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**The Brief History of the Cherokee Tribe  
and its Current Issues**

**Dušan Haustein**

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**Bakalářská práce**

**The Brief History of the Cherokee Tribe  
and its Current Issues**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval(a) samostatně a použil(a) jen  
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*Plzeň, duben 2012*

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# 1 Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to describe the development of the American Indian Cherokee tribe from the historical point of view as well as comment on the contemporary state of their society and culture in the progressive environment which the United States of America truly are.

Cherokee hold rather exceptional status among other groups of Indigenous people in the United States. In the era of Indian removals, Cherokee faced the threat of possible disintegration of their traditional values with dignity and managed to assimilate themselves into the American society at an extraordinary pace. Still holding to their traditions, they transformed their own society of hunters and gatherers to a constitutional republic with strong economic background. But in the end, all these efforts failed and Cherokees were confined in governmental reservations. However, despite these changes, the Cherokee accomplished to re-build their former society and now they are the largest officially recognized group of aboriginal people in the United States.

This paper consists of two major chapters further divided into subsections.

It starts with the information on the genealogical evidence on the origin of the Indigenous people on the American continent. It describes the process of migration and very first settlement of humans in the North America, focusing on the area around the Mississippi river. Consequent history of the pre-contact era is then divided to individual archeological periods for better clarity.

Second part of the first chapter describes the events following the first contact between European explorers and settlers and Native Americans. In this part, the Cherokee tribe is gradually separated from the general course of history since its first contact with British settlers. The explanations

of the events which led to their displacement and segregation and later re-creation of their society follow subsequently.

The second chapter of the paper deals with the contemporary Cherokee culture and society in the United States. It is focused on the contemporary state of the Cherokee Nation. There are brief descriptions of their form of democratic government, traditions they still hold and festivals they observe, as well as Cherokee belief system and other activities modern Cherokees still maintain. Nevertheless, the main topic of this chapter are commentaries from a Cherokee I contacted via e-mail, because I wanted to include not only historical description but the opinions of real Cherokees as well.

Literature dealing with the history of indigenous people of the America and internet sources concerning this subject and the commentaries from a man of Cherokee origin helped me in the research for this paper. For the purposes of privacy and comprehensibility, his name was substituted by a pseudonym. Any other information is kept in its original form.

Last chapters draw a conclusion of the paper. Bibliography, list of other sources and appendices are included afterwards.

## 2 The history of the Cherokee tribe

### 2.1 First inhabitants of the American continent

According to the archeological findings and anthropological evidence the first humans migrated to the American continent around 40,000 - 16,500 years ago, following herds through the frozen Bering Strait between Siberia and Alaska which was easily accessible due to the ending of the last glacier period.

There is, however, another theory, suggesting the first people settling foot on the American continent were first seafarers. The time span of their arrival is yet to be specified but the lowered sea levels and archeological evidence are indicating it happened around 10,500 years ago. More favourable climate made it possible for people used to sail rivers to navigate along the shores of the North America from Alaska down south to Chile and Venezuela quickly.<sup>1</sup>

Still, many Native Indians do not like the idea that they came to the America and instead offering their own explanation, saying that they are the ancestors of the Siberian peoples. And that they always lived on the American continent and migration happened in the opposite direction.<sup>2</sup>

The last genetic research conducted by the team of anthropologist Theodore Shurr, Ph.D. of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with Ludmila Osipova, Ph.D. of the Institute of Cytology and Genetics in Novosibirsk is supports the theory of the migration from Siberia through Bering Strait. Their research published in the American Journal of Human Genetics indicates that the ancient ancestors of the modern Native Americans are from the Altai region in the East-Central Asia. Calculating the mutations in the DNA, Shurr's team estimated that the Altaian lineage diverged genetically from the Native American lineage 13,000 to 14,000 years ago.<sup>3</sup>



The archeological findings are another key in estimating the age of the first settlements. Here are some examples:

The Clovis culture - it is the Paleo-Indian culture characterized by 'Clovis points', projectile points manufactured from bone or ivory. The Clovis points and other tools were created, determined by radiocarbon dating, approximately 13,000 years ago and the archeological sites of the Clovis culture discovered in the 1930s are considered to be among the first archaeologically proven settlements on the American continent.<sup>4</sup>

Fell and Pali Aike caves located in the southern Patagonia, Chile. The caves contained, among other artifacts, three cremated human remains, proving the performance of funeral ceremonies and cultural development of the population. The stratigraphic dating of the sites indicate age of 8,000 to 11,000 years.<sup>5</sup>

Meadowcroft Rock Shelter in Pennsylvania. Radiocarbon dating of the site, which was left by Indians during the American War for Independence and rediscovered in 1955, indicates that the site is 16,000 to 19,000 years old and the site is the oldest known site of human habitation in the North America. The burrow contained many artifacts from the daily life of Paleo-indians, such as pieces of pottery, tools and various items of non-local origin, which proves that the inhabitants of the burrow was experienced travelers and traders.<sup>6</sup>

## **2.2 Civilizations of the pre-contact era around Mississippi river and Great Lakes**

The first civilizations began forming approximately around the year of 5,000 BCE. Thanks to the stabilization of the climate around 8,000 BCE, the hunters-gatherers started cultivating the land, domesticating various species of plants and creating advanced tools and weapons. The more acceptable living conditions led to massive migration and population quickly

spread around Northern America. The pre-contact, or pre-Columbian era, is divided into four time-frames: the Archaic Period, the Early Woodland Period, the Middle Woodland Period, the Late Woodland Period and the Mississippian culture.<sup>7</sup>

### **2.2.1 The Archaic Period (8,000 - 2,000 BCE)**

In this period the former hunters-gatherers began forming more organized societies, which were able to build more complex structures such as earthworks and mounds. They also began exploiting broader variety of natural resources, for example oysters. Which they gathered not only for food, but also as a resource for creating accessories. One of the most notable archeological sites from this period is the Poverty Point located on the Mississippi river plain in Louisiana.<sup>8;9</sup>

In the time span of 1,650 - 700 BCE the population located along the Mississippi river periodically created town of large number of mounds and other earthworks. The core of the site covers the area around 2 km<sup>2</sup> with additional occupation area covering almost 5 km along the river. The entire site is constructed as a semicircle in the shape of a falcon.

It presents significant evidence of the advancement of its inhabitants who were building the town over a period of centuries. The oldest part of the site is the Lower Jackson Mound and is significantly older than the rest of the earthworks. The radiocarbon dating indicates that the majority of the buildings were built in the time span of 1600 and 1300 BCE by generations living in the vicinity of the site.

The main building material was loess, which was easy to dig but vulnerable to rain. In order to protect them, the builders covered them with clay. The exact purpose of the Poverty Point is unknown but archeologists agree on concept that the site was used as a meeting point and as a trade market and also as a place of religious and astronomical significance. The Poverty Point people were experienced traders, exporting stone and clay

items along the river on the dugout canoe, and importing copper from Great Lakes, flint from Ohio valley, Ozarks and Tennessee and galena from upper Mississippi.<sup>10;11</sup>

### **2.2.2 The Early Woodland Period (1,000 - 1 BCE)**

The Early Woodland Period is marked by the more broad spread of pottery making and later by establishing more permanent settlements, performance of elaborate burial practices and cultivating and gathering of various types of seeds. The most well-known culture of this period is Adena culture, which was a large group of societies sharing a common burial and ceremonial system.<sup>12</sup>

The Native Americans of the Adena culture lived all across the western part of the North America. Archeological sites of their settlements are located for example in Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia, Kentucky, parts of Pennsylvania and New York. From which the burial mounds in central Ohio valley are the best-known ones. Approximately 300 burial mounds are located on a very small area closely together. The people of the Adena culture were cultivating the land and created extensive trading network.<sup>13;14</sup>

Besides building the mounds, the Adena people were skillful artists. Among the discovered artifacts, there were many pieces of art depicting shamanic rituals, mostly transformation of humans into animals and back. Deer antlers, wolf and mountain lion jawbones and other objects were fashioned into accessories and clothes.<sup>15</sup>

### **2.2.3 The Middle Woodland Period (1 - 500 CE)**

This period is determined by quick growth and spread of trade networks as the larger population increased the demand for exotic goods. Also the burial ceremonies became more elaborate and graves from this period contain mortuary gifts, often of non-local origin. Although the people

of this period cremated their deceased and proper burial was reserved only for those of higher social status. As the population covered the area that makes most of the Eastern United States nowadays, they share common traits. This sphere of mutual influence among the tribes is known as the Hopewell tradition.<sup>16</sup>

Hopewell tradition is a term coined by an American archeologist Warren King Moorehead who was inspired by the name of Hopewell Mounds in Ohio. Hopewellian people inherited their politics system from the Adena culture and improved it. They also expanded their trade routes which allowed them to trade on great distances and include many exotic materials in their artworks, such as shells from the Gulf of Mexico, copper from the Great Lakes region, and obsidian from the Rocky Mountains.

The Hopewell people lived in small villages scattered throughout the river valleys of southern Ohio where they grew a variety of crops, such as sunflower other plants. They also gathered wild plants, hunted for large and small game and fished. Hopewell artisans were masters at carving in stone and bone. Hopewellians were creating jewelry from copper and even silver.

Not only they used exotic materials, they also built much greater architectural monuments. Their earthworks were often built in geometric shapes and of great size. The largest ones, the Newark Earthworks in Ohio, covered more than 12,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The most notable part of the earthworks is the 360 m wide Newark Great Circle, the largest circular earthwork in the Americas. These earthworks not only served as the place of meetings and honouring their dead, many of them also functioned as astronomical observatories.<sup>17</sup>

Tribes had leaders but they held no great power and could not command armies, for example. Villages were directed by certain family, which held special privileges. These leaders acquired their position thanks

to their ability to persuade others in matters of religion and trade. Men of such status later became foundation for chieftains.<sup>18;19</sup>

#### **2.2.4 The Late Woodland Period (500 - 1000 CE)**

In this period the population spread was even bigger than in previous period although the size of the population remained the same. The use of arrow and bow replaced the use of spear. Tribes began cultivating more plants, such as maize and beans. The more scatter population led to bigger isolation, which caused the individual clans to be more distinct in their culture.

#### **2.2.5 The Mississippian Culture (1000 - 1500 CE)**

Succeeding the previous Woodland Period, people of the Mississippian culture settled on the banks of Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Mississippians shared almost all cultural traits but they heavily developed and expanded them. The society shifted to be more centralized and more socially stratified, which led to the creation of chiefdoms and also social inequality. Power and leadership were in hand of the elite, usually small group or family. Their position was founded not on military power or wealth but on religious ideology. Leaders were deemed to be descendants of gods and held in honour as such, often exempt from day-to-day labour and having larger houses.<sup>20</sup>

Agriculture became more advanced and maize was grown on large-scale. Thanks to the possibility to sustain more people on one place the craftsmanship flourished. Among the archeological artifacts from this era there are detailed pottery, which incorporated stone, clam shells and even copper. Although they managed to work metals by cold-hammering it into thin sheets, they did not smelt and did not develop advanced form of metallurgy.

Mississippians were also skilled builders. Their earthworks are the largest and most elaborate known to the North America. Most of their towns featured mounds made from local soil. The mounds were of various shapes, often rectangular or oval with flat top. They were used as place for buildings and social activities and as cemeteries. However, only the chiefs had the right to be buried under within mounds.

Mississippians lived in small villages or hamlets and only major sites had more people. Probably the most notable city of the Mississippian culture is the city of Cahokia in Illinois.<sup>21</sup>

Cahokia and its mounds is the largest archeological site related with Mississippian culture. The site covers the area of approximately 9 km<sup>2</sup> and contained 120 mounds. The largest mound at the site is Monks Mound. It's 30 meters tall and it's the largest man-made mound north of Mexico.

On the top of the mound, there was a large building, probably a temple or a residence of the chief of the city. The site was also designated as a World Heritage Site in 1982.

Settled around 600 CE, the town of Cahokia was very large urban market with population about 10,000 to 30,000 people living in more than 500 thatched houses. It was the largest settlement in the North America, surpassed by New York and Philadelphia not until the 18th century.

The city functioned as a large trade center and Cahokians accumulated broad variety of goods. Shells from the Atlantic Ocean, copper from Lake Superior or obsidian from Rocky Mountains. The purpose of the city was not just the trade. Archeologists also discovered remains of circle of wooden posts, which were used for astronomical sightings and this Woodhenge (named similarly as the famous Stonehenge) played big role in timing of the agricultural cycles.

South of the Monks Mound is a large open space, the central plaza of the city. The 50 ha Great Plaza was used as a place for large gatherings and ceremonies. Besides the Grand Plaza, there were three more, smaller

plazas. All are in other cardinal directions to the Monks Mound. The Great Plaza and the Monks Mound was separated with the rest of the city by wooden stockade with a series of wooden towers. Archeological findings suggest the place was rebuild many times. It served as a separation of the area where ceremonies took place, as well as defensive structure. In the beginning 14th century, the city was abandoned.<sup>22;23;24</sup>

### **2.2.6 The end of the Mississippian period**

The 15th century meant decline in the Mississippians societies, even before the first contact with Europeans. The cause is still under discussion but there are two most probable causes. The city exhausted its resources and starting climate change drove its inhabitants out of the Cahokia city or the city was attacked by outsiders which led to the political collapse of the city's stratified society and subsequently to its abandonment. Although the city was short-lived, the cultural impact of the change was very big. At the beginning of the 16th century the people of the Mississippian culture were scattered over the large area of the United States and their civilization almost non-existent.<sup>25;26</sup>

## **2.3 Contact with Europeans**

### **2.3.1 With Spaniards**

The very first 16th century Europeans who encountered the inhabitants of the North America were Spaniards. The Spanish monarchy considered the New World a place very suitable for their imperialist ambitions. They believed they have divine right to control the Indians and possibly to convert them to Christianity. The Requerimiento, which was a written declaration of supreme authority over the Americas and which each conquistador had to present to every tribe he encountered, allowed the Spaniards to justify their conquest. The document was often read aloud

to the Indians who, of course, did not understand Spanish, to abandoned villages or even from the ship when the conquistadors spotted the coast. The Requerimiento was abolished by the monarchy in 1556.<sup>27</sup>

Inspired by the wealth the conquest in the Southern America brought, the Spanish conquistadors turned to the Northern America. Juan Ponce de Leon was sailing the coasts of Florida, which he named, with his three ships in 1513. He believed he discovered another Caribbean island and named it La Florida in recognition of the Spanish Festival of Flowers or Pascua Florida, the holiday which was taking place at the time. De Leon died after being poisoned by an arrow in an attack by Calusa Indians when he was trying to settle the area around the Charlotte Harbor Estuary in Florida in 1521.<sup>28</sup>

Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon, an academic and former sugar planter on Hispaniola, was looking for a suitable site for a colony along the shores of today's South Carolina. His group finally settled on the coast of Georgia in 1526, creating his first, but short-lived, colony named San Miguel de Guadalupe.

His second voyage went to the estuary outlet of the Delaware River at the borders of today's states of New Jersey and Delaware. Arguably, it was the first colony which used African slaves as workers. Enduring diseases, hunger and attacking Indians the colony stood for three months. De Ayllon died in the colony in 1526. From 600 people he brought with him only 150 survived and returned to Hispaniola. His expeditions are notable for bringing kidnapped natives back to Spain.<sup>29</sup>

One of the Indians was later baptized and named Francisco de Chicora. He learned Spanish and begun working for de Ayllon who later brought him to Spain. Here de Chicora met the chronicler Peter Martyr who recorded his stories about his people, put them together with information from other explorers and finally published the book named Testimony of



Francisco de Chicora in 1525. When de Ayllon returned to America leading another expedition, de Chicora escaped and returned to his people.<sup>30</sup>

Explorer and conquistador Juan Pardo who led expedition through South and North Carolina and Tennessee was first to establish the first European settlement in the North America, the Fort San Felipe and nearby village Santa Elena in South Carolina in 1566 and later the Fort San Juan at Mississippian culture settlement of Juara in North Carolina in 1567. The Fort San Juan did not last long. After a year, the settlement of Juan Pardo was attacked by native tribe and was destroyed as well as his other forts. Of the 120 people stationed at the forts only one survived.<sup>31</sup>

All of the conquistadors above did not let their expeditions deeper inland. That changed with the conquistador named Hernando de Soto who was the first European leading expedition deeper into territory of today's United States and first who crossed the Mississippi river. He gained fame fighting alongside Francisco Pizzaro in his conquest of Peru. De Soto then returned to Spain but did not stay long.<sup>32</sup>

Inspired by other expeditions, he gathered around 700 Spanish and Portugal volunteers and sailed to North America to begin his four-year expedition. He landed on the shores of Florida, not far from the place of today's city of Bradenton, in 1539. The expedition traveled north, using guides recruited from Mocoso tribe. They survived their first winter at Anhaica, the Indian capital town of Apalachee tribe.

Then they headed north-east through territory of modern Georgia and north to Appalachian Mountains where his men searched for gold. They entered Tennessee and spend some time at the Coosa chiefdom. The expedition was ambushed near the Mobilian city of Mauvila. The Spaniards fought their way out and subsequently burn down the city in retaliation. 220 of de Soto's men died and the expedition lost most of its equipment and horses.

After spending the winter in Mississippi de Soto tried to reinforce his expedition and demanded 200 men from nearby Chickasaw tribe. The Indians refused and attacked the expedition at night instead. De Soto lost 40 men and rest of the equipment. In 1541 the expedition reached the Mississippi river which they crossed a month later. They continued through Arkansas and were the first Europeans to see the natural hot spring waters near today's Hot Springs, Arkansas.

After the winter, they went further east where they encountered warriors of the Tula tribe. In their journals, they referred to them as the fiercest warriors they encountered. They turned around and got back to the Mississippi river where Hernando de Soto died of tropical fever in 1542.<sup>33</sup>

The remains of the expedition then hastily built ships and went to Mexico City while being attacked by Indians which territories they went through. From the original 700 men de Soto had only around 300 survived the entire expedition.

The expedition had a significant impact on indigenous people it encountered. Spaniards brought diseases such as measles or smallpox which killed Indians by hundreds because they did not have the needed immunity the Spaniards had. Most of the chiefdoms de Soto's expedition encountered disappeared or broke apart. Additionally, some of the animals de Soto brought along escaped and become wild, such as the pigs which became wild boars, contributing to the Columbian Exchange.<sup>34;35;36</sup>

### **2.3.2 With French**

The Indians of the North-east America met the French, who were seeking route to China at the time, for the first time at the end of 15th century. It was an Italian-born sailor named Giovanni da Verrazzano who convinced the French king of the importance to find a way to the Pacific Ocean. He explored the Carolinas and was the first European to see the site of present-day New York. Da Verrazzano named the newly discovered

land Nouvelle-France, the New France. This voyage convinced the French king to establish a colony in the New World.<sup>37;38</sup>

French explorer Jacques Cartier was commissioned by the French king to sail to the North America and try to find a passage to the Pacific Ocean. In the 10 May 1534 he reached the shores of Newfoundland and explored the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He encountered several tribes, Iroquoian mostly, and returned to France in September.

On his second voyage the next year, he went up the St. Lawrence river and visited the Iroquoian capital city of Stadacona, which was in the area of today's Quebec city. He continued up the river and reached another, much larger, Iroquoian village named Hochelaga, today's Montreal. He was stopped by river's rapids and after few days he set sail back to the Gulf of St. Lawrence where he and his crew survived the winter. He then returned to France in spring in 1536.

In 1540 Cartier made his third voyage. His goal now was to establish an settlement in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and find mythical Kingdom of Saguenay and its riches. After reaching the shores of North America, he finally settled on Cap-Rouge, in the area of the today's central Quebec. Cartier tried to find the Saguenay but bad weather and river's rapid prevented him sailing up to the Ottawa river. Upon his return to the fort he established he found the crew was attacked by the Iroquoians, who managed to kill around 30 settlers. He left to France in summer of 1542 and never returned to Canada again. His settlement Cap-Rouge did not manage to survive harsh weather and hostile natives and was abandoned in 1543.<sup>39;40</sup>

Another French explorer and sailor, Samuel de Champlain, begun exploring the North America in the beginning of the 17th century. He was born to family with maritime tradition and de Champlain went to the New World in his early life. He sailed Caribbean with his uncle and after his uncle died he inherited his estate and his ship. From 1601 to 1603 he served as

a geographer for King Henry and at his numerous visits of French ports he learned a lot about the New World.<sup>41</sup>

For the first time, he sailed to the North America as a fur-trade observer. He created a map of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He joined a second expedition in 1604 and while exploring the Bay of Fundy he found a suitable site for his crew's winter settlement named Port Royal. De Champlaine used this fort as a base for his exploratory voyages until the end of 1607.

In the 1608, after sailing up the Saguenay river, his crew finally settled. They named the site Quebec and it was the foundation for today's Quebec city.

In his pursuit of better relations with natives, he agreed to help them against the Iroquoians. On his way south, he explored Richelieu river and was the first European who mapped the Lake Champlain. He sailed the Ottawa river and reached the Hudson Bay and later Lake Nipissing.

In his later life, Champlain was more focused on administration of his colony than exploration and he successfully led the through the war between France and England. Eventually, Quebec was taken by British and was given to France not until the 1632 when Champlain returned to his role of the commander of the New France. He died of stroke in fall of 1635.<sup>42</sup>

The French basically introduced the modern weaponry to the Indians. Traded for furs, the guns were quickly spread among the tribes which learnt quickly how to use them. Natives hastily transformed the way of fighting against each other or against Europeans, often using guerrilla tactics with great effect.<sup>43;44;45</sup>

### **2.3.3 With British**

British started exploring North America relatively late, despite the expedition of an Italian explorer John Cabot in the end of 15th century.

They did not come to the North America until the very beginning of the 17th century. Their goal was similar to the previously mentioned empires. British monarchy wanted to secure its own fur market and compete for colonies with French at the same time. Thus founding new colonies and overall governance was carried out by English joint stock trade companies like Virginia or Hudson's Bay companies.

In 1606 the expedition led by captain Christopher Newport, hired by Virginia company in London, set sail to the New World, eventually making their landfall in 1607 at the shore of today's Virginia, near the Chesapeake Bay. They named the river they found James River in honour of the English king and settled one of the river's islands.

The fortified settlement of Jamestown was founded in April 1607 and John Smith was named as one of the leaders of the colony. It was the first permanent British colony in the North America. The location of the fort, an island further away from Virginian Indian tribes surrounded by deep water, was a very good strategic point. However, the life in the fort proved to be troublesome.

The expedition was comprised mainly from soldiers and not farmers. The island itself was insufficiently suitable for agriculture, full of swarms of mosquitoes infecting colonists with malaria and water in the river not suitable for drinking. The Indians overlooked the island for these very reasons.<sup>46</sup>

During the period of 1607 - 1610 only 61 of the original 500 colonists survived before the colony was resupplied by captain Thomas West. In addition, a conflict with natives arose. There were probably around 11,000 natives, members of the Powhatan Confederacy led by chief Wahunsenacawh, in the vicinity of the forts. Starving British begun seizing food from nearby villages more and more which led to a war.

The war ended in 1614 after the colonists captured the daughter of the Powhatan chief named Matoaka, or Pocahontas. She was not unknown

to the British at that time thanks to her relations with John Smith whom she likely saved from execution after he was captured by Indians in 1607.

Pocahontas married a tobacco grower John Rolfe thus sealing the peace. In 1616 the first representative House of Burgesses assembly was held in Jamestown's church and which later became Virginia General Assembly. Land was distributed and colony was divided into four districts.

After the animosity between British settlers and Indians escalated to a critical point in 1622 groups of Powhatans led by Chief Opchanacanough attacked plantations and nearby settlements surrounding the Jamestown. Nearly third of the colony was killed in the attack. British retaliated by annual summer marches to destroy Powhatan villages until the peace treaty was signed in 1632.

The peace did not last long. Another war begun in 1644 as a last effort of remnants of the Powhatan Confederacy to force the British colonists to leave the area. Powhatans killed around 500 colonists in a major attack. In subsequent British marches of retaliation, the Chief Powhatan was captured and killed which resulted in disintegration of the Powhatan Confederacy.

Several peace treaties were signed, Powhatans became subjects to British monarchy and were confined to reservations.<sup>47;48;49</sup>

Another notable British colony is the Plymouth colony which was established by religious separatists, who later became known as the Pilgrims, in 1620 in the Cape Cod Bay, on the coast of Massachusetts which was explored by John Smith.

Pilgrims arrived to the area which was sparsely inhabited by natives. Prior to their landing, the entire coast was depopulated by an epidemic of leptospirosis.<sup>50</sup>

Fewer than half of the Pilgrims survived the winter but thanks to the help of Patuxet Indian Squanto, who had returned to Massachusetts from

England and taught the colonists how to grow corn and where to fish, they managed to survive.<sup>51</sup>

In 1621, the settlers established a treaty of peace with the Wampanoag chief Massasoit and held a feast with him celebrating the harvest. Also thanks to Squanto, who acted as an interpreter. Ships arrived during the period between 1622 and 1640 bringing new settlers as well as cattle and other supplies. It is estimated that in 1678 the entire European-origin population in New England was around 60,000.<sup>52;53</sup>

The British colonies covered the largest area from the all three empires mentioned above, though they came to New World as the last ones. Their colonies grown up to almost covering the entire north of the North America. British Empire already had an experience with maintaining colonies, mainly with managing natives. This played major role in relations between Indians and Europeans over the later course of the history.

## **2.4 The 17th century, the first contact with Cherokees**

It was in the Virginia where the first Europeans made contact with Cherokees for the first time. In the 1654, when English defeated the Powhatan confederacy, a Cherokee tribe settled in the now abandoned Powhatan town. But they left it soon after British colonists attacked them as well.<sup>54;55</sup>

20 years later the traders from Jamestown and Charles Town were regularly trading guns, iron tools and even alcohol for deerskin with the Cherokee. At the beginning of the 18th century the trade relations became even stronger as the Europeans traders built warehouses in the Cherokee territory and started to live there year-round.<sup>56</sup>

Cherokee gradually became dependent on those goods due to the necessity to compete with other tribes. They slowly abandoned their own crafts. The higher demand for deerskin and higher prices on Europeans

goods drove the otherwise natural balance seeking Indians to over-hunt the big game in the area.<sup>57;58</sup>

In addition to deerskin, traders also bought war captives from other tribes whom then sold as slaves. This increased the desire for war as taking prisoners was now considered to be quite profitable. The class of warriors achieved new and more honourable status in the society which brought to their hands bigger political power.<sup>59</sup>

## **2.5 The 18th century**

Above-mentioned political power became stronger when Europeans started enlisting Cherokee warriors into their own armies. Chickasaw and Cherokee allied with British against French allied with Choctaw and Iroquois who started repeatedly attacking Cherokee villages.<sup>60</sup>

The alliance between Cherokee and British was strengthened by a war on Tuscarora people starting in 1711. Repeated kidnappings by European slavers, diseases and overall loss of land drove the chiefs of Tuscarora tribes in the North Carolina to join forces and attack the settlers in the area. Working together with other minor tribes they began harassing the planters on the Roanoke, Trent and Neuse Rivers. Hundreds of settlers were killed in the initial attacks and militia was called into action.<sup>61</sup>

The Tuscarora was shortly after defeated. They lost their land, one of the chiefs was executed and majority of the tribe escaped before the settler to the area of New York. Remaining Tuscarora signed a peace treaty in 1715. It granted them a short strip of land on the Roanoke River where they were deported. It was probably the first time when so many southeastern Indians fought together for so long.<sup>62</sup>

As a result, the Cherokee became more integrated with other Indians and trade and communication networks were greatly improved. This altogether created a strong bond between Europeans and Cherokee which



remained strong until the end of the 18th century. Cherokee military gained significant strength at this time and the Cherokee became a major regional power and the Cherokee went from conflict to conflict.<sup>63</sup>

In 1715 they participated in a war against British colonies alongside other tribes in the area, like Chickasaw, Shawnee or Creeks, Cherokee tribes were divided on what side to fight at first but in the early of 1716 the Cherokee sided with Europeans.

The conflict destabilized the entire region, many Europeans traders were killed and settlers even left the frontier to Charles Town. Despite large casualties the colonists retaliated successfully and were progressively defeating the attackers. The war ended with the defeat of the Creeks in the 1717.<sup>64</sup>

The political influence of the Cherokee was strengthened when Amo-adawehi, who they chosen as their leader at that time, visited the King of the Great Britain George II. and additionally signed the Treaty of Whitehall. The aim of the treaty was to ensure that in case of a war between French and British empire, the conflict would not spread to their colonies and the settlers would not aid Indians in their own conflicts. However, the treaty was not powerful enough to stop British colonies, whose allies were Cherokee, and French colonies to go to war with each other when the Seven Years' war broke out in Europe.

In the 1738 the smallpox epidemic broke out and nearly half of the Cherokee population, having no natural resistance to the disease, died. This greatly added to their inner political instability because the individual Cherokee tribes were not overall united and each tribe had their own form of government.<sup>65</sup>

The spreading settlers and overall loss of land after the Revolution provoked the Cherokee to another attack in the 1769 and a number of subsequent conflicts followed.

The series of conflicts is known as the Chickamauga wars, or the Second Cherokee war. The leader of the young warriors Chincanacina, or Dragging Canoe, was helping the British with their fight against American militia, hoping he will stop the occupation of the Cherokee land. Americans launched various expeditions to the Cherokee territory and destroyed everything what was in their way. The Chiefs begun negotiating peace in the 1777.<sup>66</sup>

The end of the Revolution meant an immense land loss for the Cherokee and big casualties as well. They lost nearly 20,225 km<sup>2</sup> of their former territory and their population decreased to approximately 10,000 people.<sup>67</sup>

## **2.6 The 19th century, the Removal Era**

The time after the Revolution was a time of great economic depression for the Cherokees. Almost all of the fields were razed and population suffered diseases. Cherokee recognized that in order to survive they need to change the way their society works, adopting many way of life of white Americans.

The U.S. Government supported the change because it needed the tribes to abandon warfare as the United States could not afford another war with Indians and also wanted to secure the land it got from the British empire.

The government begun issuing new rules on the trade with Indians and regulating the frontier. Only traders with a license could trade with Indians and all transfer of the land was managed by the congress. The War Department assumed responsibility for Indian affairs and all land east of Mississippi river was claimed in the name of conquest.

But the honour among the freshly elected official of the young government and overall weak military power of the US, proved to be an

advantage for the Indians. They were treated humanly and there always was a space for negotiations. Though, many tribes were displaced by squatters who do not obliged the federal laws.<sup>68;69</sup>

The Cherokee had to adopt civilized style of life. For the government civilized meant a broad set of traits. Civilized society had to be of Christian faith and also to speak and write in English language. Such society also had to use European style of agriculture, thus fencing their fields, using steel tools and even using African slaves.

They also had to govern themselves with written laws. For example, in 1808, for the purpose of property laws strengthening, the Cherokee Nation government created an official police force - the Lighthorse Guard.

These and many other traits should have ensure the security and peaceful assimilation of Indians they adopted them. In order to secure the change to more civilized society, U.S. Government was sending agents to the Indian tribes. One of the most successful agents was Return Jonathan Meigs, former lieutenant colonel of the Revolutionary War, who lived with the Cherokee in today's Kingston, Tennessee in the years of 1801 - 1823. He managed the distribution of plows and looms and invited craftsmen to set up their shops in the Cherokee country. He and his colleagues also supervised the trade and were trying to discourage the Indians from hunting for deerskin and persuade them to cede the hunting grounds in order to lower the threat to colonists by Cherokee wielding any weapons.

Besides federal agents there were also a great number of missionaries who were trying to help the Cherokee to assimilate. This Moravian missionaries not only taught the Indians about the Bible, they also established a mission outpost and more importantly, a first school. Boarding school played an important role in the assimilation of the Cherokee society.

The children were easier to influence and they did not see their parents too often, so they quickly lost their connection to Cherokee

traditions. They learned English, math, geography and other subjects. Boys were taught to look after crops and girls to look after house. Young Cherokees also had to give up their Indian name and adopt an English one.

The Cherokee Nation also bought a printing press and around the year 1809 the Cherokee got their very own alphabet. Around the year of 1809, Sequoyah, a Cherokee silversmith, developed the first version of the Cherokee phonetic alphabet consisting of 86 symbols. At first, Cherokee were reluctant to adopt the alphabet but Sequoyah successfully convinced them and later in 1828, the first Cherokee newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, begun publication.

Before the 1817 the Cherokee Nation government consisted of a number of small town councils, which worked on a local level but can hardly protect the land from the pressure of the white man. Due to the need for a strong and unified central government, the Cherokee nation was divided to 8 electoral districts and each sent its representatives to the national council. In the 1822, a supreme court was established. And in the 1827, the Cherokee Nation wrote a constitution, based on the constitution of the United States.

Based on the constitution, the government grew to two houses, the Nation Council with 32 members and the National Committee with 13 members. Both houses were elected directly. The constitution also defined the geographical boundaries of the Cherokee Nation.<sup>70</sup>

Unfortunately, the creation of the Cherokee constitution and its part defining the borders of the Cherokee Nation collided with the constitution of the United States and with intentions of its government. The Cherokee now formally claimed the disputed land and give the United States the pretext for their later removal.<sup>71</sup>

In 1827, the gold was discovered in the Cherokee nation and great number of prospectors moved into the area. It was the first gold rush in the history of the U.S. Being given the permission of the United

States government, the state of Georgia begun harassing the Cherokee government, intimidating them by absurd laws in order to destabilize the Cherokee social life.

Georgia banned council meetings and later court hearing and in 1830, the Georgia Guard police force was created and later confiscated the property, including the printing press, of the Principal Chief John Ross and arrested him.

In May 1830 the American Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. This allowed the U.S. government to once again negotiate the treaties of removal. Squatters started to move to the territory of the Cherokee Nation. John Ross and other Cherokees leaders decided to take whole issue to the court. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Cherokee Nation is not a sovereign and independent and has no right to be heard at the court.

In another suit in 1832, the Supreme Court ruled favorably for the Cherokee. It ruled that the neighboring state of Georgia can not impose its laws on the Cherokee Nation. Unfortunately for the Cherokee, Georgia did not obliged with the ruling and president Jackson did little do enforce it.

Majority of Cherokees supported John Ross in his stance against the removal. However, there was a group which was willing to negotiate the removal. Led by the editor of the Cherokee Phoenix Elias Boudinot, the Treaty Party met the U.S. treaty commissioners and signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835. Under the terms of the treaty, the Cherokee Nation was expected to cede all its territory and move west to the area of today's northeastern Oklahoma, in return for \$5.5 million dollars.<sup>72</sup>

Almost entire population of the Cherokee Nation signed a petition against the treaty. Despite the opposition, the U.S. congress ratified the treaty in 1836 and Cherokees were given two years to leave.<sup>73;74</sup>

In 1836, 7,000 federal soldiers entered the Cherokee territory and on behalf of the treaty begun forcing the remaining Cherokees out. They were taken from their homes and gathered in internment camps in Georgia and

other neighboring states. In the winter of 1838-39, the Cherokee marched west.

The almost 3,500 km march begun in Tennessee and went through Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri. Cherokees had to endure the most cruel treatment from the supervising soldiers, locals or harsh weather. Approximately half of the Cherokee died during the relocation.

The whole event was later known as the Trail of Tears. In 2008, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution which offered an official apology to the American Indians for these historic events.<sup>75;76;77</sup>

The Cherokee was relocated to an area already occupied by a group of Cherokees, who settled there in the beginning of the 19th century. Now all the groups, the Old Settlers, Treaty Party and the National Party lived closely together. Due to this, many disputes started emerging. Old Settlers were apprehensive with the large group of emigrants. And there was a great animosity between members of the Treaty Party and National Party because of the Treaty of New Echota.

This political turmoil resulted in the assassination of John and Major Ridge and Elias Boudinot in the summer of 1839. Facing possible civil war, the Old Settlers and National Party wrote a new constitution. John Ross was recognized as the new principal chief. Still, U.S. Government dealt with the three Cherokee groups individually which strengthened their enmity to each other and later a civil war started. Seven years long series of conflicts ended in 1846 when John Ross and leaders of other Cherokee groups signed a peace treaty, creating unified Cherokee Nation.<sup>78</sup>

The conflict over slavery and the beginning of the American Civil War divided the Cherokee Nation to whom to join in the conflict. The constitution allowed the institution of slavery but holding slaves was considered to be bad American custom by many Cherokees. Yet the southern location of the Cherokee Nation and official stance to slavery connected them with the

separatists in the south. Still, many Cherokee favored the idea of staying neutral.

In 1861 neighboring tribes joined the Confederacy and in the same year, due to the fear of splitting the Cherokee Nation again in case it remains neutral, John Ross agreed to ally the Confederation. But the different opinions on the war dragged the Cherokee Nation to their own civil war.

At the end of the Civil War, the Cherokee nation was considered to be a part of the Confederation and treated as such. Despite the efforts of John Ross who tried to convince the U.S. government otherwise. But the Cherokee preserved their territory, signing a treaty emancipating slaves and giving neutral land to the United States in 1865.<sup>79</sup>

In 1887, the General Allotment Act abolished reservations and allotted land to individual Cherokees households which brought them under the federal jurisdiction and shifted them into the mainstream society. The debt from the Civil War force the Cherokee Nation to sell the land.

The Curtis Act of 1898 allowed the tenure on the Cherokee land. All this led to the transformation of the territory to the new Union state of Oklahoma, which the Cherokee and other tribes in the area opposed. They drafted a new constitution proposing the creation of the Indian Nation called Sequoyah but Congress rejected it.

In 1907, the tribal governments were dissolved and state of Oklahoma was established with merging the Oklahoma and Indian territories together. The Cherokees, once having their own nation, were now a minority.<sup>80;81</sup>

## **2.7 The 20th century**

Cherokees, now minority in the states of Oklahoma and North Carolina, became diverse in their reaction to the assimilation. Some of

them embrace the change and became businessmen, conservative groups tried to stay faithful to old traditions as much as possible. Most of the Cherokees, however, were somewhere in between.

While still holding their traditions in regard they participated politics. Cherokees often were victims of various fraudsters who disguised as guardians of the Cherokee persuaded the owners to sell them their land. Even after the 1924, when Congress gave citizenship to all Native Indians, Cherokees faced discrimination and only few of them could vote before the World War 2.

The economic reform program New Deal created by the president Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 brought to the unemployed Cherokees a set of relieve programs and the post of Commissioner of Indian Affairs was created. This new office admitted that the allotment was a failure. Process of allotment was terminated and Indians were allowed to have their own governments.

In 1936 the Indian Welfare Act was passed in Oklahoma which gave the Indians the right to write their own constitution and make loans for their economic projects. Thanks to this legislation, Indian tribes received back the land they lost in the allotment program and their education and culture preservation developed much further and deeper.<sup>82;83</sup>

The era of the World War 2 was an end to these efforts as the United States shifted its focus on fighting the nations of the Axis. Approximately 25,000 Indians served in the U.S. Army during the war of which about 1,000 were Cherokees.<sup>84</sup>

For many, it was the first time they encountered world outside their communities. In 1950s many Cherokees left their communities and begun living in urban centers all across the United States and went to various job training programs. The economic situation of the Cherokees in Oklahoma and North Carolina started to improve.



In 1971, Cherokees voted for the first time for their principal chief in Oklahoma and in 1976 they created a new constitution.

The income from tourism could not cover the expenses of the Cherokee Nation, though. And so in 1980s the group of Cherokee businessmen built the first bingo parlor. Because the territory of the Cherokee Nation was not a subject to the federal laws prohibiting gambling, the casinos proved to be very lucrative yet controversial source of money. At the end of 2003, the Cherokee Nation had four large gaming facilities.

The income is used to fund education, health care or housing. Gaming was no the only source of wealth the Cherokee carried out. They also established the Cherokee Nation Industries which later became a defense contractor for the U.S. Army and NASA. The Cherokee Nation is now the largest federally recognized tribe in the United States with almost 300,000 members.<sup>85;86</sup>

### **3 The Principal People**

The Cherokees are a group of American Indigenous people originally living in the area of the Southern Appalachians. They belong to the Iroquoian linguistic family, most probably migrating south from the are of Great Lakes where most of the Iroquoian tribes lived. The Cherokees called themselves the Ani-Yun-Wiya, which in Tsa-la-gi means the people, the real people, or the principal people, which is the most widely accepted translation.<sup>87</sup>

They settled the riverbanks in today's North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee and cultivated the fertile land near them. Usual Cherokee village had around 50 houses and consisted of two main parts. The center of a village was a council house, usually sitting on top of a mound, and a nearby plaza. It should be noted that Cherokee themselves did not build these earthen mounds but instead used the mounds built

by the people of the Mississippian culture. This was the place for social gatherings, ceremonies and political discussion.

The second part of a typical Cherokee village consisted of a number of private multiple-generation square or rectangular houses arranged around the central plaza. Because the houses had to accommodate a large family, they were quite big and also incorporated separated storage room and in small garden for herbs. But this was not the only house a Cherokee family had. These large houses made from wood and mud served as a home only in Summer. In winter, some Cherokees moved to a smaller house called asi. Asi house was much smaller, rectangular hut made of mud and interwoven saplings, partially sunken in the ground. Because of the size, the house was easier to be kept warm.<sup>88</sup>

The main source of food were the corn and bean field the villagers shared and cultivated together. Cherokee men helped with the fields but the main responsibility lies on women. They looked after the crops, drove off the small animals trying to ate the plants, task often performed by older women who did not have the strength to attend the field anymore. Women took their children to the field too. The older ones helped with the work, younger infants were left in the shade nearby in their close-fitting cradles. Cherokee parents never hit or otherwise punished their children, apart from lightly scratching them with thorns. Misbehaving children were often laughed upon and teased.<sup>89</sup>

The Cherokee women performed, apart from attending the fields, any other household chores, such as the cooking. However, Cherokees did not have regular meals, they ate when they were hungry. Obviously, the widely used ingredient in their meals was corn. It was left to dry in the field, soaked in the water with wood ashes and ground in mortars. The cornmeal was then used to bake bread and leftover corn chunks were used in soups.

Women also had the task of decorating their houses. The usual furniture often comprised of wooden benches and chairs and woven

baskets. Women also made all the pottery. They used the native clay they found around their villages. Then, they rolled together ropes of clay to create the rough base, which was then smoothed with stone. Pots were put in a fire to harden.<sup>90</sup>

Cherokee clothing was rather spartan. Children often wore nothing at all. And women and men wore a simple skirt, in winter complemented with moccasins and cloak. But all Cherokees were very fond of jewelry, often wearing necklaces made from bone, clam shells or copper.

The role of Cherokee man was different. When women looked after the house and children, men went hunting. Deer and turkey were the common wild game which was hunted and Cherokee hunters often were out of a village for several months. Deer was valued for the meat, skin and bones, bear for its fur and grease and turkey for its feathers, often used in Cherokee ceremonial dances and clothing. Hunters used the bow and arrows with their points made from chipped stone. Blowgun and darts were also used and aspiring hunter had to prove his skill with the blowgun before he was allowed to use the bow. Fish was another animal Cherokee hunted. not only they used hooks and traps to catch a fish but they sometimes built a dam across the river and poisoned the water with ground chestnut. This paralyzed the fish and hunters simply picked them up when they were floating on the surface.

When men were not hunting, they played games to stay fit for the next hunt. They held matches in archery or played stickball, Cherokee analogue for Lacrosse. Stickball is a game played by two teams who tries to get a deerskin ball behind the opponent's goal line. They handle the ball with long sticks with a little basket on their ends. Preparations for the game were similar to preparations for a war and Cherokee had great enthusiasm for the game.<sup>91</sup>

The Cherokee society is matriarchal. Women, whom Europeans explorers considered to be exploited by the men, indeed worked hard on

the fields. But they also held great political power. Cherokees determined their relationship to a particular clan through their maternal descent. That means a person had relatives only on his or her mother's side.

There were seven Cherokee clans. Wolf, Deer, Bird, Paint (or Warpaint), Long Hair (or Blue), Blind Savannah, or Holly (or Wild Potato). Each clan controlled the personal affairs of its members, such as marriage, revenges, disputes or damage of property. The marriage between two persons from the same clan was forbidden. Cherokee husband lived in the house of his wife, together with her mother, sister and her husband and so on. When he divorced his wife, he simply moved to the house of his own mother.

The mother's brother was responsible for the training of the children and acted as their mentor. The uncle trained them in hunt and decided when they were old enough to go to war.

The village council consisted not only of honourable men but also of a prominent female members who were free to have their own opinion in the village matters. The meetings were democratic and villagers debated an issue together until they reached a consensus. Town council handled all political matters, except the personal affairs which were handled by the respective clan.

Power was not in the hands of one chief or of a small privileged group of ruling class. Leadership was shared and influential people had to prove themselves first. That is why the Cherokee did not understand how British military groups can be led by a young man, who was a leader not because of his abilities but because he was a child of aristocrats.

The post of Principal Chief did not exist in the Cherokee society until the 18th century.<sup>92;93</sup>

The biggest issue a town council discussed were wars. War parties often involved around 30 warriors. Before the warriors left the village, they had to cleanse themselves to secure the victory. Cherokee believed that

only a spiritually pure warrior can succeed. The preparations for battle involved drinking of Black Drink fasting and various rituals.

Warriors took great care to avoid detection. They traveled in single file to hide their numbers, they imitate sounds animals make and sometimes they even attached the animal paws to their feet. This was a one time issue for the Cherokee. They went to war to vengeance their people and after killing the particular number of enemies they just went home. Long military campaigns were not the aim for the Cherokee warriors. Instead, they invaded the enemy for their revenge, then the enemy retaliated and so the Cherokee attacked again and so on.

Together with the war parties, so called War Women traveled. These women traveling with warriors on their warpath performed the daily tasks such as cooking or gathering firewood. But they also played a part in treating of prisoners of war. Cherokee usually adopt the captives but many captured warriors of the enemy were tortured to death by the War Women. Not for just the sake of it. The Cherokee believed in the balance of nature. And so for successfully avenging the death of a person, another person had to die, thus restoring the balance and to give the rest to the spirits of the dead.<sup>94</sup>

This also applied in the Cherokee judicial system. If one Cherokee killed another, in order to keep the world balanced, the killer or a member of the killer's clan had to die. The killer usually gave himself to the justice. Sometimes the killer was offered to take a warpath at which he could either be killed or bring the scalp of an enemy to the offended clan thus lifting his sentence. However, this was the case only when the death was caused unintentionally.<sup>95</sup>

The belief in balance in all things is probably most prevalent in the Cherokee religion. Even the tale of their origin incorporates this very beliefs. As the tale tell, the first Cherokees were man and woman called Kana'ti and Selu. Kana'ti provided the meat for the family, he never returned

home without some game he hunted and killed. Selu provided vegetables and attend the family field of corn and beans. Both protagonists of this tale represents the balance Cherokee believed because Kana'ti and Selu complement each other.<sup>96</sup>

The Green Ceremony celebrating the first ripe corn was a time of cleaning. Families cleaned their houses of all broken things and leftover food. The ceremonial fire was renewed. Women cooked the corn and prepared a fest for the whole village. All crimes were forgotten, except murder. And more importantly, any surplus of corn was destroyed. All in the sake of balance. In fact, the pre-contact Cherokee never held any potential wealth, which surprised the Europeans who met them.<sup>97</sup>

### **3.1 Cherokee ceremonies**

There are six main festivals throughout the year. It starts with the First New Moon of Spring in March. This is when the chiefs originally designated hunters and killed big game was being prepared or skinned. Women performed the dance of friendship and the next day the whole tribe went to do the ritual water purification. Then the fast followed and all this was ended with a big ceremony. At the turn of June and July, when the first corn ripened, the Green Corn Ceremony was held. People played stickball, analogue for lacrosse, danced, fasted and sacrificed the corn.

Approximately 45 days after the Green Corn Ceremony, the Mature Green Corn Ceremony took place. Tribe built a large arch from green branches. During a ritual next day, each clan took a branch which then they used in a ritual next day. Participants of the ceremony drank a purification tea called Black Drink specially made for the occasion from yaupon leaves (*Illex vomitoria*). In October, the Great New Moon Festival was held and it marked the beginning of the Cherokee New Year. Cherokees gathered

for feast and the evening before the ceremony, women performed the ritual dances. Then all went to river for the water cleansing.

About ten days after, there was the Friends Made Ceremony. It was a festival for renewing friendships and creating new ones and all grudges and conflicts were forgotten. The sacred fire was renewed and all gathered for dances. The last festival was held during the winter. It was a dancing festival when women and men danced together in a large moving circle.<sup>98</sup>

### **3.2 The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma**

The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, or just the Cherokee Nation, is the largest tribe of Indigenous people recognized by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs and holds a sovereign status by the law. It consists of 14 counties within the state of Oklahoma and its jurisdiction area is 23,916 km<sup>2</sup> large. The Cherokee Nation was established by the new constitution in June 1976 and the tribe obtained its contemporary name.

There are 299,862 of citizens of the Cherokee Nation from all the 819,105 Cherokees living in the United States. It is the tribal group in the United States with the highest number of individuals who identify with it. The government consists of all three branches of the tripartite form of a government. There are 16 members of the legislative branch, one for each county, 6 members in the executive branch and 7 members of the judicial branch. The contemporary Principal Chief is Bill John Baker, former member of the Tribal Council.<sup>99;100;101;102</sup>

Many of the Cherokees still hold their old traditions but only few still observe all of them. Although, many customs of their faith still remain in the modern society. Such as the experience with spiritual beings or simply seeing a medicine man or women for a good advice or a cure in combination with the modern health care system.<sup>103</sup>

The modern Cherokee festival, as well as the largest annual festival in Oklahoma, is the Cherokee National Holiday held in Tahlequah on September 3. It celebrates the creation of the constitution of 1839 and the end of the Trail of Tears.

The first festival was held in 1953 and over the time it has grown to be the largest festival in the state of Oklahoma. Each festival is held in different theme, which is chosen by a committee in advance.

The last theme of the festival in 2011 was 'Jobs, Language and Community.' It hosts a variety of cultural, sport and entertainment events such as the traditional Cherokee matches of stickball, marbles or shooting through cornstalks with a bow, number of basket weaving, cooking and other crafts workshops and voting for the Little Miss Cherokee. The culmination of the festival is the The State of the Nation speech from the Principal Chief and the parade downtown. More than 70,000 visitors attend the festival each year.<sup>104</sup>

There is a great number of famous Cherokee people or people who are at least part Cherokees. For example Jack Dempsey, a famous boxer from the first half of the 20th century and world heavyweight champion from 1919 and 1926. Wilma Mankiller, who was the first female Principal Chief since the constitution of 1836. Rosa Parks, African-American civil rights activist who by refusing to give up her bus seat started the Civil rights movement was also partially Cherokee. An actor James Earl Jones, who is famous for his voice-over of Darth Vader from the Star Wars franchise of movies. Wes Studi, another actor who appeared in the Academy Awards-nominated films *Dances with Wolves* or *The Last of the Mohicans*. And Jimi Hendrix, a world famous singer and guitarist, who had a Cherokee grandmother.



### **3.3 Cherokees as they see themselves nowadays**

In this chapter, I would like to compare the old Cherokee society to its contemporary state. It aims to describe the way a modern Cherokee society see itself in comparison to the general American society. In order to achieve this goal I managed to get in contact with a Cherokee man and did an short interview with him through the e-mail exchange (See the appendices for the whole text of the conversation). I also used various Cherokee websites in order to examine the way they present themselves. For the sake of privacy and simplicity, his name is replaced by the pseudonym Joshua.<sup>105</sup>

Cherokees now do not live in the territory of the Cherokee Nation only. Many of the are spread out all across the United States. Still, many of them still hold to their traditions and attend tribal festivals or visit the Cherokee Nation at least for the Holiday. Young people tend to leave the Nation for work or better education, for which they can obtain scholarship from the Cherokee Nation's College Resource Program or The Cherokee Promise program. But it seems only a few actually do it. Instead, they remain home and feeling discriminated, they hold grudges against the white majority. Unfortunately, I could not find the relevant data in order to verify Joshua's statement, as the U.S. Census Bureau does not have an individual category for the education attainment of the indigenous groups in the United States.<sup>106;107</sup>

Cherokees nowadays seem to be proud of their ancestry. Although Joshua is not living in the Cherokee Nation territory and his family is Christian, he told me he still visits annual Pow-wows at the Cherokee National Holiday and some of the other Cherokee events. Generally, Cherokee appear to be proud of their culture. There are many heritage preserving programs and groups, most notably the Cherokee Nation Cultural Tourism which provides travel information and useful tips for everyone wanting to visit the Nation, or the Cherokee Heritage Center which supports and endorse cultural preservation efforts, workshops and

even runs an open-air museum, the Ancient Village of Tsa-La-Gi near Tahlequah.<sup>108</sup>

The Nation does not receive its finances from above mentioned events or government subsidies but also from Cherokee companies, which did not forget their homeland. Cherokee Nation Industries Corporation is not only an appreciated employer in the Nation but also a important manufacturer for the whole United States. It provides electro-mechanical and other assemblies for aerospace industry and the Department of Defense.

Although, not all money is from the sources mentioned above. There is one important, yet controversial source - casinos. Cherokee Nation Entertainment group has nine casinos. All of them contributes to the budget of the Nation. In Fall 2011, Cherokee Nation Entertainment provided \$26.4 million to support local communities, health care and housing.<sup>109</sup> However, this also creates issues. Gambling addiction and alcohol abuse are still significant problems in the Cherokee society.

Yet another problem the Nation is facing are fraudulent groups claiming to be of Cherokee origin. To be an Indian in the United States brings a set of benefits for such individual. Groups of fake indigenous people are claiming these benefits on the basis of their manufactured culture and ancestry. But Joshua told me that the Cherokee Nation does not face this issue very often. They keep ancestry rolls in their archives and thus is hard for fraudsters to deceive them. The Cherokee Nation itself reports around 200 cases when people claimed to be of Cherokee origin untruthfully in the past 20 years.<sup>110111</sup>

## 4 Conclusion

It appears that the Cherokees managed to not only conserve their traditions, as I stated in the Introduction chapter, but also expand on them. They are the largest group of indigenous people in the United States. Despite the trials they had to overcome in their history they managed to stay strong and adapt accordingly. Even though he does not live in the Cherokee Nation and is from a Christian family, Joshua seemed to be happy about the fact he is a Cherokee. However, he told me that Cherokees often lack the self-esteem and courage to improve their lives even more. That they rather remain put at their homes and receive the governmental benefits. But to me, it does not look so bad as Joshua describes it.

Cherokee Nation supports almost every element which tries to improve the situation of its citizens financially or culturally. The problem with young people lacking the tendencies to pursue higher education and better jobs is nationwide and not only affects the Cherokees. Yet it may appear to be as a big issue when combined with drug abuse and gambling addiction due to the influence of casinos, which is also a problem all the indigenous groups share. Not to mention the unemployment which the financial crisis made even more unfavorable.

Yet, when compared to their history, Cherokees gradually improved their position over the time and I believe they manage to overcome even these particular issues in the future.

## Endnotes

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## 6 Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the history of the Cherokee Indian tribe and its current state in the United States and conclude whether their contemporary society still observe old Cherokee traditions. To achieve this goal a research on the history of the pre-contact and post-contact North America was conducted. The final part of the paper then examine the current state of the Cherokee Nation and its citizen, which is subsequently compared with the information obtained through the electronic correspondence with a Cherokee man.

The research implies that the status of the Cherokee improved over the course of their history, despite difficulties they had to face. Now, they are no longer officially discriminated and try to preserve and show their culture to the outside world. However, there are still many issues they have to resolve, such as the drug abuse, gambling addiction or fraudulent groups claiming to be of Cherokee origin in order to receive governmental benefits unjustly.

## 7 Resume

Cílem této práce je posoudit historický vývoj indiánského kmene Cherokee a jeho současné postavení ve Spojených státech amerických a vyvodit zda jsou Cherokee stále věrni svým tradicím. K tomuto účelu byl proveden výzkum historie před- a post-Kolumbovské Severní Ameriky. Závěrečná část práce pak popisuje současný stav Cherokee Nation a jeho obyvatel, který je postupně porovnáván s informacemi získanými skrze elektronickou komunikaci s Cherokeeem.

Výzkum naznačuje, že postavení Cherokee se postupem jejich historie zlepšilo navzdory těžkostem, které museli podstoupit. Nyní již nejsou předmětem veřejné diskriminace a snaží se udržet a ukázat svou kulturu vnějšímu světu. Nicméně stále zde zůstává velké množství problémů, které musejí vyřešit, jako je narkomanie, závislost na hazardu nebo skupiny podvodníků, kteří se vydávají za opravdové Cherokee, aby mohli pobírat vládní benefity.

## 8 Appendices

### Email conversation with Joshua:

**1) Did you ever dedicate your time to know the history of your ancestors more deeply? If yes, what type of information did you look for?**

I have ancestors that belong to the Sac and Fox Nation, but the details are somewhat vague. It is difficult to track down my heritage because I am connected through a great grandparent that married a full blooded Sac and Fox member about 150 years ago, and the records that the Sac and Fox nation keep are not on par with many of the other tribes. The Cherokee nation for example tracks the bloodline for descendants into the thousandths whereas the Sac and Fox Nation stopped tracking when the bloodline became more diluted.

**2) Are you interested in problems the modern Cherokee society is facing? Which one concerns you the most?**

One of the biggest social problems that modern Cherokees are facing, especially with those living on the reservation is alcoholism and gambling addictions. The casinos that the nation sponsors perpetuate these problems. This is leading to great poverty to the members of the tribe, and the members have become more dependent on the welfare provided by the Cherokee Nation. A major health issue for the tribe is obesity and diabetes. Both are closely linked, and the alcoholism does nothing but perpetuate the problem further.

Perhaps my biggest concern though, is the lack of self-esteem that tribal members have. They feel that they are discriminated against and as such, do little to pursue higher education and better paying jobs. The tribe pays for members to attend college, and they pay at such an amount that almost all of college expenses are covered. Most do not take advantage of this incredible opportunity, and instead opt to remain in poverty on the tribal lands.

Something that you might mention in the paper is the forced integration by congress in the early years of the United States. The US early on realized that the poverty inside the tribes was a problem and made efforts to integrate the Indians living on tribal lands, with those of the bigger cities. The intent was to have the tribal members to breed with the local populous and the bloodline would eventually die out.

**3) Do you still hold any Cherokee traditions, like the Great New Moon festival? Or is it just a thing for a small group of traditionalists?**

I have been to some of the tribal events, but we do not attend regularly. Many of the tribal members do attend these things and hold them as treasured events, but we do not.

**4) Do you believe on natural spirits or Little People or in any other parts of the traditional Cherokee believe system?**

No, I was raised in a Christian household. There are very few that believe in these things because of the strong influence from the white man.

**5) What do you think of the fraudsters claiming to be of Cherokee origin?**

There are many welfare benefits that come with being a tribal member. Tribal members get free healthcare, free college tuition, and sometimes monthly welfare payments. It is difficult to fraud the Cherokee nation because they have kept detailed ancestry records of most of the tribal members. I would compare the fraudsters to any other fraudster.... They are criminals.

**6) What is your opinion on the fact that a lot of money is from casinos?**

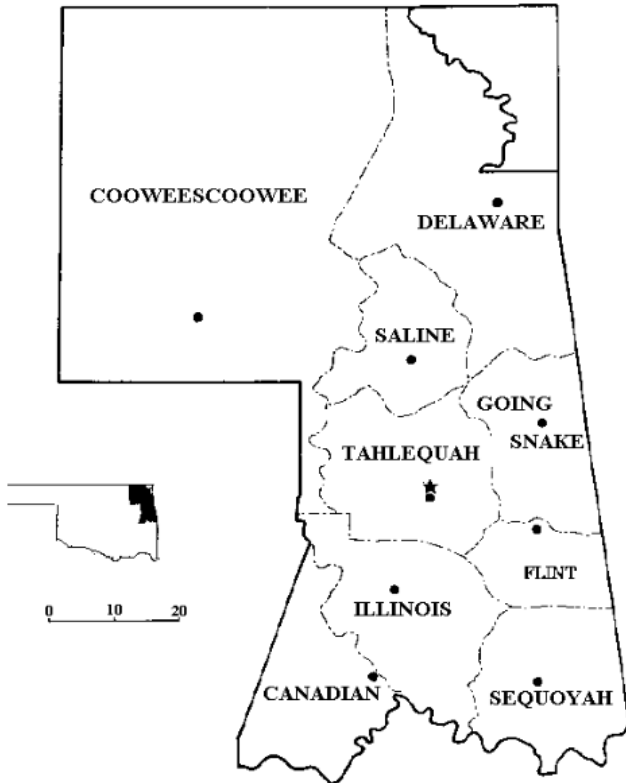
The casinos bring problems to the tribes. Yes they do bring lots of money, but two of the biggest problems for tribal members is alcoholism and gambling addiction. The casinos perpetuate this problem.

**7) Did you attend the last National Holiday? What do you think of it?**

I missed the last big Pow-wow last year, but I will probably go this year. I would compare it to a carnival. Lots of good traditional foods and old friends and family all join together to celebrate the proud Cherokee nation.

**8) Finally, tell me, please, are you happy living in the Cherokee Nation?**

I do not live in the nation. I do have family that live on the tribal lands and they enjoy many benefits for living there, but there are no jobs, so they are very poor and rely on the tribal handouts to survive.



**Fig. 1** Map of the Cherokee Nation



**Fig. 2** Current Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation Bill J. Baker



**Fig. 3** *Principal Chief John Ross (The Library of Congress)*

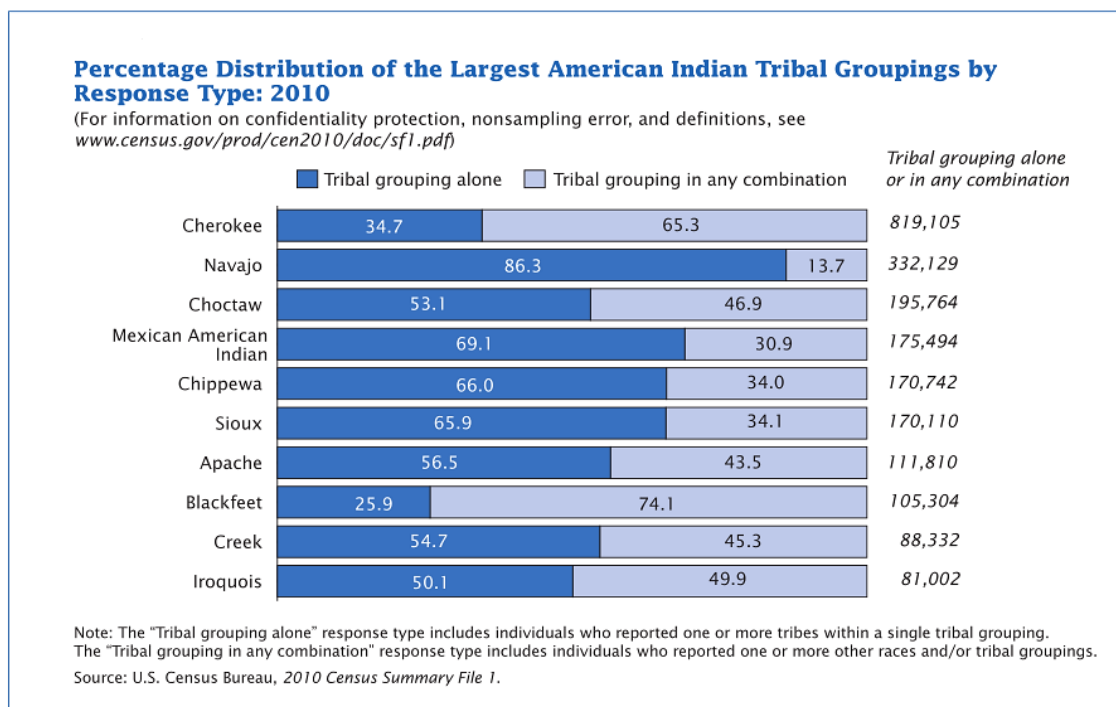


**Fig. 4** *Sequoyah (George Gist), creator of the Cherokee syllabary*



D a	R e	T i	Ꭰ o	Ꭱ u	i v
Ꭶ ga Ꭷ ka	Ꭸ ge	Ꭹ gi	Ꭺ go	Ꭻ gu	Ꭼ gv
Ꭽ ha	Ꭾ he	Ꭿ hi	Ꮀ ho	Ꮁ hu	Ꮂ hv
Ꮃ la	Ꮄ le	Ꮅ li	Ꮆ lo	Ꮇ lu	Ꮈ lv
Ꮉ ma	Ꮊ me	Ꮋ mi	Ꮌ mo	Ꮍ mu	
Ꮎ na Ꮏ hna Ꮐ nah	Ꮑ ne	Ꮒ ni	Ꮓ no	Ꮔ nu	Ꮕ nv
Ꮖ qua	Ꮗ que	Ꮘ qui	Ꮙ quo	Ꮚ quu	Ꮛ quv
Ꮜ s Ꮝ sa	Ꮞ se	Ꮟ si	Ꮠ so	Ꮡ su	Ꮢ sv
Ꮤ da Ꮥ ta	Ꮦ de Ꮧ te	Ꮨ di Ꮩ ti	Ꮪ do	Ꮫ du	Ꮬ dv
Ꮮ dia Ꮯ tia	Ꮰ tle	Ꮱ tli	Ꮲ tlo	Ꮳ tlu	Ꮴ tiv
Ꮷ tsa	Ꮸ tse	Ꮹ tsi	Ꮺ tso	Ꮻ tsu	Ꮼ tsv
Ꮾ wa	Ꮿ we	Ᏸ wi	Ᏹ wo	Ᏺ wu	Ᏻ ww
᏷ ya	ᏸ ye	ᏹ yi	ᏺ yo	ᏻ yu	ᏼ yv

**Fig. 5 Sequoyah's Cherokee syllabary**



**Fig. 6 American Indians Tribal Grouping in 2010 (U. S. Census Bureau)**