

Cherokee

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Language Groups in Southeast	
Muskogeans	Macro-Siouan (Iroquoian family)
Creek	Cherokee
Choctaw	Tuscarora
Chickasaw	Catawba
Alabama	Caddo
Seminole	

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Cultural Influences

- ✧ Cherokee name for themselves: Ani-Yunwiya (the principal people).
- ✧ Probably not descendants of Mississippians.
- ✧ Strong Mississippian influences were present, however.

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Mississippian Influence

- ✧ Charnel houses for bones of the elite dead.
- ✧ Green Corn (Busk) Ceremony, celebrating maize harvest and lighting new fires.
- ✧ Game of lacrosse.

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Cherokee Life after European Contact

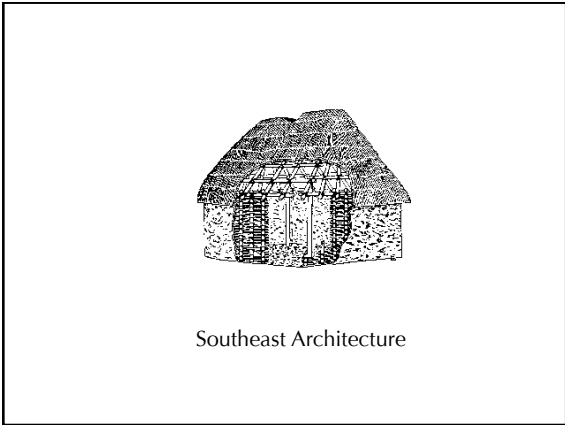
- ✧ About 1700, firearms and trade goods became widely available.
- ✧ White settlers moved into area.
- ✧ Hostilities soon arose between whites and Indians, and also between Indian tribes.
- ✧ Much description applies to all of Five Civilized Tribes: Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole.

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Cherokee Settlements

- ✧ Most located on streams or rivers.
- ✧ Town fairly large, with 350-600 persons.
- ✧ Houses similar in structure to Natchez – rectangular, with pole walls and gable roofs. Walls coated with clay and grass mats.

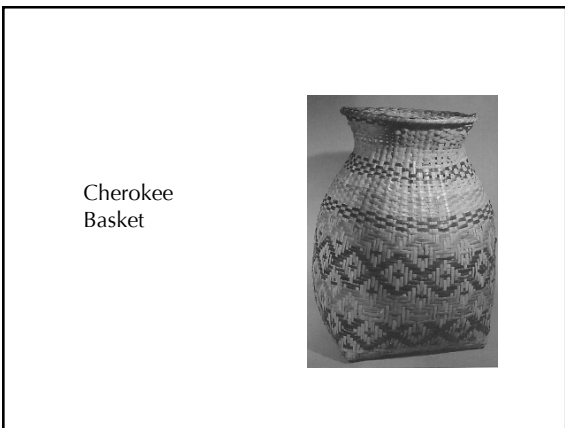
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Cherokee Baskets

- ✧ Best known artifacts from Cherokee culture are baskets.
- ✧ Other artifacts were pipes, pottery for cooking and storing food, and animal figures.

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Physical Appearance

- ✧ Traditional clothing: deerskin
 - ✦ Men: breechclouts
 - ✦ Women: knee-length skirts
 - ✦ After European contact: Buckskin shirts and cloth boots.
- ✧ Body decoration: tattooing, hair plucking, and ear stretching.

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Subsistence

- ✧ Major crops: maize, beans, pumpkin, tobacco.
- ✧ Women were primary farmers - - Europeans found this disturbing.
- ✧ Wild plant foods.
- ✧ Game animals: bison, deer, wild turkeys.
- ✧ Fishing.
- ✧ Domestic dogs also kept.

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Transportation

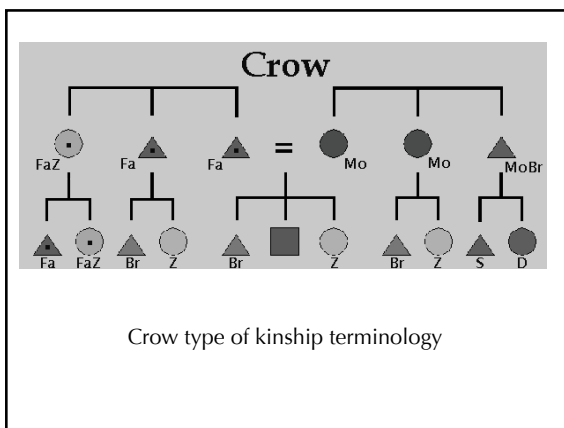
- ✧ Dugout canoe was primary transportation means.
- ✧ Made from hollowed logs, 40 ft long and 2 ft wide.
- ✧ Could carry about 20 people or lots of trade goods.

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Kinship System

- ✧ Matrilineal clans were main social structure.
- ✧ Bifurcate merging system of kinship terminology.
- ✧ Means that some people in the same generation are known by the same terms.

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Cherokee Households

- ✧ Traditionally, household consisted of matrilineal extended family
 - ✦ Elder woman and her husband
 - ✦ Daughters, their husbands, unmarried sons.
 - ✦ Children.

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Traditional Role of Father

- ✧ Father teaches some of male duties, like hunting and fishing.
- ✧ Mother's brother is responsible for discipline and for passing on sacred clan knowledge.

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Cherokee Clans

- ✧ Clans are primary social unit
- ✧ Clan membership extends across villages.
- ✧ 7 clans: bird, blue paint, red paint, twister-long hair, wild potato, and wolf.
- ✧ Farming lands allocated by clan membership.
- ✧ Clans involved in dispute resolution, and are responsible for acts of other clan members.

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Political Organization

- ✧ White and Red organizations traditionally existed in each village.
- ✧ Whites: faction that promoted peace; usually the older men.
- ✧ Reds: faction that planned and prepared for warfare; usually younger men.

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Political System

- ✧ Cherokee Villages were politically autonomous. Each governed own affairs.
- ✧ Culturally and socially related, but not politically unified.
- ✧ Problems for British negotiators:
 - ✦ Failed to understand separate control.
 - ✦ Attributed acts of warriors of one village to others.
 - ✦ Ascribed leadership standing falsely.

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Warfare and Raiding

- ✧ Warfare and raiding common in region.
- ✧ Internal conflict led to trouble - - e.g. Choctaw fought with French to subdue the Natchez.
- ✧ Revolutionary War: most factions of Five Civilized Tribes sided with British.
- ✧ Slave trade, competition for guns and horses increased warfare among Indian tribes.

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Religious Ceremonies

- ✧ Busk, or Green Corn ceremony was the most important in the cycle.
- ✧ Similar to Natchez activities: purging, cleaning village, and relighting the sacred fire, symbolizing a new beginning.

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American Independence

- ✧ George Washington: initiated policy of assimilation – 1789.
 - ✦ Learning English
 - ✦ Adopting European farming methods.
 - ✦ Allotting land for private ownership, not communal land use.

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Cherokee Assimilation

- ✧ Five Civilized Tribes approached assimilation policies cooperatively.
- ✧ Cherokee Nation formed in 1827.
- ✧ Sequoya worked out written symbols for Cherokee language.
- ✧ Cherokee capital with European style buildings established in New Echota, Georgia.
- ✧ Cherokee Phoenix newspaper began in 1828.

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Cherokee Changes

- ✧ Cherokee farmers adopted log cabins.
- ✧ Kept African slaves for farming.
- ✧ Wore European style clothing.
- ✧ Established nuclear family households.
- ✧ One area of some resistance: not much enthusiasm for Christianity – preferred traditional religious beliefs.

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Background for Removal

- ✧ Biggest factor: sheer pressure for more and more land for European settler's plantations.
 - ✦ Cotton crops require huge tracts of land.
- ✧ Assimilation policy misleading; real goal was European control of land.
- ✧ Alliance with British in Revolutionary War lingering reason for discomfort with Indian presence.

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Andrew Jackson

- ✧ Jackson's presidency foreshadowed the Civil War:
 - ✦ Southern position (Jackson's):
 - ⌘ States rights over federal authority.
 - ⌘ Right to keep slaves.
 - ⌘ Removal of Indians from eastern lands.

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Northern positions

- ✧ Northern positions on same issues:
 - ✦ Federal authority supreme over states.
 - ✦ Slavery should be abolished.
 - ✦ Indians should remain in ancestral lands.
- ✧ Andrew Jackson's election in 1828 established the Southern position on these issues for the 1830s.

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Indian Removal Act of 1830

- ✧ The Removal Act was passed by Congress and signed by Andrew Jackson in 1830.
- ✧ Many appeals and challenges raised.
- ✧ Choctaw: Act said that mixed-blood Indians could elect to stay. 1/3 of Choctaw claimed entitlement to stay; they were removed anyway.

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Cherokees and Removal Negotiations

- ✧ Despite a U.S. Supreme Court decision declaring that the state of Georgia had no jurisdiction over the Cherokees, removal was still pursued.
- ✧ Split in leadership:
 - ✦ John Ross: believed the American people's sense of justice would turn Jackson out of office in 1832 and the Cherokee would remain.
 - ✦ John Ridge and Major Ridge: took a more pessimistic view, and negotiated a treaty with the U.S. calling for removal by spring of 1838.

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Removal Process

- ✧ Ridges' group left in 1837, but the majority of Cherokee people remained and had made no preparations for removal by 1838.
- ✧ Step 1: Army rounded up people for relocation into camps, with poor sanitation, inadequate food, and overcrowding
- ✧ Conditions in camps were nearly unbearable.

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Cherokee Trail of Tears

- ✧ John Ross negotiated with the government about the mechanics of transport.
- ✧ Some made part of the journey by boat (John Ross elected this option for his family), but some had to march the entire way because of low river water levels.

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Travel to Arkansas

- ✧ Limited number of ox carts available.
- ✧ Most walked, carrying whatever they could.
- ✧ No camping facilities, so people slept in open or under wagons.
- ✧ Inadequate quantities of food provided and often was spoiled.
- ✧ Exhausting effects of marching and disease took enormous toll, and slowed travel. Some groups took more than 200 days.

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Travel to Arkansas

- ✧ During summer trips, even more died from heat, cholera, and many other diseases.
- ✧ When winter arrived, many died from hypothermia.
- ✧ In all, at least 4,000 Cherokee people died during removal, but impossible to know exactly how many because all were buried along the way.

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Retaliation and Division

- ✧ Once all reached Arkansas, great internal dissension and resentment still existed because of the Ridge's treaty. John Ridge, Major Ridge, and Elias Boudinot, the other prime player in the treaty, were all executed.
- ✧ John Ross continued as the Principal Chief, and was linked by some to the murders.

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Life in Arkansas

- ✧ No facilities had been created for the Cherokee people in Arkansas, so they had to begin from scratch.
- ✧ Land in Arkansas was rich and productive, and Cherokees decided to raise horses and cattle there.
- ✧ During the Civil War, they sided with the South.
- ✧ Treaties abrogated after war; moved to reservation land in Oklahoma.

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Eastern Cherokee

- ✧ Meanwhile, about 1,000 Cherokee people had fled to the mountains to avoid removal.
- ✧ Ultimately settled in North Carolina.
- ✧ Known as the Qualla Cherokee.
- ✧ William Thomas, adopted by the Cherokee, purchased land that later became the Cherokee reservation in North Carolina.

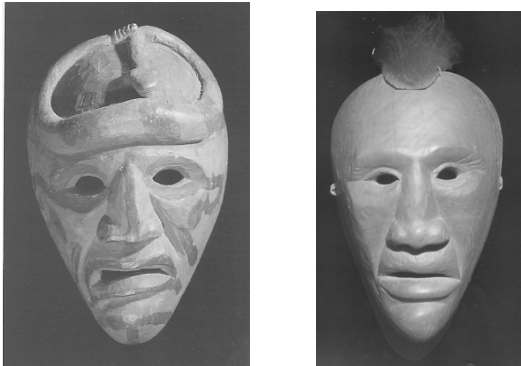
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Eastern Cherokee Ceremony

- ✧ The Cherokee had initiated a Booger Dance in defense against the smallpox epidemics.
- ✧ The Qualla Cherokee adapted this ceremony to reflect all of their perceived enemies - - whites, African-Americans, and Chinese people.

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Booger Masks



Eastern Cherokee New Traditions

- ◇ Farming still a major of life, although tourism and gambling now create more income.
- ◇ Nuclear family organization.
- ◇ 4 value systems:
 - ✦ Conservatives: preserve traditional ways.
 - ✦ Generalized: accommodate white world.
 - ✦ "White" Indians: mixed bloods who have minimal Indian heritage and live as whites.
 - ✦ Middle-class Indians: involved in market economy.

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