

You Are What You Eat: The Relationship between Cherokee Foodways and “Civilization” at Brainerd Mission

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The Cherokees are frequently referred to as the most “civilized” Indian tribe in the United States. Words of praise for the Cherokees first appeared in print when the United States government launched its Indian “civilization” policy soon after the nation’s establishment. Correspondence between the Cherokee agency and Washington, reports to Congress by Indian agents and superintendents, missionary journals and records, and newspaper articles aired the Cherokees’ progress in “civilization”: “They are improving in the arts of civilized life,” “their improvement is astonishing,” and “the Cherokees . . . are in advance of all other tribes” and “to be greatly instrumental in civilizing the other tribes.”¹ To most Americans, “civilization” had a definite meaning. To be “civilized” meant that one could think, act, dress, speak, work, and worship just as American citizens did, and advocates of the “civilization” program believed that the introduction of commercial farming would greatly enhance the Indians’ acculturation process.² In this essay I focus on the Cherokee Indians, who, under the guidance of United States agents and missionaries, adopted various aspects of the Anglo-American lifestyle and Christianity in the early nineteenth-century Southeast and examine the ways in which the federal government and missionaries introduced European-style agriculture into Indian societies.

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I.

Cherokees had been farming for centuries before Europeans arrived. The primary responsibility for farming in Cherokee society rested with women, and they worked the soil together. Women began cultivating the ground in early May when “the wild fruit is so ripe, as to draw off the birds from picking up the grain,” and men assisted them in clearing fields and planting crops with hoes and hatchets. The women hilled corn and beans rather than plowing rows, and they planted squash and other vegetables around these crops and let the weeds “out-grow the corn.”³ The Cherokees, therefore, depended for subsistence on vegetables that women cultivated in summer and on wild game that men hunted in winter.

The staple in the Cherokee diet was corn, and when it first ripened, the Cherokees held the Green Corn Ceremony, the most important religious ritual of the year. They fasted, prayed, and purified themselves for the ceremony, which made them ready to taste the new corn. The Cherokees destroyed the previous year’s crop except seven ears of corn “in order to *attract the corn* until the new crop was ripened.”⁴ Meanwhile, sins of the previous year except murder were forgiven, and disputes were all settled. The Green Corn Ceremony marked the dawn of a new year socially as well as religiously. It was the time for forgiveness, harmony, and reconciliation.⁵

From the colonial period onward, travelers and observers depicted Indian “savagery” in their writings, in part by ignoring or demeaning the agricultural base of the Indian societies. The Cherokees were no exception. Visiting the Cherokee country in the 1760s, Lt. Henry Timberlake noted that “the sole occupations of an Indian life, are hunting, and warring abroad, and lazying at home.” Deploring the fact that “the women alone do all the laborious tasks of agriculture,” Lieutenant Timberlake criticized the Cherokees by saying, “who would seek to live by labour, who can live by amusement.”⁶ Most Americans considered idleness a sin, Indian warfare savage, and hunting a mere pastime.⁷ Although men as hunters and women as farmers had long provided food for the Indian tribes east of the Mississippi, President George Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox ignored this Native subsistence system and proposed the “civilization” program. Its ultimate goal was to transform Native hunters into yeoman farmers and to peacefully obtain the cession of their “surplus” hunting grounds. Once they became sedentary farm-

ers, federal policymakers reasoned, Indian “hunter-warriors” would willingly part with their lands. The mechanism of this federal policy was well illustrated in an address by President Thomas Jefferson, an ardent advocate of the “civilization” program, to Congress in January 1803:

To encourage them to abandon hunting, to apply to the raising stock, to agriculture, and domestic manufacture, and thereby prove to themselves that less land and labor will maintain them in this better than in their former mode of living. The extensive forests necessary in the hunting life will then become useless, and they will see advantage in exchanging them for the means of improving their farms and of increasing their domestic comforts.⁸

Just as Jefferson hastily added that “I trust and believe we are acting for their greatest good,” federal policymakers assured Native people that they would benefit enormously from tilling the soil.⁹ The cultivation of the land would not only provide Indians with a dependable means of subsistence, but it also would instruct them in the Christian ethic of hard work, the idea of patriarchy, and the value of private property, all of which were essential for them to become responsible citizens of the United States. Agriculture was the focal point of the “civilization” program, and who was to cultivate the land with what implements and what crops became an important part of this policy.¹⁰

II.

The federal government’s attempt to “civilize” the Cherokees began with the conclusion of the Treaty of Holston in July 1791. It stipulated that “the Cherokee nation may be led to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsmen and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters, the United States will from time to time furnish gratuitously the said nation with useful implements of husbandry.”¹¹ Two years later, the Trade and Intercourse Act called for providing Indian tribes with agricultural implements, domestic animals, and other useful goods and for appointing agents to promote “civilization.”¹²

In the winter of 1796–97, Benjamin Hawkins, an appointed agent of the United States among the Creeks and general superintendent of the tribes south of the Ohio River, stayed in Cherokee villages on his way to the Creek country. Hawkins read signs of both “civilization” and “backwardness” among the Cherokees. He found “the field of 4 acres for

corn fenced” and “a number of fowls, hogs and some cattle” to be encouraging, but in every town he visited, it was Cherokee women who received him because “the men were all in the woods hunting.”¹³ In their husbands’ absence, Cherokee women hosted Hawkins. They explained how the division of labor functioned among the Cherokees: men “hunted in the proper season,” and women, in charge of farmland, “performed almost all the labour, the men assisted but little and that in the corn.”¹⁴ Unlike Anglo-Americans who assigned solely to men the role of head of household, both men and women were responsible for providing food among the Cherokees. The Cherokees’ spiritual beliefs reinforced this gendered system of food production: the first man, Kana’ti, provided game, and the first woman, Selu, rubbing her stomach and armpits, provided corn and beans. Cherokee men identified themselves as hunters, and women considered themselves to be cultivators of the land.¹⁵ Men hunted in winter while women began to farm in spring, and they balanced and complemented each other.¹⁶ During his stay, the Cherokee women pleased Hawkins by expressing their willingness to “follow the advise [*sic*] of their great father General Washington” and, in addition to their daily routine of tending corn and beans, to “plant cotton and be prepared for spin[n]ing as soon as they could make it.” They also wished to “get some wheels and cards as soon as they should be ready for them” and “promised . . . to take care of their pigs and cattle.”¹⁷ Hawkins had no chance to discuss the matter with Cherokee men, the foremost targets of federal Indian policy.

In the late 1790s, Silas Dinsmoor, the United States agent to the Cherokees, took charge of converting Cherokee hunters into sedentary farmers, who he hoped would soon agree to perform their duties as household heads. Agent Dinsmoor did not fail to escape the Cherokees’ ridicule from the start, and “he was unanimously laughed at by the Council for attempting [to] introduce white peoples’ habits among the Indians, who were created to pursue the chase.” A Cherokee chief warned agent Dinsmoor: “I don’t want you to recommend these things to my people. They may suit white people, but will do [nothing] for the Indians. I am now going to hunt & shall be gone six moons & when I return, I shall expect to hear nothing of your talks made in [my] absence to induce my people to take hold of your plan.” Still, during his absence, Dinsmoor persuaded the wife and daughters of the chief to try spinning and weaving and to make cloth. When he returned home after six months,

the chief was astounded, and he told the agent “with a smile” that he had made “his wife & daughters better hunters than he & requested to be furnished a plough & went to work on his farm.”¹⁸

Agent Dinsmoor might have succeeded in transforming one of the influential members of the tribe into a cultivator of the land, but Cherokee men were slow in accepting the roles traditionally assigned to women. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the men continued to hunt and stayed away from home even longer than before because, due to a severe scarcity of game, it was increasingly difficult for them to fulfill their duties as providers of meat.¹⁹ Federal policymakers were aware of this circumstance, and they recognized that it would furnish an excellent opportunity for them to promote “civilization” among the Indians. In his “farewell” letter of 1796 to the Cherokees, President Washington stated that “the game with which your woods once abounded, are growing scarce; and you know when you cannot meet a deer or other game to kill . . . you must remain hungry.” The president urged Cherokee men to replace women as farmers and Cherokee women to spin and weave as wives of yeoman farmers so that the men, as the sole breadwinners in their households, could protect their families from suffering starvation. Washington sought to instill in the Cherokees what Anglo-Americans thought proper for men and women to do. Promising that he would do the same when “I shall leave the great town and retire to my farm,” Mount Vernon in Virginia, Washington encouraged Cherokee men to raise more cattle, hogs, and sheep instead of hunting wild game and to cultivate “wheat, (which makes the best of bread),” cotton, and flax as well as Native corn for their families. He suggested the use of plows, which “can vastly increase your crops,” and not hoes, a farm tool the Cherokees traditionally used that yielded “only scanty crops of corn.” The president recommended that women adopt spinning and weaving to make cloth and reminded the Cherokees that the outcome of their efforts “may determine the lot of many nations”: “If it succeeds, the beloved men of the United States will be encouraged to give the same assistance to all the Indian tribes within their boundaries. But if it should fail they may think it vain to make any further attempts to better the condition of any Indian tribe.” Although it was still an “experiment,” the “civilization” program, by challenging the subsistence system of Indian people, threatened to undermine the traditional roles of men and women in Native societies.²⁰

III.

Under the “civilization” program, the federal government sent agents to assist Indian tribes in the process of acculturation, but it was missionaries who became the most influential in “civilizing” the Indians. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, an interdenominational organization in Boston, was particularly eager to “civilize” the Cherokees. The missionaries, with great zeal, intended to educate Cherokee children “before their habits are formed.”²¹ Establishing its first station named Brainerd in Chickamauga in present-day Tennessee in 1817 “by consent of the Cherokees,” the American Board set the stage for Indian “civilization.”²²

The chief objective of the American Board was, of course, to preach the gospel among the Cherokees, but missionaries devoted a great portion of their time and energy to teaching Cherokee children reading, writing, arithmetic, and the manners and customs, including farming, of Anglo-American society. They contended that adoption of these practices would eventually lead the Cherokees to embrace Christianity. The missionaries maintained that “the religious instruction of the Indians” should “be preceded or accompanied by . . . civilization” and that agriculture had inseparable links with the Christian doctrine.²³ The corresponding secretary of the American Board Samuel Worcester articulated this point in 1821:

Husbandry is a secular business in common life. But here husbandry is to be considered in a different light. The missionary farm should be regarded as the farm of the Lord; and those, who labor here, are to labor as for him, every day, and every hour. All, who are thus employed, are as really his servants, as the missionary. And they should shew cheerfulness in this labor; as for him, every day, and every hour.²⁴

Immediately after he arrived in Chickamauga in January 1817, the Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury “commenced making preparation to cultivate the land” and planned successively to build a mill. A work farm would provide an arena for male students to learn the habit of industry and a means for missionaries to sustain themselves. Kingsbury triumphantly stated that the mission’s “great resources will be from the cultivation of the land, and by raising stock.”²⁵ Missionaries Moody Hall, Loring S. Williams, and their wives soon joined the station, and the Brainerd School started with twenty-six students in the first year.²⁶

In May 1817, well before they celebrated a harvest of their first year's crops at Brainerd, thirty-four Cherokee families visited the station at one time, imploring the missionaries for aid. Because of a poor yield in the previous year, they ran short of corn. The missionaries found it "painful to see this people thus distressed for bread in this fertile land," but they contended that it was because the Cherokees were not yet well versed in farming and criticized them:

If they knew how, they might raise an abundance with half the labor they now take to get this scanty pittance from us, it was highly pleasing to have it in our power to deal out to their present supplies, & at the same time to hope that we may be instrumental of putting them in a way to obtain an abundance of bread, & all other necessaries of life, by teaching them & their children to cultivate the earth.²⁷

The missionaries never doubted that their agricultural techniques were decidedly superior to those of the Cherokees, but they soon realized that attaining food self-sufficiency was far more difficult than they thought. At the end of the first year, Kingsbury had to report to Boston that "the advantage to be derived from these [agricultural] sources for one or two years must be small."²⁸ A harvest for 1818 looked promising; as one missionary noted, "Crops every where look finely. We have about 7 acres of rye & oats (which we are now gathering) something more than 30 acres of corn, about 3 acres of Irish & 2 of sweet potatoes, and a small patch of cotton. All these promise well, except the cotton." But the missionaries, having decided to accept as many as sixty students, continued to struggle to procure an orderly supply of food at Brainerd.²⁹ The missionaries purchased corn and pork from the Cherokees, some of whom willingly donated what they could spare.³⁰ They also made contracts with farmers in neighboring towns. Yet the Tennessee River was frequently too high or too low for a boat to deliver corn to the station, which aggravated a chronic shortage of food. The first three months of 1819 were extremely severe. Corn did not arrive as the missionaries expected. By the time they heard that corn boats were coming down on the Tennessee, "the boats had all passed without calling."³¹ The corn they managed to obtain turned out to be wet and damaged.³² The missionaries reported to the board's Prudential Committee: "A single disappointment the last winter, in the failure of a contract for corn, occasioned partly by the state of the river, was a detriment to the mission of several hundred dollars."³³

As the missionaries admitted, “the cultivation of land” turned out to be “of more use by affording the means of training the boys to habits of industry, than by yielding any considerable profit to the mission.”³⁴ If they often faced the exhaustion of their food supplies and could not entirely sustain the school and mission station by themselves, the American Board missionaries remained firm in their belief that “the cultivation of the farm” was “an object of high importance.”³⁵ The day at Brainerd opened with the horn blown half an hour before sunrise. Students as well as missionaries and their families gathered together in the hall and raised prayers. “The boys,” then, “file off to the right . . . the girls to the left” and engaged themselves in “their morning labor.” The female students began spinning and carding, sewing and knitting, and mending their clothes as well as those of the boys, and their male counterparts hoed in the garden, pounded corn, milked the cows, and dressed the fish. The male supervisor took “about ten active lads” to the field, and “they planted an acre of corn” on one morning before breakfast and “on another . . . planted six or seven bushels of potatoes.” When the horn blew to announce time for breakfast, the Cherokee students reassembled in the hall and, along with the missionaries and their families, sat at two long tables. The Cherokee students no longer “ate whenever they were hungry,” and “till the blessing is concluded, not one touches his knife and fork, or plate; nor is the slightest impatience discovered, as is common among children in civilized society.”³⁶ After breakfast, they resumed their morning labor which “amounts to two hours and a half,” and at nine o’clock, the school began with a prayer and hymns. The students learned reading, writing, English grammar, and arithmetic, and after school before dinner, they again were assigned to “an hour’s labor” to master the arts of “civilized” life and to help run the mission station.³⁷

From dawn to dusk, Cherokee children were coached on what Anglo-American society considered appropriate roles for “civilized” men and women. Male students cultivated the land, and female students learned to keep house. In traditional Cherokee society, however, women cultivated the communal land as well as their kitchen gardens, and with the help of men to clear the fields, they planted corn, beans, squash, and many other vegetables. Farmland was where women were trained to be women, whereas the forest was where men learned to be men. Many male students at Brainerd, therefore, “evinced, at first, an indisposition to labor in the field.” Deeply offended at what the missionaries required young men to do, a Cherokee chief “offered to find a slave who should

work all day, if the missionaries would excuse his son from agricultural labor between school hours.”³⁸ The missionaries gently corrected him. Although they “entirely exempted” female students “from the task” of working the fields, the missionaries continued to instruct Cherokee boys in the importance of “labor[ing] with their hands”: “Indian young men should be accustomed to some kind of agricultural or mechanical labor, in order to prepare them for a course of hardy industry, when their education shall have been completed.”³⁹

The progress of Cherokee students did not fail to capture the attention of Americans who visited Brainerd. A “gentleman of great respectability” from North Carolina who traveled in the Cherokee and Chickasaw nations in 1818 commented on Brainerd that “I never saw a better regulated school, or scholars of more promising dispositions and talents.— They were quick of apprehension, retentive in memory, docile and affectionate.” He did not miss an opportunity to mention that “they are taught practical farming, and are initiated into habits of industry—an art and virtue unknown among savages,” and he looked forward to the time when “they are made practical farmers under the direction of an excellent manager, by which means they give direct support to the institution, and procure important advantages to themselves.”⁴⁰

The reports the missionaries sent to Boston and Washington also depicted the Cherokee students’ advancement. Corresponding secretary Jeremiah Evarts had been visiting Brainerd periodically since its opening. Evarts noted in 1822: “It is very evident, that the Cherokees are improving more rapidly at present, than at any previous time. There are more instances of laborious industry among them every returning year.” For more than half a month staying among the Cherokee students, Evarts refuted an idea prevalent in the United States that “Indians can never acquire the habit of labor” and argued: “Facts abundantly disprove this opinion. There are numerous instances, among the Cherokees, of very laborious and long continued industry.” Evarts, moreover, pointed out that Cherokee people outside of Brainerd procured “an abundant supply of food for their families, by the labor of their own hands, but have a surplus of several hundred bushels of corn, with which they procure clothing, furniture, and foreign articles of luxury, particularly sugar and coffee, of which they are immoderately fond.” Thus Evarts concluded: “The current is now setting very strongly in favor of agriculture, and other laborious pursuits.”⁴¹ The missionaries at Brainerd agreed with Evarts that their influence over the Cherokees went well beyond the

mission station. In their 1824 report to the Committee of Congress on Indian Affairs, the missionaries contended that the students “have already had no small influence in inducing their parents to become less fond of an erratic life, and more inclined to have fixed residence, and rely for their support on the cultivation of the ground.”⁴²

IV.

Although they experienced many different types of difficulty in promoting “civilization” among the Cherokees, what challenged the American Board missionaries most, particularly in early years among the tribe, was a shortage of hands. Journal entries were peppered with the missionaries’ desperate requests for “at least two or three who would gladly come out to assist in this business.” As one missionary wrote, it was “quite too much for any one man to teach the school, and labor with, and instruct, such a number of boys out of school” in Anglo-American farming practices.⁴³

The missionaries at Brainerd thought that obtaining a couple of assistant missionaries would help solve the problems they faced, the most serious of which was a food deficiency. Feeling frustrated at a continuous shortage of supplies, one missionary wrote in 1819: “There is plenty of good land around us, & we have full liberty to improve as much as may be necessary for the support of the school. Every thing we get from Tennessee might be raised here as little labor as there if the land was once cleared & fenced. The expense of get[t]ing on our supplies this year would have opened & fenced a very large field, if it had been applied for that purpose.” He continued his ardent appeal: “If we had a small company of our brethren from the north to assist in clearing a farm here, we might hope soon to be able to live without this great expense and trouble of get[t]ing our bread & meat from abroad.”⁴⁴

The American Board headquarters in Boston, however, remained unable to render assistance to the Brainerd Mission. In the summer of 1821, the missionaries were very disappointed “to hear from the Treasurer that the funds of the society are too low to admit of sending more help at present.” The missionaries contended that inadequate assistance from Boston caused much trouble and prevented them from giving Cherokee students proper instruction “out of school”: “Unless we can have more help as assistant missionaries we despair of ever extending the agricultural business to much profit, any farther than labor can be

performed by the children of the school. These do exceedingly well for boys of their age and opportunities, but we greatly need one or two pious men to labor with them and direct this important branch of their education.” The missionaries expressed much concern over their plight particularly because “we are often obliged to send this large company of boys out with their hoes or their axes, without any one to teach or direct them.”⁴⁵ By early 1822, their request was finally granted, and two assistant missionaries, one from Vermont and the other from Ohio, arrived at Brainerd.⁴⁶

The struggle to obtain assistance made the missionaries consider their reasons for continuing the agricultural program. It was because agriculture “render[s] a most essential service in training these children to habits of industry and good management” and “because we think it would tend to the more rapid improvement of the children and ultimately, with the divine blessing.”⁴⁷ Soon after the two assistants joined them, however, a crisis erupted at Brainerd. The missionaries were divided among themselves over the issue of what to do with the work farm in a weekly business meeting in May 1822. A majority thought that the work at Brainerd was still burdensome, and they concluded that “they had nobody to attend to” the field. Though he was well aware that “the season of planting to the best advantage was past,” one missionary reminded the rest that “as [a] means to promote the improvement of these people, the school stood the first & agriculture the second.” In observing the ground, however, they found a part of it to be totally worn out and “baked so hard, that it could not be ploughed without difficulty.” Wheat might grow on the ground, but corn would not. After much debate, the missionaries decided that “it would be best to plough only as part of the field, say 10 acres, & leave the poorest part, say 15 acres, for wheat or rye” and that each one of them “should plough a part of each day.”⁴⁸

The missionaries would have been able to handle the situation if they had tried the traditional style of farming that the Cherokee practiced. An American Board missionary once commented: “When they have exhausted a field by planting it with corn, they know nothing of recruiting it, by sowing other grains & laying it down to grass, & for lack of this knowledge, they are either working their old fields to very little profit, or forsaking them to open new ones.”⁴⁹ The missionaries were totally perplexed at such sights, but Cherokee farming would not have exhausted the soil as much as the missionaries had experienced in 1822. Cherokee women knew exactly how they could maintain soil fertility

without applying fertilizer. They intercropped corn and beans. The bean vines twined around the corn stalks as they grew up, and with beans replacing nitrogen that corn removed from the soil, they complemented each other and helped prevent the soil from becoming exhausted.⁵⁰ The fertility of the soil in the Cherokee country was indeed remarkable, and Henry Timberlake noted that the soil “requir[ed] only a little stirring with a hoe, to produce whatever is required of it.”⁵¹ Missionaries and federal agents attempted to introduce plows and horses into Cherokee society, but traditional farm tools such as hoes and digging sticks might have been sufficient for many Cherokee women.⁵²

Other farm tools that the missionaries considered outdated were the mortars and pestles that Cherokee women used to process corn. The missionaries anticipated that “whenever . . . a Cherokee begins to enjoy the advantage of a grist mill, he abandons the practice of pounding his corn” with a mortar and a pestle. The missionaries thought that the introduction of agriculture and the erection of mills would function in similar manners among the Cherokees because they both “save much expense, and tend much to introduce civilization.”⁵³ Cyrus Kingsbury, therefore, expected to have a mill constructed soon after he arrived at Brainerd in January 1817, but it took a full five months to furnish it to the station: “The mill which has been erected with much trouble & frequent disappointments in consequence of the inexperience and unfaithfulness of the workmen, was this day [June 11, 1818] put in operation.” A life without a mill seemed to have been quite troublesome to the missionaries because “we had been obliged to pound corn for our bread.”⁵⁴ The missionaries hoped that “its advantage to the institution & the neighborhood, will soon repay the great trouble & expense of building,” but just a week after its operation, the mill collapsed, and they had to repair it by reinforcing it with planking.⁵⁵

Just as the missionaries hoped, a gristmill helped reinforce “civilized” ways of living among the Cherokees. On a Sabbath day of 1818, American Board missionaries witnessed three Cherokees attempting to go to the mill after public worship. They stopped the Cherokees and explained that it was not an appropriate way to observe the Sabbath. The Cherokees apologized instantly, and they “very cheerfully turned out their horses, & did not go after their meal untill monday.” The missionaries later discussed the issue with a miller. He agreed not to grind grains on the Sabbath nor to receive grains or deliver meal on that day, thereby relieving the missionaries. The mill, therefore, would “assist in establishing a sabbath in this place.”⁵⁶

Still, the missionaries could not easily find a miller reliable enough to keep a mill in good order. In September 1819, the missionaries found a miller who had been working for them for a short time to be rather “unfaithful if out of our sight,” and they resolved to fire him in a business meeting.⁵⁷ Three months later, they sold the mill for three hundred dollars to a “responsible neighbor” who “was willing to buy the mill, & engage to keep it in repair & grind for the mission family as long as we chose to have our grinding done there.”⁵⁸ The missionaries soon began looking into the possibility of having a mill of their own once again, and they built a sawmill as well as a gristmill by early 1821. Both mills, however, were often out of repair. The difficulties in spreading Anglo-American agricultural practices among the Cherokees, along with a chronic shortage of hands at Brainerd, remained an annoyance to the American Board missionaries.⁵⁹

V.

As the missionaries at Brainerd continued their efforts to “civilize” Cherokee youth, the American Board opened seven other schools among the tribe in the 1820s. In 1828 an American Board agent who toured the Cherokee mission stations requested that the missionaries write on accomplishments at their stations and “the progress which the Indians in the vicinity had made in the arts of civilized life.”⁶⁰ It is notable that in their responses, the missionaries all focused on farming—who cultivated the land, what they grew, and what implements they used. The American Board missionaries wanted Cherokees to grow wheat, which they considered to be a “civilized” crop, rather than Native corn, but their presence of over ten years in the Cherokee Nation had not necessarily accelerated the shift in food for subsistence.⁶¹ The farm at Brainerd continued to produce more corn than wheat. In the neighborhood, “some have been successful in raising tolerable crops of wheat,” and a majority of the Cherokees were “beginning to feel” that “the raising of corn . . . belongs to” men and not women as they had traditionally thought.⁶² Evidence elsewhere suggested that the change was not quite so dramatic. The missionary stationed at Willstown announced that “every family in this settlement has a cornfield, plough, and horse or horses to till it,” but he pointed out that the way the Cherokees farmed had not changed: “The season of raising corn is a time of general industry with both men and women; and perhaps we may say that most of the women are industrious the year round.” He continued: “The men have not a sufficient stimulus

to keep up their exertions after the season for laboring in the cornfields has passed.” He observed that “a very few lately raise[d] a little wheat,” but basically agriculture was still “extended only to raising of corn, potatoes, and cotton.”⁶³ The missionary at Candy’s Creek concurred: “A great part of the people make it a duty to labor only during certain seasons.”⁶⁴ The American Board missionaries continued to measure Indian “civilization” by the extent of farming. Some of the reports the American Board missionaries sent to Boston and Washington were optimistic, but more frequently, the reports were discouraging to those who promoted “civilization” among the Indian tribes in the early nineteenth-century United States. Many Cherokees had adopted European agricultural practices selectively and fused them to traditional farming techniques. The production of food, therefore, mirrored the broader process of culture change in which Cherokees and other Indians took what was useful but maintained much of their traditional way of life. By continuing traditional foodways—that is, with what they ate—Native peoples retained an important aspect of their cultures and their very identity as Indians.

NOTES

¹ “Cherokees: Brainerd,” *Missionary Herald* 25 (February 1829): 58; “Progress of civilization among the Indians” in “Mission among the Cherokees: Extracts from a Narrative Written by an Assistant Missionary,” *Missionary Herald* 18 (May 1822): 139; Thos. L. McKenney to James Barbour, 13 December 1825, *American State Papers: Indian Affairs* 2: 651; and “Cherokees: Carmel,” *Missionary Herald* 25 (February 1829): 58.

² Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, 2d ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), 11; and Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787–1862* ([Lexington]: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 70.

³ James Adair, *Adair’s History of the American Indians*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (New York: Promontory Press, 1930), 435–37, 438–39.

⁴ James Mooney, *James Mooney’s History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees: Containing the Full Texts of “Myths of the Cherokee” (1900) and “The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees” (1891) as Published by the Bureau of American Ethnology*. With a new biographical introduction, “James Mooney and the Eastern Cherokees,” by George Ellison (Asheville, NC: Historical Images, 1992), 423 (italics in the original).

⁵ Adair, *Adair’s History*, 105–15, 462; and Mooney, *James Mooney’s History*, 423.

⁶ Henry Timberlake, *Lieut. Henry Timberlake’s Memoirs, 1756–1765*, annot. Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, TN: Watauga Press, 1927; Marietta, GA: Continental Book Company, 1948), 68, 98–99. Citations are to the Continental edition.

⁷ Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage*, 70.

⁸ Thomas Jefferson to Gentlemen of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, 18 January 1803, James D. Richardson, comp., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents: Prepared under the Direction of the Joint Committee on Printing, of the House and Senate, Pursuant to an Act of the Fifty-Second Congress of the United States. With Additions and Encyclopedic Index by Private Enterprise* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897) 1: 340.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ For the federal government's "civilization" program, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 89–177; and *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790–1834* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹¹ "Treaty with the Cherokee, 1791," Charles J. Kappler, comp., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2, *Treaties* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 31.

¹² *U.S. Statutes at Large* 1: 331.

¹³ 3 December [1796], Thomas Foster, ed., *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796–1810* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 23; and 30 November [1796], *ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴ 2 December [1796], *ibid.*, 21–22.

¹⁵ For the Cherokee myth about Kana'ti and Selu, see Mooney, *James Mooney's History*, 242–49.

¹⁶ Theda Perdue eloquently develops a Cherokee world of complementarity and reciprocity in *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998). See also Izumi Ishii, "Surviving Colonization: Native American Women and Their Lives," *Doshisha Studies in Language and Culture* 7, no. 4 (March 2005): 597–611.

¹⁷ 1 December [1796], Foster, *Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 21.

¹⁸ John Ridge, "Letter to Albert Gallatin," 27 February 1826, Perdue and Green, *Cherokee Removal*, 43–44.

¹⁹ For drastic changes the Cherokees faced during the early republic period, see William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

²⁰ Geo. Washington to Beloved Cherokees, 29 August 1796, "Washington and the Cherokees," *Cherokee Phoenix*, 20 March 1828.

²¹ "Mission among the Cherokees of the Arkansaw [*sic*]: Annual Report to the Secretary of War," *Missionary Herald* 18 (April 1822): 108.

²² Elias Cornelius to [Samuel] Worcester, 1 November 1817, "Mission to the Cherokees," *Panoplist, and Missionary Herald* 13 (December 1817): 566. For the efforts of the American Board to establish mission stations among the Cherokees and "civilize" them, see Henry Thompson Malone, *Cherokees of the Old South: A People in Transition* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1956); and Robert Sparks Walker, *Torchlights to the Cherokees: The Brainerd Mission* (New York: Macmillan, 1931). Meg Devlin O'Sullivan focuses on conversion, a religious aspect of "civilization," at Brainerd in "A Family Affair: Cherokee Conversion to American Board Churches, 1817–1839," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 64 (Winter 2005): 264–83.

²³ Adam Hodgson, "American Indians: Journey among the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees," *Missionary Herald* 18 (May 1822): 150–51.

²⁴ [Samuel] Worcester, "Important suggestions on the organization of Education Families," 1821, Jedediah [Jedediah] Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs 1822* ([Whitefish, MT]: Kessinger Publishing, [2007]),

164–65. Although he addressed it to the missionaries among the Choctaws, Morse noted that Worcester's statement was "applicable to all Education Families, established among Indians." *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁵ Cyrus Kingsbury to [?], 30 June 1817, *Panoplist, and Missionary Herald* 13 (August 1817): 384–86.

²⁶ "Report of the Prudential Committee of the A.B.C.F.M.," *Panoplist, and Missionary Herald* 14 (November 1818): 505.

²⁷ 1 May [1817], Joyce B. Phillips and Paul Gary Phillips, eds., *The Brainerd Journal: A Mission to the Cherokees, 1817–1823* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 33–34, 442–43n30.

²⁸ Cyrus Kingsbury, Moody Hall, and Loring S. Williams to Samuel Worcester, 25 November 1817, *Panoplist, and Missionary Herald* 14 (January 1818): 44.

²⁹ 13 [July 1818], Phillips and Phillips, *Brainerd Journal*, 72; 19 [June 1818], *ibid.*, 64; and Isaac Anderson, Matthew Donald, and William Eagleton to [Prudential Committee], 13 December 1819, "Mission and School at Brainerd," *Panoplist, and Missionary Herald* 16 (March 1820): 132.

³⁰ 16 [January 1822], Phillips and Phillips, *Brainerd Journal*, 253; and "Story with Respect to Donations in Clothing, &c.," *Missionary Herald* 17 (November 1821): 350–51.

³¹ 27 [February 1819], Phillips and Phillips, *Brainerd Journal*, 108

³² 29 [December 1818], *ibid.*, 98–99; and 12 June [1819], *ibid.*, 119, 481–82n33. See also *ibid.*, 101–3, 107, 108, 109–11.

³³ "Report of the Prudential Committee: Cherokees," *Missionary Herald* 15 (December 1819): 549.

³⁴ "Report of the Prudential Committee: Station of Brainerd," *Missionary Herald* 18 (December 1822): 372.

³⁵ "Report of the Prudential Committee: Cherokees," *Missionary Herald* 15 (December 1819): 549.

³⁶ Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 309.

³⁷ "Letter from the Treasurer of the American Board, &c.," *Panoplist, and Missionary Herald* 14 (July 1818): 341–43.

³⁸ Southerners, just as missionaries did, affected the Cherokees' acculturation process in enormous ways. By having their slaves cultivate the lands for them, Cherokee men found a way to avoid being farmers. For the process of the birth of Cherokee slaveholders, see Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540–1866* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979).

³⁹ [Adam] Hodgson, "American Indians: Journey among the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees," *Missionary Herald* 18 (June 1822): 183; and "Missions: Choctaws," *Missionary Herald* 24 (January 1828): 9.

⁴⁰ "Mission and School at Brainerd," *Panoplist, and Missionary Herald* 14 (September 1818): 431–32.

⁴¹ Jeremiah Evarts to the Prudential Committee, 29 May 1822, *Missionary Herald* 18 (July 1822): 233–34.

⁴² "Indian Civilization: Report of the Committee of Congress on Indian Affairs," *Missionary Herald* 20 (May 1824): 151.

⁴³ 2 July [1821], Phillips and Phillips, *Brainerd Journal*, 224.

⁴⁴ 23 [March 1819], *ibid.*, 110–11.

⁴⁵ 2 July [1821], *ibid.*, 224.

⁴⁶ “Report of the Prudential Committee: Station of Brainerd,” *Missionary Herald* 18 (January 1822): 2.

⁴⁷ 2 July [1821], Phillips and Phillips, *Brainerd Journal*, 224.

⁴⁸ Memoranda Relative to the Cherokee Mission, No. 1, 6 May 1822, 7 May 1822, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, ABC 18.3.1 v. 2, microcopy, roll 737, #0451–55. Hereafter documents from this archive will be cited by the notation that begins with ABC with date and volume, roll, and frame numbers.

⁴⁹ Cyrus Kingsbury and others to Samuel Worcester, 18 March 1818, ABC 18.3.1 v. 2, roll 737, #0307.

⁵⁰ Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 290–91, 293–94, 297. Corn and beans complement each other nutritionally as well. See also Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 19; and Thomas Hatley, “Cherokee Women Farmers Hold Their Ground,” in *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era*, ed. Robert D. Mitchell (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 40.

⁵¹ Timberlake, *Lieut. Henry Timberlake’s Memoirs*, 68.

⁵² Gary C. Goodwin, *Cherokees in Transition: A Study of Changing Culture and Environment Prior to 1775*, University of Chicago Department of Geography Research Paper no. 181, 1977, 125–26.

⁵³ “Report of the Prudential Committee: Station of Brainerd,” *Missionary Herald* 18 (December 1822): 372–73.

⁵⁴ 16 [April 1817], Phillips and Phillips, *Brainerd Journal*, 33.

⁵⁵ 11 June [1818], *ibid.*, 63; and [18] June [1818], *ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁶ 5 [July 1818], *ibid.*, 69.

⁵⁷ 16 [September 1819], *ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁸ 9 [January 1820], *ibid.*, 149.

⁵⁹ 10 [April 1820], *ibid.*, 163; “Report of the Prudential Committee: Station of Brainerd,” *Missionary Herald* 18 (January 1822): 2; 1, 3 [September 1823], Phillips and Phillips, *Brainerd Journal*, 375; and 19, 20 [September 1823], *ibid.*, 378.

⁶⁰ “North American Indians: Progress in Civilization,” *Missionary Herald* 25 (February 1829): 57.

⁶¹ Perdue and Green, *Cherokee Removal*, 51–52.

⁶² “Cherokees: Brainerd,” *Missionary Herald* 25 (February 1829): 58.

⁶³ “Cherokees: Willstown,” *Missionary Herald* 25 (February 1829): 59.

⁶⁴ “Cherokees: Candy’s Creek,” *Missionary Herald* 25 (February 1829): 59.