Title

Beneath the Underdog: Race, Religion, and the Trail of Tears.

Authors

Minges, Patrick (AUTHOR)

Source

American Indian Quarterly. Summer2001, Vol. 25 Issue 3, p453-479. 27p.

Document Type

Article

Subject Terms

*Indigenous peoples of the Americas
*Racism
*Slavery
*Crimes against Indigenous peoples

Abstract

Traces the historical oppression of Indians. Examination of racism and religious intolerance; Importance of clan relationships or larger collective identities within indigenous societies to their interactions with foreigners; Role of missionaries in the perpetuation of slavery.

Full Text Word Count

12231

ISSN

0095-182X

DOI

10.1353/aiq.2001.0053

Accession Number

7088205

BENEATH THE UNDERDOG

Race, Religion, and the Trail of Tears

In the fields and homes of the colonial plantations of the United States in the late eighteenth century, African Americans and Native Americans forged their first intimate relations in their collective oppression at the hands of the "peculiar institution" of slavery.[1] The institution of the chattel slavery, as it developed in the United States, was based on the lessons learned in the enslavement of the traditional peoples of the Americas. In spite of a later tendency in the Old South to differentiate the African slave from the Indian, the "peculiar institution" was built on a preexisting system of Indian slavery.[2] In North America, the two systems never diverged as distinctive institutions.[3]

Racism and religious intolerance were critical components in the European dispossession and enslavement of Native Americans in the colonial period.[4] Originating in the Aristotelian notion of "natural rights," the concept of white supremacy as it found expression in colonial expansion had its roots in the classical traditions of philosophical idolatry.[5] Juan Gines de Sepulveda met with Bartholomeo de las Casas at Valladolid, Spain, in 1555 in a disputation over enslavement of the people of the New World. Sepulveda argued for the enslavement of the indigenous people on the basis of the intellectual and moral superiority of the Spaniard: "In wisdom, skill, virtue and humanity, these people are as inferior to the Spaniards as children are to adults and women to men; there is a great a difference between savagery and forbearance, between violence and moderation, almost—I am inclined to say—as between monkeys and men." [6]

Though Sepulveda did not carry the day in Valladolid, the moral argument against slavery was soon swept aside by a European continent facing a vast world with countless treasures inhabited by a people who could, themselves, become a commodity in the open market. Many of the early explorations of the New World were quite simply slaving expeditions. Vast numbers of indigenous peoples toiled to their death in the fields and mines of the Spanish colonists from the earliest points of contact. A Cherokee from Oklahoma remembered his father's tale of the Spanish slave trade: "At an early state the Spanish engaged in the slave trade on this continent and in so doing kidnapped hundreds of thousands of the Indians from the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts to work their mines in the West Indies." [7]

What was originally the "black legend" of Spanish ethnocentrism and genocidal cruelty spread quickly throughout Europe as political, economic, and religious sentiment fueled colonial expansion. Though initially shocked by Sir John Hawkins's first slaving venture in 1562–63, Queen Elizabeth quickly changed her mind —"not only did she forgive him but she became a shareholder in his second slaving voyage." [8] With the founding of Charlestown in Carolina some one hundred years later, England entered into the commercial slave market in a manner that was to establish Charleston as the center of the slave trade for two centuries.[9]

Applying the same rhetoric that they had used in their campaign against the "heathens" and "barbarians" of Scotland and Ireland,[10] the English cited Indian "savagery" and "depredations" as justification for the dispossession and enslavement of the indigenous peoples.[11] The colonists' predisposition to cite "hostilities" as the cause for "Indian wars" was quite often simply a rhetorical exercise to cover a more insidious commercial enterprise.[12] The Carolinians played Native American nations throughout the South against each other in an orgy of slave dealing that decimated entire peoples. During this period, Carolina was more active than any other colony in the exportation of Indian slaves; [13] the trade in slaves became an essential element in the early southeastern economy.[14]

By the beginnings of the eighteenth century, even the interior Cherokees had become objects of the slave trade to the extent that they sent a tribal delegation to the royal governor of South Carolina to protect themselves from slave catchers.[15] In 1705 the Cherokees accused the colonial governor of granting "commissions" to slave catchers to "set upon, assault, kill, destroy, and take captive" Cherokee citizens to be "sold into slavery for his and their profit." The slave trade was so serious that it eclipsed the trade for furs and skins and become the primary source of commerce between the English and the people of what would become South Carolina.[16]

The arrival of twenty Africans aboard a Dutch man-of-war in 1619 began to change the face of American slavery from the "tawny" Indian to the "blackamoor" African over a period that reached its peak between 1650 and 1750. Though the issue is complex, probable contributing factors to the transition to an African-based institution of slavery include the unsuitability of Native Americans for the colonials' labor-intensive agricultural practices, their susceptibility to European diseases, the proximity of avenues of escape for Native Americans, and the

lucrative nature of the African slave. [17] During this transitional period, however, the colonial "wars" against the Westo, the Tuscarora, the Yamasee, and numerous other peoples led to the enslavement and relocation of tens of thousands of Native Americans.

The Carolinians formed alliances with coastal native groups, armed them, and encouraged them to make war on weaker tribes deeper in the Carolina interior.[18] By the late years of the seventeenth century, caravans of Indian slaves were making their way from the Carolina backcountry to forts on the coast just as Africans were doing on the African continent.[19] Once in places such as Charleston or Savannah, the slave traders loaded their captives on ships for the "middle passage" to the West Indies or northern colonies such as New Amsterdam or New England. The Carolinians also kept many of the Indian slaves at home and worked them on the plantations of the Carolinas; by 1708 the number of Indian slaves in the Carolinas was nearly half that of African slaves.[20]

During this transitional period, Africans and Native Americans shared the common experience of enslavement.[21] In addition to working together in the fields, they lived together in communal living quarters, produced collective recipes for food and herbal remedies, shared myths and legends, and ultimately became lovers. The intermarriage of Africans and Native Americans was facilitated by the disproportionahty of African male slaves to females (two to one) and the decimation of Native American males by disease, enslavement, and prolonged wars with the colonists.[22] In addition, during the intertribal wars encouraged by the English in order to produce slaves and in accordance with historical patterns of warfare among Native Americans, the largest majority of those enslaved were women and children.[23] As traditional societies in the Southeast were primarily matrilineal, African males who married native women often became members of the wife's clan and of her nation.[24]

As relationships grew, the lines of distinction began to blur. The evolution of red-black peoples began to pursue its own course. Many of the people who came to be known as slaves, free people of color, Africans, or Indians were most often the product of integrating cultures.[25] In areas such as southeastern Virginia, the low country of the Carolinas, and northeastern Georgia, communities of Afro-Indians emerged. A 1740 slave code from South Carolina reveals the depth and complexity of this intermixture:

> all negroes and Indians, (free Indians in amity with this government, and negroes, mulattoes, and mustezoes, who are now free, excepted) mulattoes or mustezoes who are now, or shall hereafter be in this province, and all their issue and offspring… shall be and they are hereby declared to be, and remain hereafter absolute slaves.[26]

At this earlypoint, the concept of "race" as an identifying component in interaction did not exist among the traditional nations of the early Americas. James Adair, an early visitor among the Cherokees, noted that "their own traditions record… no variegation of colour in human beings; and they are entirely ignorant which was the first or primitive color." [27] In Cherokee cosmology, there is no mention of race; the myth of Selu and Kana'ti —the first humans—is the story of a common human origin.[28] Even into the nineteenth century, the Cherokees were noted for their cultural accommodation.[29] Only years later, following the introduction of Christian traditions and the ideology of race as a component within human interactions, would a Cherokee myth of multiple origins and racial hierarchy be developed.

A historian of the Cherokees, William McLoughlin, stressed the importance of clan relationships or larger collective identities (for example, Ani-Yunwiya, Ani-Tsalagi, Ani-Kituhwagi) within indigenous societies as being the critical components in their interactions with outsiders.[30] In her pivotal work, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540–1866, Theda Perdue states that the Cherokees regarded the Africans they encountered "simply as other human beings" and, "since the concept of race did not exist among Indians and since the Cherokees nearly always encountered Africans in the company of Europeans, one supposes that the Cherokees equated the two and failed to distinguish sharply between races." [31] Kenneth Wiggins Porter, a historian of African American-Native American relations, concurs with this conclusion: "[We have] no evidence

that the northern Indian made any distinction between Negro and white on the basis of skin color, at least, not in the early period and when uninfluenced by white settlers." [32]

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, white colonists began to recognize that, especially in areas of the South where Africans and Indians outnumbered whites four to one, a great need existed "to make Indians & Negro's a checque upon each other least by their Vastly Superior Numbers, we should be crushed by one or the other." [33] In 1775 John Stuart, a senior British official, complained that "nothing can be more alarming to the Carolinians then the idea of an attack from Indians and Negroes"; he further believed that "any intercourse between Indians and Negroes in my opinion ought to be prevented as much as possible."[34] Historian William Willis states that one of the main reasons that the colonists curtailed Indian slavery was white fears of an alliance between Native Americans and African immigrants.[35]

Various mechanisms began to be developed throughout the colonies that served to differentiate between Africans and Native Americans. Slave codes began to distinguish between them. Miscegenation laws were passed to restrict the intermarriage between the two. African slaves were used against "Indian uprisings"; Native Americans were used to quell slave revolts. The colonists offered bounties to Native Americans for capturing and returning runaway slaves. The policy of fostering hatred between the races became an enduring element in the relationships among the varied peoples of the South. The Virginia Supreme Court codified this policy in 1814 when it made provisions related to the natural rights of white persons and Native Americans, "but entirely disapproving, thereof, so far as the same relates to native Africans and their descendants." [36]

Following the Revolutionary War and with the settlement of hostilities with the Native Americans, the newly established national government under the leadership of George Washington inaugurated its "program to promote civilization among the friendly Indian tribes" that "furnished them with useful domestic animals, and implements of husbandry."[37] A critical element in the "civilization" program would be the shift from the community-based low-intensity agricultural collective that had been at the center of Cherokee society to the European model of an individually owned labor-intensive farm. It was the government's belief that if the Indians adopted the concept of private property, it would be a great advance toward "civilization." In addition, it would also free up millions of acres of property held collectively by the southeastern Indians.

The federal government under Secretary of War Henry Knox set about a policy designed to make farmers of the former "woodsmen" and assimilate them into white society.[38] The Treaty of Holston, signed 2 July 1791, stated: "That the Cherokee Nation may be led to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsman and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters, the United States will, from time to time, furnish gratuitously the said nation with the implements of husbandry." [39] However, this dramatic shift in the culture of the peoples of the Southeast could not be accommodated without first altering the entire social, political, and religious structures of traditional societies. Toward this end, the missionaries of the Christian churches proved quite effective.

From the very beginning of U.S. policy toward the Indians, missionaries (often acting as government agents) played a critical role in the civilization/ Christianization of the southeastern nations. The Indian policy of George Washington stated that "missionaries of excellent moral character should be appointed to reside in their nation who should be well supplied with all the implements of husbandry and the necessary stock for a farm." It went further to state: "It is particularly important that something of this nature should be attempted with the Southern nations of Indians, whose confined situation might render them proper subjects for the experiment." [40]

Thomas Jefferson followed on Washingtons heels by increasing the investment of the federal government in Indian agriculture, believing that farmers could become good Christians, while hunters were "unfavorable to the regular exercise of some duties essential to the Christian character." [41] Jefferson believed that it was possible to induce the Cherokees to "enter on a regular life of agriculture, familiarize them with the practice and value of the arts, attach them to property, lead them, of necessity, and without delay, to the establishment of laws and government, and thus make a great and important advance towards assimilating their condition to ours." [42]

With the establishment of the first model farms and missions among the Five Nations of the southeastern United States, a key aspect was the implementation of African slaves as laborers in the building and operation of these

model farms and missions.[43] Native Americans who had never used slaves in this manner learned quickly of their value. Farms grew into plantations; buildings grew into towns. As the program of civilization pursued its goals, slavery spread among the Five Nations of the Southeast.[44]

Individuals who held positions of power and land began to grow wealthy and to buy black slaves to extend their fields and tend to their livestock. Intermarriage among the Indians and the whites who served among them increased; mixed-blood Natives who spoke English began to adopt the social and cultural patterns of the missionaries and white farmers who surrounded them, including slavery.[45] Gradually the Five Nations developed an landed elite, and a small group of shopkeepers and entrepreneurs formed a bourgeois element that became dominant in national affairs. It was among this group of the rich and powerful, the assimilated peoples of the "Five Civilized Tribes," that slavery became most accepted.[46]

Though the missionaries did not often own slaves except "with a view towards emancipation" and only used slaves rented or borrowed from Native American slave owners, they were reticent to preach against slavery among their practitioners in the Five Nations.[47] Many of their most loyal supporters were slave owners. They, as well as governmental agents, would oppose the missionaries should they choose to espouse the cause of abolition. Many missionaries believed that the most important goal was to first convert the heathen, and then attempt to deal with the "sin" of slavery.[48]

In fact, some government agents attributed the progress made by the Five Nations to the spread of the practice of slavery among them; one such agent stated: "I am clearly of the opinion that the rapid advancement of the Cherokees is owing in part to the fact of their being slave holders." [49] In addition, their governing boards in the North did not want to jeopardize contributions from wealthy persons who disliked abolition.[50] The missionaries sought to establish a basic position of neutrality "between two fires" and as the Bible did not explicitly condemn slavery, they accepted "all to our communion who give evidence that they love the Lord Jesus Christ." [51]

However, several dynamic phenomena were to draw many of the missionaries away from their positions of neutrality and cast the Five Nations into a crisis that would have devastating effects on them for the next hundred years. The first was a decisive split that occurred within the nations as to those who pursued the path of assimilation, commonly referred to as "progressives," and those who clung to traditional values, the "conservatives." Especially in the light of a pan-Indian religious awakening inspired by Tecumseh in the early nineteenth century, many of the conservative members of the Southeastern Nations rebelled against assimilation by reasserting the traditional methods of living.[52] This left little room for colonial institutions, including slavery, among large populations of the conservative members of the Southeastern Nations.

In addition, there were splits among the various nations regarding the desired level of assimilation to white culture and intermarriage between Europeans and the peoples of the First Nations. Within the so-called "Five Civilized Tribes," nations such as the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees intermarried with the white missionaries, government agents, and local settlers to a much greater extent than did the Mvskokean people of the Deep South. A joke developed among the Indians that highlighted this peculiar aspect of southern society: "A Creek said to a Cherokee… 'You Cherokees are so mixed with whites we cannot tell you from the whites.' The Cherokee… replied: 'You Creeks are so mixed with the Negroes we cannot tell you from the Negroes.'" [53]

This assertion was based in the fact that from the mid-eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century, Africans had been fleeing slavery south along the same routes that their Native forebears had used in earlier times.[54] Ohio congressman Joshua Giddings described this flight to freedom. "The efforts of the Carolinians to enslave the Indians, brought with them the natural and appropriate penalties. The Indians began to make their escape from slavery to the Indian Country. Their example was soon followed by the African Slaves, who also fled to the Indian Country, and, in order to secure themselves from pursuit continued their journey." [55]

Mvskoke traditionalists, and especially their relatives among the Seminole (a corruption of the Spanish word cimarron, meaning "runaway" or "maroon" [56]) of Florida, accepted these African American runaways and incorporated them into their communities. They did so because the Africans were well skilled in languages,

agriculture, technical skills, and warfare.[57] Just as the Underground Railroad facilitated flight to the North in later years, this other "underground railroad" ran south to "freedom on the border." [58]

The Mvskokes and the Seminoles granted the Africans a great degree of freedom, even though they were referred to as "slaves." [59] Africans among the Mvskokes could own property, travel freely from town to town, and marry into the family of their "owner." Often, the children of a Mvskoke's African American slaves were free, and African American Mvskokes became traditional leaders among several local indigenous communities.[60]

Among the Seminoles, there was even greater freedom. The blacks lived apart by themselves, managing their own stocks and crops, paying only tributes to their "owners." The Africans could own property, move about with freedom, and the Seminoles allowed them to arm themselves.[61] According to contemporary sources, the Seminoles "would almost sooner sell his child as his slave." [62] In addition, there existed "a law among Seminoles, forbidding individuals from selling their negroes to white people." [63]

The Africans were more than just the laborers and technicians for the Mvskokes and Seminoles; they became their diplomats, their warriors, and their religious leaders. In many areas, an apocalyptic religious tradition spread among the Mvskokes that promoted resistance to white oppression.[64] This prophetic Christianity had its roots in the African American community, as witnessed by Anglican missionary Francis Le Jau as early as 1710, in the low country of South Carolina.[65] In these areas, as in many areas throughout the South, the Mvskokes were instructed in the Christian religion by African American "linksters"—multilingual cultural agents and missionaries.[66] These persons spoke to them of this prophetic religious tradition in their own tongue and outside the intervention of nonfluent ministers; this prompted Le Jau to question whether "Negroes and Indians shou'd indifferently be admitted to learn to read." [67]

On the frontier, there were constant rumblings of insurrections by these inspired Christians and there was great fear of blacks and Indians coming up from Florida to attack planters—"to rob and plunder us"—and to rescue enslaved Africans.[68] Joel Martin, in his work Sacred Revolt, argues that African American prophetic Christianity may have contributed to the emergence of the "Redstick" prophetic movement among the Mvskokes, "for at the heart of African American Christianity was a spiritually inspired critical view of Anglo-American civilization." [69] However, it is equally likely that Native American prophetic religion influenced African American religious consciousness; having "Indian blood" meant something in the enslaved society.[70]

One of the leaders of the Redstick rebellion was the Prophet Abraham (Souanakke Tustenukke), a former slave who fled south and served as war leader for the maroon community at Fort Negro, Florida. Throughout the southeastern United States, there existed independent and integrated Aframerindian communities led by mixed-blood religio-political leaders such as Jim-Boy, Black Factor, Garcon, Mulatto King, and the Choctaw (Seminole) chief.[71] Kenneth Wiggins Porter described the peculiar presence of Africans among the Seminole as quite significant:

> not only were there chiefs of mixed Indian and Negro Blood among the Seminoles, and free negroes acting as principal counselors and war-captains, but… the position of the very slaves was so influential that the Seminole nation might present to students of political science an interesting and perhaps almost unique example of a very close approach to a doulocracy, or government by slaves.[72]

The presence of such refuges and spiritual centers so close to colonial plantations, especially in the light of the slave rebellion in Haiti, proved to be a great threat to the institution of slavery. General Andrew Jackson, believing these settlements had been established by "villains for the purpose of rapine and plunder," destroyed them in the First and Second Creek War. As Joshua Giddings noted, there was but one effort in Jackson's war:

> the bloody Seminole War [sic] of 1816-17 and [18]18 arose from the efforts of our government to sustain the interests of slavery; or that our troops were employed to murder women

> and children because their ancestors had once been held bondage, and to seize and carry back to toil and suffering those who had escaped death.[73]

During these wars, those "stolen negroes" not killed or returned to the English colonies, fled deeper into the South.[74]

Africans and maroons were not just religious leaders among the "exile" communities of Mvskoke and Seminole; the same also existed to a lesser degree within the communities of the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw. Most of the early records of the missionaries note that their earliest converts were the enslaved African Americans within Native American communities.[75] Even as late as 1818, the missionaries referred to their "Sabbath schools" as "our Black Schools" because of the presence of Africans as both students and teachers.[76] As few missionaries spoke the native languages, the Africans played an intermediary role as teacher and, of necessity, preacher.[77] One of the most fascinating accounts of this presence in the missionary church comes from Cornelia Pelham, a visitor to a mission in the Chickasaw Nation:

> About two thirds of the members of the church are of African descent; these mostly understand English; and on that account are more accessible than the Chickasaws. The last mentioned class manifest an increasing attention to the means of grace, and since the commencement of the present year, more of the full Indians have been constant in their attendance upon religious meetings, than at any time since the mission was established. The black people manifest the most ardent desire for religious instruction, and often travel a great many miles to obtain it.… Two or three years ago, a black man who belonged to the mission church, opened his little cabin for prayer, on the evening of every Wednesday, which was usually attended by half a dozen colored persons. This spring, the number suddenly increased, till more than fifty assembled at once, many of whom were full Indians. The meetings, were conducted wholly by Christian slaves, in the Chickasaw language. One of their number can read fluently in the Bible, and many of the others can sing hymns which they have committed to memory from hearing them sung and recited.[78]

Similar experiences are recorded among the Cherokees into the early nineteenth century, including the case of two slaves who were teaching their Cherokee mistress "to read in the Bible." In August 1818, a full-blooded Cherokee seeking admission to the Chickamauga Mission was found "able to spell correctly in words of 4 & 5 letters. He had been taught solely by black people who had received their instruction in our Sunday School." [79]

Within the cultural nexus of the integrated community of the early American frontier, a unique synthesis grew in which African and Native American peoples shared a common religious experience. Not only did Africans share with Native Americans, the process of sharing cultural traditions went both ways. From the slave narratives, we learn of the role that Native American religious traditions played in slave culture:

> Dat busk was justa little busk. Dey wasn't enough men around to have a good one. But I seen lots of big ones. Ones where dey all had de different kinds of "banga." Dey call all de dances some kind of banga. De chicken dance is de "Tolosabanga," and de Istifanibanga is de one whar dey make lak dey is skeletons and raw heads coming to git you. De "Hadjobanga" is de crazy dance, and dat is a funny one. Dey all dance crazy and make up funny songs to go wid de dance. Everybody think up funny songs to sing and everybody whoop and laugh all de time.[80]

> When I wuz a boy, dere wuz lotsa Indians livin' about six miles frum the plantation on which I wuz a slave. De Indians allus held a big dance ever' few months, an' all de niggers would try to attend. On one ob dese ostent'tious occasions about 50 of us niggers conceived de idea of goin', without gettin permits frum de master. As soon as it gets dark, we quietly slips outen de quarters, one by one, so as not to disturb de guards. Arrivin at de dance, we jined in the festivities wid a will. Late dat nite one ob de boys wuz goin down to de spring fo de get a drink ob water when he notice somethin' movin in de bushes. Gettin up dosah, he look' agin when—lawd hab mersy! Patty rollers! [81]

Slaves were welcome at the busk festival and stomp dances and “mixed and mingled and danced together with the Indians.” [82]

Native Americans also played roles in the development of the African American churches through supporting the “invisible institution.” A prominent aspect of slave religion was the “brush arbor.” These brush arbors, hastily constructed “churches” made of a lean-to of tree limbs and branches, had been a prominent part of the southeastern traditional religion. The brush arbor architecture that became a critical part of the “camp-meetings” of the Second Great Awakening was borrowed from the architecture of the “stomp ground” of southeastern traditional religious practices.[83] That Native Americans supported the invisible institution is evidenced in the slave narratives: “Master Frank wasn't no Christian but he would help build brush arbors fer us to have church under and we sho would have big meetings I'll tell you.” [84]

Interestingly enough, Native Americans also shaped African American churches in other ways. The first recorded Negro Baptist Church was established at “Galphintown” near Silver Bluff, South Carolina, a place that was a center for trade with the Five Nations.[85] George Galphin, the owner of the settlement, was a gregarious Irishman who had at least four wives, including Metawney, the daughter of a Creek headman, and two Africans.[86] In the eighteenth century the area around the Negro Baptist Church was a region where the three races converged; members of Galphin's family were patrons of the Negro Baptist Church at Silver Bluff.[87] Jesse (Peters) Galphin was one of the founders of the Silver Bluff Baptist Church and revived the church following the Revolutionary War.[88]

Another founder of the Silver Bluff Baptist Church was a slave named David George. George's parents were born in Africa and brought to America. They were enslaved to a master whose brutality was such that David fled the plantation and traveled throughout the South.

> Extraordinary adventures took him to the Creek and ‘Nautchee’ Indian peoples, where he was a well-treated chattel servant. He eventually became the possession of George Galphin, a ‘very kind’ man who owned a plantation and trading station at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, some twelve miles from Augusta Georgia.[89]

In the years leading up to the Revolutionary War, David George preached to the congregation at Silver Bluff Baptist Church “till the church… encreased to thirty or more, and till the British came to the city of Savannah and took it.” [90]

When the British invaded South Carolina, Jesse Galphin fled across the river from Silver Bluff to Augusta, where he and some forty-eight other members of his church formed the First African Baptist Church.[91] Among the first ministers of the First African Baptist Church of Savannah was a former slave by the name of Henry Francis. Though a slave and considered a “black pastor” of the Third African Baptist Church, Henry Francis had no known African ancestry:

> Another dispensation of Providence has much strengthened our hands, and increased our means of information; Henry

> Francis, lately a slave to the widow of the late Colonel Leroy Hammond, of Augusta, has been purchased by a few humane gentlemen of this place, and liberated to exercise the handsome ministerial gifts he possesses amongst us, and teach our youth to read and write. He is a strong man about forty-nine years of age, whose mother was white and whose father was an Indian. His wife and only son are slaves. Brother Francis has been in the ministry fifteen years, and will soon receive ordination, and will probably become the pastor of a branch of my large church … it will take the rank and title of the 3rd Baptist Church of Savannah.[92]

Most of the early records of the missionaries note that among these mixed peoples of the low country areas, their earliest converts were the enslaved African Americans who lived within Native American communities. The records also state that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had no qualms about baptizing "the heathen slaves also (Indians and negroes)." [93] Throughout the Old South, mixed congregations of black and red people worshipped together in ways that were at once both African and Indian. Whether in the churches or in the stomp grounds, people recognized the solidarity that only comes in response to an overarching culture of oppression that attempted to define and divide black and red people. By learning to overcome that which separated them as a people, they learned to conquer that which created estrangement within themselves. In so doing, they laid the foundation for a common history, one "written in the hearts of our people." [94]

A "close neighborly feeling" existed between the peoples of the Five Civilized Tribes and the Africans in their midst.[95] Even as slave owners, Native Americans were particularly noted for their kindness and refusal to implement even their own national laws with respect to slavery.[96] According to one southern visitor to the Indian nation: "The Indian masters treated their slaves with great liberality and upon terms approaching perfect equality, with the exception that the owner of the slave generally does more work than the slave himself." [97] Indeed, the slaves themselves noted the differences.

> We all live around on them little farms, and we didn't have to be under any overseer like the Cherokee Negroes had lots of times. We didn't have to work if there wasn't no work to do … Old Chief treated all the Negroes like they was just hired hands, and I was a big girl before I knowed very much about belonging to him.[98]

Even within a particular nation, there was great variation. Cherokee New Thompson noted "the only negroes that have to work hard were the ones who belonged to the half-breeds. As the Indian didn't do work, he didn't expect his slaves to do much work." [99]

Within the conservative elements of the Cherokees, more than just a "close neighborly feeling" existed. Cudjo, the slave of Cherokee chief Yonaguska of North Carolina, described their relationship thus: "He never allowed himself to be called 'master,' for he said Cudjo was his brother, and not his slave." [100] Those who had themselves been enslaved had little affection for the institution of slavery. In addition, conservative members noted the destructive effects of the "peculiar institution" on traditional culture and society. In those places where blood and sentiment ran deep, the opposition to slavery grew strong.

In the late 1820s the colonization movement spread among the Cherokee of North Carolina; the Cherokee American Colonization Society was formed in 1828 and Cherokee David Brown spoke for many Cherokees in 1825 when he said,

> There are some Africans among us;… they are generally well treated and they much prefer living in the nation as a residence in the United States.… The presumption is that the Cherokees will, at no distant date, cooperate with

> the humane efforts of those who are liberating and sending this prescribed race to the land of their fathers.[101]

Ironically, about this same time, a different kind of colonization movement swept through the federal government. Henry Schoolcraft made the following observation regarding the Indians of the Southeast: “Two diverse states of society, it is observed, cannot prosperously exist together; the stronger type must inevitably absorb or destroy the weaker.” [102] “Colonization” of the Cherokees, or “removal” as it would later be called, was not a new idea. Thomas Jefferson, who appropriated fifteen thousand dollars for such “colonization” efforts as early as 1803, set its precedent.[103] “Colonization” and “removal” would become inextricably linked within liberal rhetoric over the next fifty years.[104]

Caught between Benjamin Lundy (whose abolitionist newspaper the Genius of Universal Emancipation had once employed William Garrison) to the West and a powerful Quaker abolitionist movement to the East, there is little doubt that the Cherokees were exposed to abolitionist rhetoric.[105] In 1824 the Baptist Evan Jones, who would become a noted opponent of slavery, came to work as a missionary among the conservatives in the valley towns of North Carolina. [106] Among the Mvskokes and Seminoles, British abolitionism held sway. The British had offered freedom to African American slaves during both the 1776 and 1812 wars, believing that “the terror of revolution in the southern states can be increased to good effect.” [107] Among the maroon communities of southern Florida, the abolitionist message struck a particular note.

In 1827 the Cherokee people took what they considered the final steps toward “civilization” by the establishment of a constitution, a bicameral legislature, a judicial system, and an electoral process that elected John Ross as principal chief.[108] However, in the same year, the people of the United States elected Andrew Jackson, noted Indian fighter and slaveholder, to the presidency of the United States. In his first message to Congress, Andrew Jackson set forth his “benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements.” [109] The colonization plan had come full circle; those who had sought to help Africans return to their homeland now found themselves being removed from their traditional homelands. The Cherokees were eloquent in their struggle against removal, believing that because they had made significant progress toward “civilization,” they would be spared removal. In fact, the Supreme Court of the United States, led by Chief Justice John Marshall, did side with the Cherokee Nation in their struggle with Georgia.[110] However, upon hearing of the decision, President Andrew Jackson is reported to have replied, “John Marshall has rendered his decision; now let him enforce it.” [111]

In the minds of most of the people of the United States, especially among those inhabitants of the Southeast, the issues of slavery and removal were indissolubly linked.[112] Among the reasons for removal of the Mvskokes, and especially the Seminoles, was the presence of “another class” of citizens of the nation. African Americans among the Indians posed a significant threat to the whites and greater opportunity for runaway slaves. Moreover, the presence of missionaries who seemed not only to be preaching a message of equality but also manifesting one in their missions was a tremendous threat to the institution of chattel slavery.[13] Indicative of the problem was the attitude of many of the missionaries, such as that of Sophia Sawyer who, when asked in 1832 by the Georgia Guard to remove two African boys from her classroom, replied, “until the Supreme Court of the United States declares the Cherokee Nation to be a part of the State of Georgia I will obey Cherokee laws, which are just laws, not Georgia laws.” [114]

Sophie Sawyer's position was symbolic of a much greater resistance. [115] The opposition to removal of the Indians was a potent force among the religious bodies that had been working among the Indians for so many years.[116] There arose an organized opposition to removal among women's groups in towns and communities across the United States; women who were not empowered politically became empowered socially, and an unprecedented national women's petition drive against Indian removal was initiated. As the movement spread, so did its message. Many of the antiremoval leaders were to become future leaders of the abolitionist movement—Angelina Grimké, Theodore Weld, Arthur Tappan, Catharine Beecher. Benjamin Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison cut their political teeth in the antiremoval debate. It was the irony of calling for African colonization and yet opposing Indian colonization that led to the development of the “immediatist” movement and the birth of radical abolitionism. In an illustration in the first issue of Garrison's the Liberator, the path to the slave auction

block was littered with copies of trampled Indian treaties; “from the Indian to the Negro, the transition was easy and natural.… The suffering of the Negro flowed from the same bitter fountain.” [117]

The relationship between slavery and removal was not lost on the Cherokees either, though their understanding of the situation was propelled by a different focus. Following a sermon by Evan Jones on “providence” in one of the Valley Town missions, a discussion ensued regarding what sins could have turned God's face away from the Cherokee Nation. “God cannot be pleased with slavery,” said one of the Cherokees. There followed “some discussion respecting the expediency of setting slaves at liberty.” When one of those present noted that freeing the slaves might cause more harm than good, a Native Baptist preacher replied, “I never heard tell of any hurt coming from doing right.” [118]

In 1835 a movement to free the African slaves of the Cherokee Nation was put into motion by several “influential men” of the nation. These men made arrangements to emancipate the slaves and receive them as Cherokee citizens. However, the following December the “Treaty Party” of the assimilated slave-owning Cherokees signed the Treaty of New Echota, relinquishing all lands east of the Mississippi and agreeing to emigrate to “Indian Territory” in the West. According to missionary Elizur Butler, the Treaty of New Echota effectively prevented the abolition of slavery within the Cherokee Nation. [119] Though the signers of this treaty were ultimately punished for treason, the long-term impact of this treaty on Cherokees and Africans alike was disastrous.

On the eve of the forced displacement of the Five Civilized Tribes, the census recorded the African American presence among the Cherokees as about 10 to 15 percent. [120] Taking into account that the census seldom counted free blacks and maroons of outlying communities, we can assume the number was much higher, especially among the Mvskokes and Seminoles. In spite of tales used to support removal, the people were reluctant to leave their ancestral homelands.[121]

In the spring of 1838 the process of forced removal began for the Cherokees at the hands of the United States military. An African American member of the community described the process:

> The weeks that followed General Scott's order to remove the Cherokees were filled with horror and suffering for the unfortunate Cherokees and their slaves. The women and children were driven from their homes, sometimes with blows and close on the heels of the retreating Indians came greedy whites to pillage the Indian's homes, drive off their cattle, horses, and pigs, and they even rifled the graves for any jewelry, or other ornaments that might have been buried with the dead.
>
> The Cherokees, after having been driven from their homes, were divided into detachments of nearly equal size and late in October, 1838, the first detachment started, the others following one by one. The aged, sick and young children rode in the wagons, which carried provisions and bedding, while others went on foot. The trip was made in the dead of winter and many died from exposure from sleet and snow, and all who lived to make this trip, or had parents who made it, will long remember it, as a bitter memory.[122]

Resistance among the Cherokees was high; many were bound and tied before being brought out of their homes.[123] A Georgia volunteer was later to remark on the cruelty imposed upon the Indians: “I fought through the civil war and have seen men shot to pieces and slaughtered by thousands, but the Cherokee removal was the cruelest work I ever knew.” [124]

The U.S. troops rounded up Indians, Africans, and other members of the Cherokee Nation and placed them in “concentration camps,” [125] where they were kept as “pigs in a sty.” [126] Starvation and disease were so rampant among those forcibly marched to the West that missionary Daniel Buttrick said, “we are almost

becoming familiar with death." [127] A month later, he was to say that the government might more mercifully have put to death everyone under a year or over sixty; rather it had chosen "a most expensive and painful way of exterminating these poor people." [128]

Without a doubt, the "Trail Where We Cried" was hard on those African Americans who were forced to march, many without shoes, through the dead of winter into Oklahoma.[129] In spite of the hardship, the Africans were committed to the Cherokees: "My grandparents were helped and protected by very faithful Negro slaves who… went ahead of the wagons and killed any wild beast who came along."[130] Even though they were given the responsibility to guard (with "axes and guns") the caravans at night, few of the slaves made their escape. What for the Cherokees became known as the Trail Where We Cried was for the Africans an exodus. [131] Large numbers of Africans fled with the Cherokees and the other members of the Five Nations to "Indian Territory." They realized that as rough as life on the trail could be, there could be no life for them in what was their adopted homeland in the Cherokee Nation. By the outbreak of the Civil War, the African American population within the Cherokee Nation would grow to about so percent.[132]

The newspaper reports of the time detailed a "peaceful and deathless trek of the Cherokees." [133] However, missionary Elizur Butler estimated conservatively that over 4,600 Indians and African Americans died on that nine-month march. More recent estimates put the number of deaths at nearly 8,000 people who died as a direct result of the Cherokee Trail of Tears.[134]

Among the Mvskokes and Seminoles, where Africans played more prominent roles in their society, the question of removal was deadly serious.[135]The Africans among these southern Indians knew that the whites considered them to be the property of the men from whom they, or their ancestors, had fled. The burden of proof lay on the slaves, and they knew that their losing to the U.S. government meant they would become the property of whoever claimed them.[136] In 1836 the U.S. government sought to remove the Mvskokes and their relatives from their lands in the Deep South; the government initiated simultaneous assaults upon the Creeks and Seminoles. The Second Seminole War ended only following the commitment of nearly forty thousand troops, ten years, forty million dollars, and fifteen hundred soldiers' lives. The removal of the Creeks, Seminoles, and their African counterparts was the costliest war in American history until the Civil War.

Let us make no mistake about the nature of this endeavor. As General Jesup, the leader of the campaign, stated in 1836: "This, you may be assured, is a negro, not an Indian war: and if it be not speedily put down, the South will feel the effects of it on their slave population before the end of the next season." [137]

Joshua Giddings saw the war in a similar light; the Second Seminole War

> on our part had not been commenced for the attainment of any high or noble purpose. … Our national influence and military power had been put forth to reenslave our fellow men: to transform immortal beings into chattels; and to make them to property of slave holders; to oppose the rights of human nature; and the legitimate fruits of this policy were gathered in a plentiful harvest of crime, bloodshed, and individual suffering.[138]

The Florida Indians were led in their resistance by the same Aframerindian leaders who had fled there to escape from slavery. Jim-Boy, Gopher John, the Negro Abraham, John Horse, Wild Cat, and many others led the Indians in their struggle for resistance. The traditional leaders of the Mvskokes and Seminoles, such as Opothle Yahola, Micanopy, and Osceola (Asi Yahola), also had deep ties to the African American members in their presence. In the spring of 1837 General Jesup reasserted his position: "Throughout my operations I found the Negroes the most active and determined warriors; and during the conference with the Indian chiefs I ascertained that they exercised almost controlling influence over them." [139]

To solve the problem, General Jesup set about to divide and conquer; he offered to free the slaves who would separate from the Indians and allow them to emigrate to the West en masse. He wrote to John Horse of the

Seminole, "to whom, and to their people, I promised freedom and protection on their separating from the Indians and surrendering."[140] Black emancipation and removal had become the policy of the U.S. army. Jesup refused to return the African slaves to their owners in the South; he sent them West as part of the Seminole Nation.[141] Though many Africans surrendered and the Seminole followed suit, the struggle to remove the last of the exiles from Florida went on for many years.

The Africans, Seminoles, and Mvskokes took the path to the western territory, where the conflict over the status of the Africans was uncertain and the relationship between the Seminoles and the Mvskokes seemed undecided. One thing was certain and decided; the losses among the Mvskokes and the Seminoles in their Trail of Tears were immense. They collectively suffered a 50 percent mortality rate. For the Mvskokes, many of these deaths followed removal; probably one-third died from "bulious fevers." Among the Seminoles, the deaths were not from disease but from "the terrible war of attrition that has been required to force them to move."[142]

As they were proceeding west upon the trail watered by their own tears and sanctified by the many gravestones of their children and elders, many of the Mvskokes began to sing the spiritual "We Are Going Home."[143] The words "We are going home to our homes and land; there is one who is above and ever watches over us" rang true to those nurtured in a Christian religion birthed in the cauldron of oppression. It also rang true to those traditionalists among the Mvskokes who believed that they had emerged from caves in the West and had come to settle in the Southeast.[144] In the collective experience of those who struggled to understand why a just deity allowed such injustice, a religious expression was born that reflected the essential nature of the experiences of both peoples. It gave them the strength to resist and it gave them the strength to endure.

When the Cherokees were moving west along the more famous Trail of Tears, the missionaries who had been with them through the struggle in the homelands, the concentration camps, and the agony of the journey were with them at their deaths. The missionaries and their native ministers led many of the contingencies. The records of the Trail Where We Cried show that along the way the churches themselves congregated and expressed their faith in God. Reverend Jesse Bushyhead, who would himself become a controversial Baptist "slave owner," expressed his thanks that they were able "to continue, amidst the toil and sufferings of the journey, their accustomed religious services."[145]

We can be certain that whenever faces gathered around the campfire, there were Africans there to serve as spiritual guides into a different kind of wilderness. When there were dances to celebrate, deaths to mourn, or festivals to mark the passing of the seasons, there were Africans present. On the Trail Where We Cried, there were also African tears. This we must never forget.

NOTES

1. This is, of course, an issue of some debate, for there are many theories regarding precolonial contact between Africans and Native Americans. For background materials on this discussion, see Leo Wiener, Africa and the Discovery of America (Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1920); Jack Forbes, Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Ivan Van Sertima, They Came before Columbus (New York: Random House, 1976); Barry Fell, America B.C.: Ancient Settlers in the New World (New York: Quadrangle, 1976).

2. George Washington Williams, History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880: Negroes as Slaves, as Soldiers, and as Citizens (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1882), 123–80.

3. David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 176.

4. "It has become evident through long experience that nothing has sufficed to bring the said chiefs and Indians to a knowledge of our Faith (necessary for their salvation), since by nature they are inclined to idleness and vice, and have no manner of virtue or doctrine" ("The Laws of Burgos" [1512], in History of Latin American Civilization: Sources and Interpretations, 2 vols., ed. Lewis Hanke [Boston: Little, Brown, 1967], 135).

5. *Lewis Hanke, Aristotle and the American Indian (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970); Gustavo Guttierez, Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ, trans. Robert Barr, (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 291.*

6. *Juan Gines de Sepulveda, Democritus Alter (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Instituto Francisco de Vitoria, 1984), 33.*

7. *Grant Foreman, "Indian Territory in 1878," Chronicles of Oklahoma 4(1926): 264.*

8. *Daniel P. Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1523–1865 (New York: Viking Press 1962), 22.*

9. *Historian David Wallace put it this way: "The temporary basis of wealth that was ultimately to prove a lasting curse, Negro slavery, had perfectly naturally begun with the landing of the first colonists" (David Wallace, South Carolina: A Short History-1520–1948 [Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1951], 31).*

10. *Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery-American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: Norton, 1975), 20.*

11. *Booker T. Washington, The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery (New York: Doubleday, 1909), 1:128–30.*

12. *See Almon Lauber, "Indian Slavery in Colonial Times within the Present Limits of the United States" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1933); Barbara Olexer, The Enslavement of the American Indian (Monroe NY: Library Research Associates, 1982).*

13. *Peter Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 39.*

14. *William R. Snell, "Indian Slavery in Colonial South Carolina" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alabama, 1972); Donald Grinde Jr., "Native American Slavery in the Southern Colonies," Indian History 10:2 (1977): 38–42.*

15. *H. T. Malone, Cherokees of the Old South: A People in Transition (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1956), 20.*

16. *James Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1900), 32.*

17. *Indian slaves were considered to be "sullen, insubordinate, and short lived" (A. B. Hart, quoted in Sanford Wilson, "Indian Slavery in the South Carolina Region," Journal of Negro History 22 [1935]: 440). The article further describes Native American slaves as "not of such robust and strong bodies, as to lift great burdens, and endure labor and slavish work." However, Native Americans were not without some commercial value. They were often seized throughout the South and taken to the slave markets and traded at an exchange rate of two for one for African Americans.*

18. *"This traffic was an inhuman method of getting rid of troublesome neighbors, yet the planters pleaded necessity in its vindication. It is certain that the reward for indian prisoners encouraged bold adventurers, and the sale of them made profitable trade" (David Ramsay, Ramsay's History of South Carolina from Its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808 [1858; reprint, Spartanburg SC, 1959–60], 86).*

19. *Gary B. Nash, Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall, 1982), 130.*

20. *Verner Crane, The Southern Frontier, 1670–1732 (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1928), 113.*

21. *Washington, in The Story of the Negro, describes it thus:*

> During all this time, for a hundred years or maybe more, the Indian and the Negro worked side by side as slaves. In all the laws and regulations of the Colonial days, the same rule which applied to the Indian was also applied to the Negro slaves.… In all other regulations that were made in the earlier days for the control of the slaves, mention is invariably made of the Indian as well as the Negro. (130)

22. *J. Leitch Wright, The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of the American Indian in the Old South (New York: Free Press, 1981), 258.*

23. *Wood, Black Majority, 39. Historian J. Leitch Wright suggests that the presence of so many women slaves from the southeastern Indian nations where matrilineal kinship was the norm helps to explain the prominent role of women in slave culture (Wright, Only Land They Knew, 148–50, 248–78).*

24. *Charles Hudson, The Southeastern Indians (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 193.*

25. *For excellent surveys and discussions of this phenomenon, see Kenneth Wiggins Porter, Relations between Negroes and Indians within the Present United States (Washington DC: Association for Negro Life and History, 1931); Daniel F. Littlefield, Africans and Creeks: From the Colonial Period to the Civil War (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Laurence Foster, Negro-Indian Relations in the Southeast (Philadelphia: n.p., 1935); J. Leitch Wright, Creeks and Seminoles (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).*

26. *John C. Hurd, The Law of Freedom and Bondage in the United States (Boston: Little, Brown, 1862), 303.*

27. *James Adair, Adair's History of the American Indians, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (1775; reprint, Johnson City TN: Watauga Press, 1930), 3.*

28. *Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 242–49.*

29. *Tom Harley, The Dividing Path: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Revolutionary Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 233.*

30. *William McLoughlin, The Cherokee Ghost Dance (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 260–65.*

31. *Theda Perdue, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540–1866 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 36.*

32. *Porter, Relations between Negroes and Indians, 16.*

33. *Robert Meriwether, The Expansion of South Carolina (Kingsport TN: Southern Publishers, 1940), 6.*

34. *John Stuart, quoted in William Willis, "Divide and Rule: Red, White, and Black in the Southeast," Journal of Negro History 48 (1963): 161.*

35. *Willis, "Divide and Rule," 162.*

36. *Virginia Supreme Court, quoted in Davis, Problem of Slavery, 181.*

37. *"Trade and Intercourse Act, March 30, 1802," in Francis Paul Prucha, Documents of United States Indian Policy, 2d ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 19.*

38. *R. Douglas Hunt, Indian Agriculture in America (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1987), 96. In an interesting side note, both George Washington and Henry Knox were Freemasons. This is an important point because Freemasonry would prove to be a critical element in the "civilization" program for the American Indian. As early as 1776, Native Americans were being made Freemasons and the trend would continue well into*

the nineteenth century. Many of the leaders of Native American nations were made Freemasons and some were carried to England to tour English lodges.

39. U.S. Congress, Report to the Senate on the Cherokees, Six Nations, and Creeks, 2d Cong., 1st sess., 26 October 1791, no. 19, in American State Papers: Indian Affairs, 2 vols., ed. Walter Lowrie, Walter S. Franklin, and Matthew St. Clair Clarke (Washington DC: Gales & Seaton, 1832–34), 1:125.

40. U.S. Congress, Report to the Senate on the Six Nations, the Wyandots, and Others, 1st Cong., 1st sess., 25 May 1789, no. 1, in American State Papers 1: 53–54.

41. Thomas Jefferson, quoted in Joseph Parsons, "Civilizing the Indians of the Old Northwest, 1800–1810," Indiana Magazine of History 56 (September 1960): 202. For the Cherokee response, see William G. McLoughlin, "Thomas Jefferson and the Beginning of Cherokee Nationalism, 1806 to 1809," William and Mary Quarterly 32:4 (1975): 547–80.

42. Thomas Jefferson, Report to the Senate on the Cherokees, Senate, 10th Cong., 1st sess., 10 March 1808, no. 120, in American State Papers, 1:752.

43. Rudi Halliburton, Red over Black: Black Slavery among the Cherokee Indians (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 25. This is not to say that the practice of slavery did not exist among Indians prior to this time. However, the presence of the practice of slave catching and slave possession is quite different from the institution of African slavery and the use of chattel slavery as a primary tool of agricultural practice. It was only the "civilization" programs of Washington and Jefferson that led to the growth of plantation-style economies based on the institution of African slavery.

44. Douglas C. Wilms, "Cherokee Acculturation and Changing Land Use Practices," Chronicles of Oklahoma 56:3 (1978): 331–43.

45. Theda Perdue, Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 81–84.

46. In a letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1826, Cherokee John Ridge noted that "the Africans are mostly held by half breeds & full blooded Indians of [distinguished] talents. The valuable portion of property is retained in this class [and their farms are conducted in the same style as southern white farmers of equal ability in point of property]" (John Ridge, "John Ridge on Cherokee Civilization n 1826," ed. William C. Sturtevant, Journal of Cherokee Studies 6:2 [1981]: 80).

47. Robert T. Lewit, "The Conflict of Evangelical and Humanitarian Ideals: A Case Study" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1959), 35–53.

48. Lewit, "Conflict of Evangelical and Humanitarian Ideals," 97.

49. Federal agent George Butler, quoted in William McLoughlin, "Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism: America's Slaveholding Indians," American Quarterly 26 (1974): 368.

50. McLoughlin, "Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism," 371.

51. Perdue, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 121.

52. Tecumseh is reported to have been a Freemason; he "was made a Mason while on a visit to Philadelphia." Many prominent Native Americans were Freemasons. Joseph Brant, Mohawk, reportedly became America's first Native American Freemason when he was raised by an English lodge. Red Jacket, famous orator of the Seneca, was a Freemason. Ely S. Parker was the first Indian American commissioner of Indian affairs under fellow Freemason U. S. Grant. Pushmataha, the Choctaw leader, was also a Freemason. Other prominent Native American Freemasons were John Ross, John Ridge, Peter Pitchlyn, Stand Watie, Opothle Yahola, John Jumper, Elias C. Boudinot, Alexander McGillivray, Philip DeLoria, Vine DeLoria, Carlos Montezuma, Arthur C. Parker,

and Will Rogers (William R. Denslow, Freemasonry and the American Indian [St. Louis: Missouri Lodge of Research, 1956]).

53. Quoted in Joel Martin, Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 73

54. Wood, Black Majority, 260.

55. Joshua Giddings, The Exiles of Florida; or, The Crimes Committed by Our Government against the Maroons, Who Fled from South Carolina and Other Slave States, Seeking Protection under Spanish Laws (Columbus OH: Follett, Foster, 1858), 4.

56. Kevin Mulroy, Freedom on the Border (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), 7.

57. Porter, Relations between Negroes and Indians, 40. See also Woodson, Negro in Our History, 189–98; Imari Obadele, "New African State-Building in North America: A Study of Reaction under the Stress of Conquest" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1985).

58. Mulroy, Freedom on the Border, 25.

59. It is important to note that many of the Mvskoke and Seminole referred to their African brethren as their "slaves" to protect them from white slaveholders who sought their return. In addition, there was some social status acquired by owning slaves, even though the Mvskokes and Seminoles had little need for slave labor because they did not adopt plantation-style agriculture as did the northern nations of the Five Civilized Tribes.

60. Martin, Sacred Revolt, 73.

61. Mulroy, Freedom on the Border, 19.

62. Wiley Thompson to Lewis Cass, 27 April 1835, Kenneth Wiggins Porter Collection, Schomburg Center for the Study of Black Culture, New York.

63. John L. Williams, The Territory of Florida (1837; reprint, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), 239.

64. Martin, Sacred Revolt, 75; Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 265.

65. Francis Le Jau, "Slave Conversion on the Carolina Frontier," in Afro-American Religious History: A Documentary Witness, ed. Milton Sernett (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1985), 27.

66. One of these "linksters" was John Marrant, an African American Methodist minister from Charleston who was converted by evangelist George Whitefield. He ministered among the Cherokee in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He was, according to Arthur Schomburg, "A Negro in America [like] the Jesuits of old, who spread the seed of Christianity among the American Indians before the birth of the American Republic" (Arthur Schomburg, "Two Negro Missionaries to the American Indians, John Marrant and John Stewart" Journal of Negro History 21:3 [July 1936]: 397–405).

67. Le Jau, "Slave Conversion," 27.

68. Wood, Black Majority, 298–301.

69. Martin, Sacred Revolt, 73.

70.

```
My mother had Indian in her. She would fight. She was the
```

> pet of the people. When she was out, the pateroles would whip her because she didn't have a pass. She has shored [sic] me scars that were on her even till the day that she died. She was whipped because she was out without a pass. She could have had a pass any time for the asking, but she was too proud to ask. She never wanted to do things by permission.

Samuel Badgett, in Works Progress Administration: Arkansas Writers Project, Slave Narratives [Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1932]).

71. Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 190;

> We must add to this enumeration, which will make the Indian population amount to more than five thousand of each sex and of every age, fifty or sixty negroes, or mulattoes, who are maroons, or half slaves to the Indians. These negroes appeared to me far more intelligent than those who are in absolute slavery; and they have great influence over the minds of the Indians.

Congress, Report to the House on Florida Indians, 17th Cong., 2d sess., 21 February 1823, no. 195, in American State Papers 2:412). The term "Aframerindian" was coined by Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "Notes Supplementary to Relations between Negros and Indians," Journal of Negro History 18 (January 1933): 321.

72. Kenneth Wiggins Porter, The Negro on the American Frontier (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 241.

73. Giddings, Exiles of Florida, 44–45.

74. Foster, Negro-Indian Relations, 24.

75. Eighth Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1818), 16; Ninth Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Boston, Crocker & Brewster, 1819), 19.

76. "Brainerd Journal," 12 February 1818, in American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions [microform] (Woodbridge CT: Research Publications, 1982).

77. The positive attitude of the Cherokee toward African American missionaries could be related to the presence of minister John Marrant. According to Michael Roethler, "It is only natural that the Cherokees should judge the value of Christianity by the character of the people who professed it.... The Cherokees had no reason to suspect the religion of this Negro preacher" (Michael Roethler, "Negro Slavery among the Cherokee Indians, 1540–1866," [Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1964], 126).

78. Sarah Tuttle, Letters from the Chickasaw and Osage Missions (n.p., 1821), 9–10.

79. Chickamagua Journal, quoted in Malone, Cherokees of the Old South, 142.

80. Lucinda Davis, in Works Progress Administration: Oklahoma Writers Project, Slave Narratives (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1932), 58

81. Preston Kyles, in Works Progress Administration: Arkansas Writers Project, Slave Narratives, 220.

82. Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 95.

83. J. Daniel Pezzoni, "Brush Arbors in the American South," Pioneer America Society Transactions 20(1997): 25–34.

84. Kiziah Love, in Works Progress Administration: Oklahoma Writers Project, Slave Narratives, 196.

85. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, The Black Church in the African American Experience (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 102; Edward Freeman, The Epoch of Negro Baptists and the Foreign Missions Boards (Kansas City: National Seminary Press, 1953), 29.

86. Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 81; Kathryn E. Holland Braund, Deerskins and Duffels: Creek-Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685–1815 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 46.

87. Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 81.

88. Freeman, Epoch of Negro Baptists, 30–33.

89. Mechal Sobel, Trabelin On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 105.

90. Walter H. Brooks, "The Priority of the Silver Bluff Church and Its Promoters," Journal of Negro History 7:2 (April 1922): 172–83.

91. Sobel, Trabelin On, 189; Albert Raboteau, Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 139.

92. Andrew Bryan, "Letter of Andrew Bryan to Reverend Doctor Rippon," in Sernett, Afro-American Religious History, 49.

93. Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Classified Digest of the Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701–1892 (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1893), 12.

94. bell hooks, "Revolutionary Renegades: Native Americans, African Americans, and Black Indians," in Black Looks: Race and Representation (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 183.

95. Irene Blocker, in Works Progress Administration: Oklahoma Writers Project, Slave Narratives, 264.

96. Raleigh Wilson, "Negro and Indian Relations in the Five Civilized Tribes from 1865 to 1907" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1949), 22.

97. U.S. Congress, House Reports, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 1867, no. 30, part 4, vol. 2,p. 162.

98. Nellie Johnson, in Works Progress Administration: Oklahoma Writers Project, Slave Narratives, 157.

99. Interview with New Thompson, Indian-Pioneer Papers, 108:213, Oklahoma Historical Society, Tulsa.

100. Cudjo, quoted in Perdue, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 106.

101. American State Papers, 2:651.

102. Henry Schoolcraft, "Plan of Colonization West of the Mississippi," in Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1857), 6:406.

103. Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 101–2; Charles C. Royce, The Cherokee Nation of Indians (Chicago: Aldine, 1975), 74–75.

104. Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s," Journal of American History 86:1 (1999): 15–40.

105. Carl Degler, The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 19–21. The presence of large numbers of Quakers in North Carolina and Tennessee played a profound role in the development of antislavery sentiments. Benjamin Lundy estimated in 1827 that there were 106 antislavery societies in the South as compared with 24 in the northern states.

106. William G. McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789–1839 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 159.

107. Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 166.

108. Angie Debo, A History of the Indians of the United States (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 113.

109.

> The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves. The pecuniary advantages which it Promises to the Government are the least of its recommendations.… It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions … and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.

Andrew Jackson's Case for the Removal Act; First Annual Message to Congress, 8 December 1830," in Patrick Jennings, North American Indian Removal Policy: Andrew Jackson Addresses Congress [www.synaptic.bc.ca/ejournal/jackson.htm], 10 June 2000).

110. Both John Marshall and Andrew Jackson were Freemasons as were John Ross and John Ridge, leaders of competing political parties of the Cherokee Nation.

111. Andrew Jackson, quoted in Grant Foreman, Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), 235. For a more nuanced discussion of this controversy, see Mark R. Scherer, "'Now Let Him Enforce It': Exploring the Myth of Andrew Jackson's Response to Worcester v. Georgia (1832)," Chronicles of Oklahoma 74:1 (1996): 16–29.

112. "The agitation for the return of the Negro slaves, moreover, was kept up through this period, as a reason for removal, inasmuch as the Indians were disinclined to return fugitive Negroes who had become connected with them by blood" (Woodson, Negro in Our History, 193).

113. Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 232, 226.

114. Elizur Butler to David Green, 14 March 1832, in American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

115. For more on Sophia Sawyer's career as missionary and educator, see Kimberly C. Macenczak, "Sophia Sawyer, Native American Advocate: A Case Study in Nineteenth Century Cherokee Education," Journal of Cherokee Studies 16 (1991): 23–37.

116. The politics of Indian removal placed great stress upon the churches that had tried to refrain from politics. There were splits in the religious bodies over the issue; many of the missionaries were opposed to removal but

their governing boards and congregations were reluctant to take what they considered a "political" position. See Christopher H. Owen, "'To Refrain from … Political Affairs': Southern Evangelicals, Cherokee Missions, and the Spirituality of the Church," Tennessee Historical Quarterly 53:1 (1994): 20–29.

117. Beriah Green, quoted in Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition," 39.

118. Robert Walker, Torchlights to the Cherokees (New York: MacMillan 1931), 298–99.

119. Elizur Buffer to David Green, 5 March 1845, in American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Papers.

120. Russell Thornton, The Cherokees: A Population History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 52.

121. "[T]hey told em they was hogs runnin' around already barbecued with a knife and fork in their back. Told em cotton growed so tall you had to put little chaps up the stalk to get the top bolls" (Lewis Johnson, in Works Progress Administration: Arkansas Writers Project, Slave Narratives, 100).

122. Eliza Whitmire, in The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, ed. George Rawick (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 380–81.

123. "Daniel Buttrick's Journal" (February 1838), in American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Papers.

124. Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 124.

125. Foreman, Indian Removal, 290; E. Raymond Evans, "Fort Marr Blockhouse: The Last Evidence of America's First Concentration Camps," Journal of Cherokee Studies 2:2 (1977): 256–62.

126. "Daniel Buttrick's Journal" (July 1838).

127. "Daniel Buttrick's Journal" (July 1838).

128. "Daniel Buttrick's Journal" (August 1838).

129. Wilma Mankiller and Michael Wallis, Mankiller: A Chief and Her People (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 46; Roethler, "Negro Slavery among the Cherokee Indians," 150.

130. Interview with Nathaniel Willis, Indian-Pioneer Papers, 50:117, Oklahoma Historical Society, Tulsa.

131. J. M. Gaskins, History of Black Baptists in Oklahoma (Oklahoma City: Messenger Press, 1992), 84.

132. Thornton, Population History, 89.

133. "Daniel Buttrick's Journal" (March 1838).

134. Thornton, Population History, 118.

135. Jill Watts, "'We Do Not Live for Ourselves Only': Seminole Black Perceptions and the Second Seminole War," UCLA Historical Journal 7 (1986): 5–28.1

136. Porter, Relations between Negroes and Indians, 50–51.

137. U.S. Congress, Executive documents, 25th Cong., 2d sess., 1837–1838, vol. 3, no. 78, p. 52.

138. Giddings, Exiles of Florida, 119.

139. U.S. Congress, Executive documents, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838, no. 225, p. 51.

140. *Jesup, quoted in Mulroy, Freedom on the Border, 31.*

141. *Jesup, quoted in Mulroy, Freedom on the Border, 31.*

142. *Russell Thornton, American Indian Holocaust and Survival (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 115.*

143. *Interview with Mary Hill, Indian-Pioneer Papers, 5:106–7, Oklahoma Historical Society, Tulsa.*

144. *Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 283.*

145. *Jesse Bushyhead, quoted in Foreman, Indian Removal, 310.*

~~~~~~~~

By Patrick Minges

©2026 EBSCO Industries, Inc. All rights reserved.
EBSCO | 10 Estes Street | Ipswich, MA 01938
~~~~~~~~