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The Origin and Development of the Redbird Smith Movement - Part II

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CHAPTER II

FULL-BLOOD LIFE IN THE 1890's

The last part of the 1880's and the first part of the 1890's was the last period in which the Cherokee people functioned as a semi-autonomous national group. Officially the state of Oklahoma was formed in 1906, and the Cherokee government came to an end at that period. But all through the last half of the 1890's, successive laws were passed by Congress stripping the Cherokee Nation of nearly all of its independence.

The older full-bloods look back on this period as the last era in which Cherokee culture flowered. There were signs foretelling the coming catastrophe, but the average full-blood of that era was largely unaware of them. Even though conditions were becoming hard for the survival of Cherokee full-blood culture, the full-bloods did not think at this time that the United States would break their treaty.

Life in the Cherokee Nation had most of the aspects that modern Americans now associate with the Wild West. There were great cattle ranches in the Indian Territory, becoming railroad towns, and an influx of "Boomers," that is, American citizens illegally settled on Indian land.

People were travelling through Indian Territory by wagon, horseback, and on foot, moving farther west or looking for new
land. The tide of American westward migration had flowed around the Cherokee Nation and settled most of the unclaimed land in the United States. But now with no more rich acres further west to settle, American citizens of the surrounding states were filtering in to Indian Territory. As one informant put it: "I seen these white people come in here from Arkansas with a wagon load of ragged kids. They lived in houses just made like a log pen with a dirt floor. They came in here poor and now they own the country." Citizens of the state of Arkansas made up a great many of the intruder class in the Cherokee Nation.

By the last of the 1890's, there were approximately twenty-five thousand whites in the Territory and seventy-five thousand Indians. Most of the intruders in the Cherokee Nation settled in the rich lands of the Arkansas River bottoms and in the country west of the Grand River. These intruders in the river bottoms soon formed an association to fight any type of eviction or legal difficulty. They were led by Watts, who was the most noted of the intruders on Indian land.

As one informant said: "If you tried to prosecute against any of these people, the association would beat you in court." At this time, all cases involving a United States citizen and a Cherokee were tried in the court at Fort Smith, Arkansas, under the famous Judge Isaac Parker. "The intruders could steal your horse or cow, but you couldn't beat them in Judge Parker's court."

Much of the intruder population was concentrated along
the several railroads which ran through the Cherokee Nation. Boom towns had sprung up at the stations. They had all the aspects of the stereotype of the wild and wooly western town. "A man could do anything he was big enough to do." Law enforcement was very lax as there was only the one court at Fort Smith until 1895 to deal with the entire intruder population of the Indian Territory. These towns became a haven for the most undesirable element of the West. Outlaws, gamblers— it was a real frontier.

Most of the full-bloods watched this activity with growing apprehension, and met the bustling new situation by drawing further back into the hills.

The Smith family, for instance, traded a rich farm in the Arkansas River bottom lands to retreat farther back in the hills. After the railroad between Fort Smith and Coffeetille, Kansas, was built through their farm, the Smith family soon moved away. The railroad trains killed many of the stock and generally disrupted the tranquility of existence. George Smith said that when he was a boy people were always walking through on the railroad, going somewhere. One of the greatest events in his life as a small boy was when a man came travelling along the railroad with a dancing bear.

Most of the mixed-bloods lived west of the Grand River in the Cherokee Nation, in the Coweescoowee District. By this time, the mixed-blood faction of the Cherokee were almost completely acculturated to American life. Many of the young
mixed-bloods of the era spoke no Cherokee. The percentage of Indian blood, because of intermarriage with whites and other mixed-bloods, was very slight in most families.

These people were Americans in every way but in allegiance. They considered themselves Cherokee and were many times very militant about that fact. But, because of culture differences, the dichotomy between these two factions was almost unbridgeable.

An example of the great difference between them was shown in their respective attitudes towards allotment and the dissolution of the tribal government. The mixed-bloods fought against it legalistically, but when resistance was no longer feasible, they accepted and entered whole-heartedly into the life of the state of Oklahoma.

The full-bloods, as a whole, met the problem of allotment by ignoring it, by passive resistance and a nativistic revival. To the full-bloods, resistance to the allotment never became "no longer feasible" (as it did to the mixed-bloods) for individual ownership of land struck at the very core of the culture.

A good example of mixed-blood behavior can be seen in the Rogers family of Claremore, Oklahoma. Clem Rogers and his wife were both less than one-fourth Indian. They were well-off financially and were cattle owners. They spoke little if any Cherokee. Clem Rogers was successful in politics in the Cherokee Nation and later in the new state of
Oklahoma. One of his sons, Will, became the exemplification of the American spirit, in the 1920's and '30's.

It was no trouble for most of the members of this faction to become Americans, as most of them were that culturally. Most of the mixed-bloods lived in the richer lands west of the Grand River. And many were large cattle owners. Much of this movement into the Cooweescoowee District had taken place after the Civil War. However, there were many mixed-bloods living in predominantly full-blood areas east of the Grand River. These people carried on basically the pattern of American rural life. There was a well-nit aristocracy among this faction who became the basis for the class structure of Oklahoma today. Most of the mixed-blood "aristocratic families" became the leaders in Oklahoma state politics and are today, or were until recent years, the aristocracy of Oklahoma.

The mixed-bloods who were against the allotment because of national feeling were also against it, probably, for reasons of financial gain. The allotments that would have been given them would have been too small for the vast herds owned by many mixed-bloods. American congressmen interested in seeing the Indian Territory become a state used this argument many times to bolster their point. They claimed that the rich mixed-bloods were taking advantage of the poor full-bloods. However, the author never heard or read of any full-blood objection to these large land holdings.

East of the Grand River, the full-bloods lived in the
quite hills relatively free from turmoil, away from the boom towns and the great cattle ranches. The procession of the full-bloods retreating further into the woods and hills that goes on today was also going on at this time. Not only was the full-blood retiring before the encroachment of "civilization," but also he was being pushed before it.

It was from the socially disorganizing aspects of this "civilization" that the full-blood was retreating. Such conditions as the presence of boom towns and intruders and the wave of outlawry in this period were some of the factors which gave rise to the Redbird Smith movement. However, back in the hills the full-bloods were still preserving their cultural identity. After two hundred years of intensive contact with whites, the core of Cherokee culture was still basically the same. As can be seen in the preceding chapter on culture history, all through Cherokee history the goals and values of the full-blood Cherokee had changed little. The approach to problems and reaction to situations were unchanging patterns. Cherokee culture had adapted to changing conditions and forms had changed, but basically the core of full-blood Cherokee culture in the nineties was the same as before. And out of full-blood Cherokee culture in the nineties came the Redbird Smith movement.

The Cherokee Nation was divided topographically into two main areas—one, east of the Grand River, was the Ozark plateau which extends over from the neighboring state of Arkansas. This country is highly dissected in parts and is very wooded. On the
undissected parts of the plateau are prairies.

West of the Grand River is the prairie country of eastern Oklahoma and Kansas—gently rolling grass country, with sparse timber, but well-watered and suitable for farming.

The full-bloods generally lived along the streams which dissected the plateau. It was only in the '90's that the full-bloods, to any extent, began to move on to the prairies of the "mountain tops." This was probably due not only to the cultural preference of the full-bloods, but to the fact that the steel plow, which is suitable for breaking prairie sod, came into general use in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The typical full-blood community was spread along a stream course. Its center was usually a log church. These communities were made up usually of two or three extended families.

The average full-blood lived in a log house, sometimes of the double variety seen on the American frontier. This is a two room structure with a "dog trot," an open passage way, between the two rooms. More often, however, the dwelling was a one room log house. There was usually a smoke house where meat was stored and, later, jars of canned goods, when that technique came into Cherokee life. There was also a corn crib and a barn. Most full-bloods had no outside toilets or toilet facilities.

Most of the income of a full-blood family came from the land. The major crop grown was corn, and usually there was a small garden also. At this time stock had to be fenced out,
as the land was all free range. Most of the counties in Oklahoma in this area now have free range, because of the full-blood preference for this type of land tenure. Sometimes a little cotton was grown and taken to one of the gins in the area for cash, or traded. Cotton was grown more places in the Cherokee Nation then than it is now. Cotton was the "cash crop." But, generally speaking, full-blood economy was almost self-sustaining.

One of the principal items of full-blood economy was wild game. Exactly how much hunting was relied upon in relation to agriculture cannot be seen at this time. However, it is probable that wild meat consisted of at least 40 to 50 per cent of all Cherokee food. The Cherokee today eat a great deal of meat, and most of the meat eaten in those days was wild game. As one informant put it, "We lived on deer in them days."

The full-blood section of the Cherokee Nation was full of wild game. The timber was very large and high grass grew through all the woods. Informants say, "You could see a horse in those woods at a quarter of a mile or more, because of the lack of undergrowth." These conditions were ideal for the propagation of wild life.

Large parts of the Cherokee Nation were unoccupied except along the courses of the streams. To maintain this type of economy, the full-bloods needed large areas in which to hunt. In earlier days, before the Civil War, many full-bloods had made yearly trips back to the Great Plains area to hunt.
buffalo. But now, the great herds were gone from this part of the United States, and so this part of the diet had lapsed. Although much of the diet consisted of other kinds of game, corn products in various forms were eaten too, as well as beans and other garden products, even though the Cherokees were not as intensive farmers as certain other tribes of the region, such as the Creeks.

Cherokee food preparation at that time still retained much of the aboriginal character, with new techniques added from white culture. Hominy and corn bread, in various forms, were eaten. Even today, most Cherokee households still have a mortar and pestle in the back yard which is used in the preparation of distinctive dishes. The dishes require much time and preparation by Cherokee women. Today, one of the distinctive dishes eaten by the Cherokee is responsible for a nickname given to the full-bloods by the local whites in the area. They refer to the full-bloods as "Kunuchi-pounders."

The dish is made by pounding up hickory nuts into a jelly and mixing with the Cherokee form of hominy. It requires a great deal of pounding of the hickory nuts—hence the name.

An article of diet which was relied upon heavily was fish. Even now, the streams of this area abound in typical Ozark fish, and the Cherokee of today fish quite a bit as they did then. All during the summer months, in Oklahoma, you can see Cherokees fishing along the streams. The whites in the area are always amazed at the success they have in their
fishing technique. This success is due to many hundreds of years of practice. The full-bloods have a great store of knowledge about weather conditions and general fishing lore. Now, the state of Oklahoma restricts certain fishing techniques of the Cherokee; but in the nineties all the techniques were in use. Fishing with line and pole, use of the trot line, spearing, and the use of a drug "devil's shoe string," were employed. This drug is pounded up and thrown in a water hole, dragging the fish and making them float to the top where they can be easily thrown out on the bank. The fish not caught soon recover and swim off. Many times such fishing by the use of herbs was a group affair, and some of the fish caught would be barbecued and eaten on the spot.

Hunting of deer and small game was done with the use of guns. Squirrels were hunted with a bow and very long, blunt-pointed arrow. Birds were hunted with the blow gun. The Cherokee full-bloods also kept herds of cattle, although these herds were not as extensive as those of some of the great ranching families of the mixed-bloods. Full-blood cattle ran wild and were branded by the individual owner. The cattle-raisinig culture of the southwest had been taken on by most of the Cherokee by this time, and all the techniques that belong to this special occupation.

Some milk cows were also kept by the full-bloods, but milk or dairy products were not used to an extensively by them. Many of the Cherokee preferred to drink a hominy concoction or coffee.
Hogs were allowed to run wild in the woods and were usually marked with a cut in the ear for identification. Actually, although the Cherokee had stock, they still made use of wild game for much of their meat supply.

Around most Cherokee homesteads, there was a small orchard of peaches and apples, which were dried for winter use. Jerky and other foodstuffs were also smoked and dried.

Although the families lived in individual homesteads, much of the work was done communally. The Cherokee of this time were a very compact and united people. Most of the large efforts in their economy were accomplished by community work. Such tasks as plowing the fields, tending the stock, hog killing, harvesting, housebuilding, and rail splitting were all done by the community. The type of community participation varied from area to area. And the most intensive community activity took place in heavily populated full-blood areas.

Even today, white landowners hiring workers usually hire one or two families for work in the fields. As one white landowner explained it: "The Cherokees don't like much to work by theirselves, but you get 'en together and they'll do a good, careful job." This communal working is called by the Cherokee, "gadoog." This word is probably related in some way to the word for breed, "gadoo" and the word for a political unit, "skaoogi." In most Cherokee full-blood communities, the communal work was under the leadership of the "little captain," (os-di skai-gunst), the local officer of the Keetoowah Society.
It can be seen that the Cherokee economy was almost self sufficient; but now in the 1900's, the Cherokee were beginning to be drawn into the cash economy of Western civilization.

Periodic trips were made to the trading centers, which were usually in the railroad towns or other urban centers in the Cherokee Nation. There were some country stores in this area which were usually run by mixed-bloods or inter-married whites. The full-bloods would usually go in extended family groups to trade at these centers. Sometimes they would stay a day or more. (Today, when the full-blood shops, he likes to take his time, and if hurried or "high-pressured" will just answer less and less.) The items bought at these stores were: flour, sugar, tobacco, clothing, and coffee. (Today a lot of coffee is consumed by the full-bloods—and the Cherokee has a reputation among the Creeks for being an excessive coffee drinker.) The articles purchased were paid for in barter or, more often, in cash.

The clothing that was bought by the Cherokee was the usual frontier type of garments. A decade earlier most of the clothing was made of homespun by the women. A Cherokee man wore boots, usually made by a native cobbler, sometimes with wooden nails. They were the knee-high, low-heeled "miners boots." Most of the full-blood men affected a "Western" type of hat.

The women wore the full-length dresses adopted in the early part of the century, and usually tied a bright handker-
chief on their heads. Some of the younger women, however, were beginning to affect fashionable clothes of the era. Most of the pictures of the full-bloods at that time show them in this attire. The Cherokee were beginning to get caught up in the picture-taking phase of American life. Most families have pictures from the era of their relatives.

The men formerly had worn their hair cut below the ear, and many much longer than that; but it was beginning to become customary to wear short hair, as the pictures show.

As well as being social gathering places, the trading centers advanced credit for the full-bloods.

After the payment of money to the Cherokee Nation for the rent of the Cherokee Strip, the full-bloods around Briggs, Oklahoma, deposited their money with the local trader, an intermarried citizen, so that he had in his possession tens of thousands of dollars. The temptation was too great and he absconded with the money, leaving his wife and child and the trading establishment.

On the whole, however, the land payments helped bolster Cherokee economy. The money received from a large cattle association for the rent of the Cherokee Strip was issued individually to the Indians at various stations throughout the Cherokee Nation. Old timer say you couldn't walk for the drunk Indians for miles around the stations. The various outlaws were busy robbing them as they lay.

But many full-bloods made provident use of their money.
Redbird Smith built a new house with his issue.

In the nineties, this issue was spoken of as "bread money."

Some of the full-bloods were left out of one or more of these issues. It was necessary to register previously in order to be able to draw individual money. And some of the full-bloods unfamiliar with legislative machinery failed to register.

As stated before, a typical Cherokee community extended along a stream and was made up of one or more extended families. The bi-lateral extended family is very important in Cherokee life today, and was at that time.

Cherokee kinship terminology had shifted somewhat, but was based upon the matrilineal clan of earlier days, although certain changes had been made in the structure to take care of a shift from the matrilineal.¹

The Cherokee, as today, had very large families, and there was a close feeling of kinship on both sides of the family. As one Cherokee man said, "Seems like every time I meet a pretty girl, she turns out to be a cousin."

The clan at this time had almost been forgotten. Many people did not know their clan, and others would not tell, for fear of black magic. The name of a person and his clan is used in the rites of black magic, or as they say in Oklahoma in "conjuring."

Most of the rules based on clan status regulating personal behavior toward individuals were forgotten. The intermarriage between clan members, the selection of mates from certain clans, the joking relationships, had all ceased. A taboo had grown up against intermarriage of blood relations on either side.

On the Cherokee reservation in North Carolina, the first thing one asked of a strange Cherokee was, "What is your clan? and what was your father's clan?" This was done in order to determine the status in relation to oneself, so that the proper behavior and kinship term could be used. One of the things which they express great surprise about in North Carolina is the fact that some Oklahoma Cherokee when visiting there will not tell their clan.

By this time, the emphasis in Cherokee family life had shifted to the male line. The man was head of the house. It was the pattern for the male when marrying to bring his wife and settle around his own community. However, there was not a hard and fast rule about this, and sometimes the couple would settle in the community of the wife or move to another one. (And, even though the pattern had shifted at this time, the Cherokee still did not have the strict patrilineal dominance of the ordinary Southern white.) Women were excluded from participation in politics in the Cherokee Nation, and it was almost as much of a shock to the sensibilities of many of the full-bloods when the women "got the vote" as it was to the Southern white.
The father controlled the Cherokee family to a large degree, and the close relation of mother's brother to the children was not in evidence. Somewhat stricter control was used with the children than in former times. But even so, this control was very limited. John Smith spoke of the time "by father drove me to school with a long switch"; but after more determined resistance was offered by John the matter was dropped. Cherokees today say that the children were more well-behaved than now—although this might be a looking-back into the "golden age." Today, Cherokee children exhibit the personality traits which go along with Cherokee culture and are very well-behaved generally, according to white standards.

The mother still, however, as in former times, had a great deal of control over the children; and Cherokees were apt to listen to the counsel of their elders, even when they themselves were in advanced years.

The pattern of marrying was usually arranged by the boy and the girl themselves—although the counsel of the parents was influential in their decision. Cherokee girls required almost as much courtship and attention as did the white girls of the era. However, Cherokees accept the act more readily than whites that economic security is influential in a woman's decision in picking a mate.

One informant told a story which hinges on this point and is an example of Cherokee humor. He said that, when he was a young man, his brother and a friend went over one night to
court one of the local belles. They had on their best clothes, new boots, and rode fine saddle horses with good saddles. One of the local boys was there, calling on the same girl. He was without family and had to live back in the woods, very poorly. He rode a donkey which was so old that his ears hung down and all the hair was off one side. For a saddle, the boy had a mattress thrown on the donkey's back and he carried a musket, as long as he was tall. To turn the donkey, it was necessary to prod him in the side of the head with the musket. When all the boys were sitting at the girl's house, the subject of their qualifications for a husband came up, and they in turn expounded their virtues. When it came time for the poorest young man, he said, "You look at those boys there. They're dressed in fine clothes and ride good saddle horses. But every stituch they have on their back and the fine saddle horses belong to their fathers." Because of this he found favor in the girl's eyes.

Today, young men will tell girls how much cattle or property they have. Although nominally Baptist, they have never taken on the strict moral code of American whites. And sex laxity was not greatly censured. The rate of illegitimacy is very high among the Cherokees of past times and today. But, usually, regardless of this fact, a girl will be able to get married later. The attitudes of condoning sexual laxity in females and illegitimacy probably goes back to the time when the matrilineal clan was strong among the Cherokees.
The Cherokee Nation's legal system provided for civil marriage in the courts. But not many full-bloods went through this rite, preferring to be married by an Indian preacher, or, as informants say, just "take up together"—or a "blanket marriage."

Divorces were simply a parting of the way, when people could not get along. In Cherokee, you say "to divide the blankets" for divorce. The extended family of the mother usually absorbed the economic obligation to the children.

By this period in Cherokee history, the prevailing religion among the full-bloods was the Baptist. Each community had a Baptist church, usually built of logs, and in a central location, so that it could be easily reached. Many times, brush arbors were built by the side of the church, for summer use. These arbors are reminiscent of the old brush arbors of the ceremonial dance grounds of the Southeast.

The church was highly organized, somewhat after the fashion of southern white Baptist churches. But each church was almost an autonomous unit. The community helped in erecting new buildings and keeping the church up. The women had quilting bees and communal church activities, and community life revolved around this center.

Nearly every community had a lay native preacher, who was usually a farmer as well as a preacher. All services were conducted in the Cherokee language, and the preaching style is almost identical with the old ceremonial speaking style used
on the old ceremonial grounds. The Bible was translated into Cherokee by the famous missionaries, Evan Jones and his son, John. Because of the use of the Cherokee language many of the "Biblical" concepts follow older Cherokee religious thought. Also, some Christian concepts are obscured, because of the lack of exact translation into the Cherokee language. However, this translation is excellent considering the great handicaps.

A few passages are obscured, possibly intentionally, in order not to lend validity to certain older Cherokee concepts which the missionaries wanted to "weed out." Hymns are translated into Cherokee, many of them the standard hymns sung in white churches in the South. Others were composed by the Cherokees, following the general pattern of hymn music set by the early missionaries. However, this music was altered to fit the Cherokee language and the Cherokee melodic pattern. Much of the singing by the Cherokee has a medieval European flavor.

These hymns are one of the greatest attractions that the Baptist church holds for the Cherokee. Even pagan Cherokees today go to Baptist meetings just to hear the hymn singing.

It is doubtful whether the Cherokee of the period understood the Christian doctrines in the same way as white Baptists. Even today, young Cherokee preachers make most surprising statements relative to Christian doctrine. And the stricter aspects of the Baptist moral code were never wholly taken on.
The preachers and the men in the church organization were usually leaders among the full-bloods. The religious and political life of the period was intertwined. There is no real separation in the Cherokee mind between church and state.

The full-bloods of that time usually had all day meetings and had "dinner on the ground," during the day. Most churches had a small "cookhouse" nearby where food was prepared. At some time in the year, usually around September, there was a meeting of all the Cherokee Baptists. This was held for about four days, with hymn-singing and preaching throughout the entire period. People came and camped. The meeting usually took place at about the same time that the old Green Corn ceremony had occurred. At the present time, this meeting is usually held just east of Talequah, Oklahoma.

The meeting also served to bring together young people from all over the Cherokee Nation and was a chance to meet old friends. The full-bloods always made a social as well as a religious holiday of their meetings.

By this period in Cherokee history, "stomp dancing" (Indian dancing) had stopped. The dancing did not stop immediately, but went through a gradual decline. Also, there were now missionaries in the Cherokee Nation who were very much against Indian dancing and preached to the full-bloods against it.

Some of the full-bloods were beginning to see a dichotomy between some of the old aboriginal customs, such as Indian
dancing, and the Christian religion. Before this time, there had been a general combination of the two patterns, as there was among the Creeks at this period. The Creeks would go to "stomp dances" all Saturday night and to church in the morning.

There was a minority in the Cherokee Nation who still held to the old religion as much as possible. As the old ceremonial pattern had broken down, this minority was left with no formal religion since they did not participate in the Baptist pattern. The Smith family was one of these. And it was this small core of conservatives which became the core of the Redbird Smith movement.

A phase of Cherokee culture which had survived into the '90s was the complex medical lore of former times. This lore consisted of ritualized prayers and herbs for curing. And it was from these ritualized prayers that much of the religious thought and concepts of the Redbird Smith movement could be reconstructed. The medical lore of the Cherokee is unbelievably complicated, and to be a medicine man requires a great store of knowledge.

Each medicine man usually had a book in which the ritual prayers were written in the Cherokee alphabet. Some of these books are many pages long. The knowledge was perpetually being added to. The Cherokee of Oklahoma did not have a great variety of herbs such as they did in the mountain regions of the South. There in the southern Appalachians, several different plant zones existed, because of the height of the mountains.
Here, in Oklahoma, the hills were only high enough to include one life zone. But even after one hundred years, the medicine men of today in Oklahoma know herbs which grow in the "old country," "Tse-la-gi o-ka-ti."

The herb lore was being added to by experience and acculturation from white herb specialists. Medicine men are always discovering new herb remedies. One of George Smith's most successful medicines was purchased from a travelling white herb specialist for the sum of $20.00. The medicine man's prayers are added to by dreams. George Smith has, at times, dreamed medicine songs and short prayers, and so has John Smith. But, by and large, the origins of the complicated ritual prayers are very ancient.

Actual prayers, that is the asking of a deity to accomplish a specific purpose, is found only in the prayers to the most powerful deities. The minor spirits are commanded to do something.¹

The Cherokee Baptists see no conflict in going to a medicine man and being a staunch Baptist. Many staunch Baptists today are medicine men themselves. And there are Baptist preachers who are skilled in this specialty. They see no conflict in preaching Christianity and praying to the Thunder to cure disease.

Most of the prayers are used in curing the sick. But others are also used in hunting. Songs are also used.

There were doctors in the Cherokee Nation—mixed-bloods as well as white. But the full-bloods made little use of them, preferring their own medicine men.

Many of the people at that time, especially the medicine men, knew the old sacred myths. The myths were not as sacred as in former times, because now an alternate had entered Cherokee culture—the sacred myths of the Bible. In former times, to learn the great sacred myths, it was necessary to go through special training. A young novice, desiring to learn these traditions, would meet at night with the older tradition keepers of the tribe in one of the small houses of the Cherokee. There, after talking all night, they would go to the river in the morning for a purification rite. This consisted of having the hearers of the myths strip themselves and be scratched by a bone scratcher, after which they would wade out into the stream and face the rising sun while the priest recited the appropriate prayers on the bank. This purification rite is a very important ritual performance.¹

However, at this time, the myths were not this sacred. Most of the people at this time knew something about the Cherokee deities, such as the Sun, the Fire, and the Thunder. There was also supposed to be a race of "little people," in Cherokee, "yun-wi oos-di," a race of perfectly formed small people thought to live under the "bluffs." The world was peopled with other spirits, and the Cherokee are very afraid

¹Mooney, James, Myths of the Cherokee, p. 230.
of witchcraft.

Another great fear is the fear of black magic. There are many ritualistic prayers which can be used for making another person sick, causing death, and other bad happenings. There are also prayers for success in love. This black magic is called "conjuring" in Oklahoma. Fear of witches and conjuring looms large in the Cherokee mind. Conversation around these topics takes up a good deal of Cherokee time. The active art of black magic was practised more in the '90's than it is today, but the fear of being conjured is now just as strong as formerly. Much sickness is laid at the door of these practices. Many Cherokees today, while going to church meetings, will take their own lunch instead of eating the food provided there, for fear that it may be conjured.

Girls are also afraid many times to talk to a boy because of fear of a former girl friend.

As can be seen from the foregoing material, the life of the full-blood was fairly well cut off from that of the rest of the Cherokee in general. There was one institution in which full-bloods participated, which brought together most of the factions among the Cherokee citizens. This was the tribal government.

The capital of the Cherokee Nation was at Tahlequah. And the present County Courthouse of Cherokee county, Oklahoma, was the capital building. This town was the only true Cherokee urban center. Many of the "aristocratic" mixed-bloods lived
around Tahlequah. And there are many other mixed-blood families in the District. The Cherokee government was modeled along the lines of the United States government. There were two houses, a lower and an upper house, the lower house being formed of representatives according to population, and the upper house having two delegates from each district. The whole organization was called the Council. There was also a chief and a second chief and executive council. This was the governing body of the Cherokee Nation.

During the '90's, the lower house had a great many full-blood representatives. The speeches were in English or Cherokee according to which was the language of the representative speaking, and several interpreters were provided to translate from English to Cherokee and from Cherokee to English.

However, the full-bloods were in the minority. Before, the numerical superiority of the full-bloods had allowed them to control the policies of the Cherokee Nation. But after 1887, when Chief Dennis Bushyhead went out of office, the mixed-blood faction was able to control the policies of the Cherokee Nation. The mixed-bloods were very proficient in English and had many educated men among them, such as doctors, lawyers, and other specialists who had been educated in the "States."

During this period, the more subtle politicians of the mixed-blood faction were able to outmaneuver the more direct full-bloods. Formerly in the Cherokee Nation, politics and issues had revolved around individual leaders, but now in the
'90's, the issue of the coming dissolution of the Cherokee Nation was becoming clear. The National party usually represented the full-blood interest, and the Downing party the mixed-blood interests.

The dichotomy between the two factions had reached the point where it pervaded every aspect of Cherokee life. For instance, the marker in the yard of the Cherokee capital building, now the Cherokee County Courthouse, was erected to General Stand Watie. The full-bloods had wanted to put up a marker to Sequoyah and resented this tribute to one of the leaders of the old Treaty party, a general of the Cherokee Confederate forces. But they were outvoted by the members of the Downing party.

By this time, most of the mixed-bloods, or half-breeds, spoke little, or no, Cherokee, and communication was almost cut off between the two factions. The terms "half-breed" and "full-blood" are to a large extent cultural designations. Most of the mixed-bloods were less than one-fourth Indian. Since the original split into the two factions, the mixed-bloods had intermarried very extensively with the whites and with other mixed-bloods. This widened the gap of cultural difference as the years went by.

The term "full-blood," as it was used in this time, refers to the faction which was predominantly Indian in blood, language, and culture. However, even at this time, there were few actual pure-blooded Cherokees left. But intermarriage in this conservative group had been cut off to a large extent after
the removal to Oklahoma.

Most of the "full-bloods" had some white ancestors, but they were not several generations back. For instance, George Smith's great grandfather, on his mother's side, was a white man, as was also his great grandfather on his father's side. There is probably white blood from other sources in the family also. But, at this time, if both of your parents spoke Cherokee, you were considered a full-blood.

In the Cherokee Nation at this time there were about twenty-five thousand Cherokee citizens. Approximately nine thousand of these belonged to the full-blood faction. There were four thousand Negro freedmen, and the rest of the citizens were mixed-bloods.1

For the first time in Cherokee history, the mixed-bloods were outnumbering the full-bloods. The Negro vote was also important, but it was usually "swung" by mixed-bloods. As John Smith says, "The full-blood never had a chance under the tribal government."

The Negro did not hold the same place in Cherokee society as in Creek and Seminole societies, for instance. In those Indian Nations the Negro sided many times with the full-blood. In the Cherokee Nation most of the Negroes had been owned by the wealthy mixed-blood class. And the Cherokee Negro followed the general cultural pattern of the American Negro.

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1Wardell, W. L., A Political History of the Cherokee Nation, pp. 283, 333.
There was very little contact between the full-blood and the Negro. The freedmen lived in the rich Arkansas bottoms and west of the Grand River. There was very little intermarriage between the Negro citizens and other Cherokees.

In the Creek Nation, on the other hand, many Negroes spoke Creek, went to Green Corn dances, sang Creek songs, and were culturally full-blooded Creeks. There was also quite a bit of intermarriage between the Creeks and the freedmen. More conservative Creeks had owned slaves, and the slaves had acculturated to conservative Creek ways and language.

Very few of the full-bloods in the Cherokee Nation, however, had owned any slaves, and there is some prejudice of the full-blood against the Negro. The Negro is considered too noisy by the full-blood.

Cherokee politics had all the lusty qualities of frontier American politics. Candidates running for office stumped the country making speeches. Political rallies and barbecues were held. Election time was the signal for flare-ups of violence just as it was in the rest of the rural South. Whiskey was always plentiful around the polling places, as it was at any festival time. Votes were recorded by a clerk at the polling centers. Only the areas with large concentrations of full-bloods were able to send full-bloods to the lower House.

The Cherokee Nation had a system of courts modeled somewhat after those of the United States, with a supreme court and courts for each district. The court procedure, as well as
all the procedures of the Cherokee government, was tempered by the personality of the full-bloods. On paper, the government and courts of the Cherokee Nation seemed to be exactly like that of an average state. And this is what mixed-blood leaders were striving for. But the full-bloods altered the systems to fit their concepts. These tribal courts, as well as politics, developed many successful politicians and lawyers of the future state of Oklahoma.

Many of the mixed-blood politicians like to tell stories of these days in the Indian Territory, particularly about dealings with the full-bloods, much as the now successful urban Southerner tells about his backwoods relatives, or modern Americans of Irish descent tell about the first Irish immigrants.

Court procedure and court time were often bogged down by Indian temperament and habit. For instance, full-blood witnesses often took hours of court time telling in conscientious detail about the physical aspects of a certain scene, whether they had been present at the actual time the crime took place or not.

Cherokee justice was swift and direct, particularly in courts where full-blood judges presided.

Before this decade, Cherokee courts had been almost autonomous, except insofar as the Intercourse Acts were concerned—such as the transporting of whiskey into Indian Territory and cases between a United States citizen and a Cherokee
citizen. Throughout this period, however, more and more authority was stripped from Indian courts and put into the hands of Federal courts. The Cherokee Nation had a system of law enforcement with sheriffs and deputy sheriffs for each district, but more and more United States marshals were taking over their functions.

The educational system of the Cherokee Nation was as good as or better than that of the Southern states. There were two high schools and one hundred primary schools. Also, fourteen primary schools and one high school were provided for Negro citizens. Also, there were twelve mission schools functioning at this time. There was an orphan asylum. And children of non-citizens had their own subscription schools.

However, although this outwardly presented a high level of education, the full-blooded were still largely uneducated. Among the mixed bloods, on the other hand, there were very highly educated men, such as lawyers and doctors and other professional men who had attended the schools of the Cherokee Nation and universities in the states.

Although schools were provided equally for the full-blood districts, educational methods at this time for teaching non-English speakers were very poor. The Cherokee full-bloods set a high premium on education, but nevertheless most of them did not go to school for more than a few years, if at all, primarily because of the language handicap. Redbird Smith, for

\[1\text{Ibid., p. 152.}\] \[2\text{Ibid., p. 155.}\]
instance, wanted very much that his sons become educated and was much in favor of schools. He urged his oldest son to become educated at least to the point of becoming a very good interpreter; and being an interpreter of the Cherokee language requires an excellent knowledge of English as well as a facility with language. Most of the full-bloods over forty spoke very little English, if any. And it was only the young men at that time who were learning English to any great extent.

Even today there are quite a few people who were young men and women at that time who speak very little English.

The Cherokee Nation had a fairly good road system but citizens were not required to work on the roads. Neighborhoods took care of their roads. Even today many of the country roads built then are in very good shape. Older Indians, when riding through the country, will always remark about which roads are "Indian roads."

All functions of the Cherokee government were achieved without financial help from its citizens. The interest on the money for the sale of Cherokee land to the United States provided enough to sustain the courts, government, support of the schools, etc.

The Cherokee personality of this time was very much like that of today. And it may draw its roots from far back in the past. The Cherokees in Oklahoma today seem to an outsider to be stoical. However, among themselves the full-bloods laugh and joke quite a bit, although they are hardly ever
boisterous. They can be characterized as having a quiet joviality. Because of bitter past experience, they are suspicious of strangers, but are still very hospitable. Cherokee behavior as compared to whites is quiet, and many Cherokees can be in a crowd and still make very little noise.

Even at large gatherings, the atmosphere can be described as a "quiet hubbub." The Cherokee try to avoid conflict situations, such as direct and open criticism and arguments. However, when aggression does come into the open it is apt to come in the form of violence. However, the full-bloods were not so prone to violence as the frontier whites.

Much of this aggression was expressed in the form of gossip and even the Cherokee men were great gossipers. When aggression comes to the surface in the form of criticism, arguments, or violence it causes enmity between individuals. On the level of the society as a whole it caused factionalism. Full-blood Cherokee culture is highly organized and does not allow for much difference of opinion as does American culture. There is no channeling of factionalism. When the break does come there is no reconciliation and no common ground for the factions to meet on. There is no other course to take but for one faction to go one way and the other faction another way. This can be seen in the actions of the Keetoowah Society and the Keetoowahs Inc. in the first part of the twentieth century, and in the modern factions of the full-bloods.¹

¹This description of Cherokee personality is only a layman's impression and is designed only to give the reader a general impression.
The full-bloods, because of their comparatively easy economic life, had a great deal of leisure time and much of this was spent in amusements. The communal nature of Cherokee culture brought together groups of people to engage in activities. The full-bloods always made a social gathering out of their communal workings and church activities. The full-bloods like to gather in large groups. They like to go fishing together, to walk to church together, to eat together, and to gather in crowds and visit together.

Since statehood, the full-bloods have followed the American rural pattern of going to town on Saturday, and they make a great event of this. They circulate around, shaking hands and visiting with friends, wandering in and out of shops and standing on the streets “just looking.” The Cherokees are great watchers.

They also visited a great deal. The full-bloods liked to gamble quite a bit. Men liked to sit under the shade trees and play cards in the afternoon. On weekends, there were usually all night card games going on, particularly in the boom towns.

Horse racing was also quite a sport, and many of the rich mixed-bloods kept blooded horses. There were race tracks in many parts of the Cherokee Nation.

There were also quite a few herds of wild horses (in the Cherokee Nation) and great horse drives were undertaken. The full-bloods like to ride horses and work with cattle. They
always had a great many more horses than they needed. And even today many of them are "horse poor."

Another gambling game was "Corn Stalk Shoots." This game is played by piling corn stalks about two feet high in a bundle and shooting at them from a distance of over one hundred yards. The arrow has a long spike on the end of it and the score is reckoned by how many cornstalks the arrow pierces. Teams were organized, and one team would shoot against another all day. Each team had its captain and its own medicine man. The team members would meet at the river and the medicine man would make medicine all night. In the morning, the team would be put through the purification rite of "going to the water." The medicine man would divine to see if they were strong enough in medicine, and, if not, would continue his arts. Sometimes the corn stalk shoot would not get underway until two in the afternoon. In former days, large numbers of people engaged in a corn stalk shoot; sometimes one District shooting against another, with hundreds of people gathered together. A lot of wagering was done on the game and a great deal of money changed hands.

Also, the art of conjuration was practiced, because of the gambling involved. George Smith tells of one time when he was conjured in a match so that his arm knotted up and he could not pull the bow. After this he decided to quit, because, he declared, "There wasn't much to that corn stalk shooting."
The Cherokee ball game with its ceremonialism was not being played at this time. Square dancing was well-liked by the full-bloods, and many of them played the fiddle or some other stringed instrument.

The full-bloods are unusually musical and like all types of singing and music. A real regional type of square dance music and general folk music grew up in the Indian Territory. Many songs and tunes are characteristic of this region, such as square dance tunes like "Fort Smith," and "The Creek Nation." Even today many full-bloods play at the country dances in the area. In 1951, an elderly Indian woman, about sixty years old, won easily over all competition in the old time fiddlers contest at the Sequoyah County Fourth of July celebration.

Many of the social events were accented with whiskey drinking and fighting. At this time a wave of outlawry descended on the Cherokee Nation, and many of the full-bloods were caught up in it. This was a symptom of the social disorganization of the time and had happened before in Cherokee history at such times.

After the Removal to Oklahoma, there was a minor civil war between the Ross faction and the members of the Treaty party. Also, during and immediately after the Civil War was the great era of turbulent days for which the Indian Territory is noted. The boom towns along the railroad were like all frontier towns, and the Indian Territory was a haven for outlaws. Law enforcement was inadequate, and whiskey flowed into the Indian Territory.
John Smith tells of a time when, on a "bender" with a friend in Fort Smith, they shipped several cases of liquor to their home town by railway express. They came back on the train loaded down with whiskey and managed to intimidate the U. S. marshall on the train by holding their guns on him. They got off safely in their home town.

One John Childers, a full-blood postmaster at Sallisaw, in the Indian Territory, brought in at one time two hundred barrels of whiskey. There were also illegal "stills" in the Cherokee Nation. As George Smith expressed it, "Every night, you could hear somebody whooping and shooting off their guns."

The Federal court at Fort Smith, Arkansas, under the famous Judge Isaac Parker, hanged eighty-eight white and Indian outlaws during this period and sentenced another eighty-four to be hanged. Many of the full-bloods who were involved in this wave of outlawry became famous—or infamous. Life was cheap at this time, and many of the stories told by informants would seem exaggerated if written as modern fiction. It is probable that much of the outlawry among the full-bloods was because of resentment from being arrested by U. S. marshals and not being tried by their own courts. Most of the full-bloods were sympathetic to these outlaws and made their capture very difficult. The Cherokee sheriffs of the various Districts were very efficient, however. These sheriffs were thought to know a lot of medicine, and many of them used the old war medicine in their activities.
One famous sheriff of the Illinois District was Johnson Mannie. Johnson Mannie at one time killed six outlaws with a six shooter when they were robbing the town of Braggs, Oklahoma. He accomplished this against men with Winchester rifles, by riding straight into town where the outlaws had herded all the citizens into the middle of the town, and he continued running towards them shooting, after his horse had been shot out from under him. Johnson Mannie was believed to "know a lot of medicine."

Nose Miller and his companion, Will Bails, were two full-blood outlaws of the period who also used "medicine" in their escapades. One of the ways they eluded capture was by divination with a quartz crystal, or "dragon scale," as it is known in Cherokee, to divine with. So they knew when the law officers were approaching.

One of the most famous outlaws of this period was Ned Christie. He was a gunsmith by trade, spoke good English, and was a member of the Cherokee Council. When the Council was in session in Talequah, he killed a U. S. marshal when drunk. He was later shot in the nose and was cured by a medicine man. He supposedly became embittered and refused to speak English. He became one of the most famous outlaws in Indian Territory and held out against U. S. marshals for over seven years. He built a log fort with a rock wall around it in the present Bidding Springs in Adair County, Oklahoma. He was finally killed by thirteen U. S. marshals who used a three pound cannon and
dynamite to blast him out of his fort. Some of the full-blood outlaws of this period later became peaceful citizens, and one, Jess Pigeon, became one of the leaders in the Redbird Smith movement.

Cherokee culture had by this time progressed far along the road of acculturation, by all outward appearances. To the traveler in Indian Territory, the life of the full-bloods would seem in many respects similar to that of the frontier Whites. The full-bloods lived in log houses, dressed in frontier clothes, and went to the Baptist church. However, much of the acculturation was in form only. The Baptist church as an institution had replaced the old ceremonial town organization; but it had taken on many of the forms and meanings of this former organization. The Baptist church was still organized highly as had been the old ceremonial towns, and many of the concepts of the Baptist church had been combined with older ones. The medical lore remained almost intact.

The greatest absolute change had probably taken place in social organization. The goals and ethos of Cherokee culture were fundamentally unchanged. Judging from Bartram's account in the eighteenth century, discounting his romantic tendencies, the personality structure seemed to be primarily the same.

One of the best examples of this process of acculturation in Cherokee life can be illustrated by the concept of land tenure. Although a full-blood family lived in individual homesteads and formed individually to some extent, there was no
real concept of individual land ownership. The full-bloods traded homesteads and sometimes sold improvements on land. But a man was thought to have use of the land only as long as he occupied it. The land itself belonged communally to the whole Cherokee people.

This concept was one of the bases for resistance to the allotment. Even today, there are full-bloods who have no real understanding of individual land ownership. They give lip service to present American system, but the majority still think in terms of the older concept.

A good example of the fact that the basic concepts, goals, and ethos of Cherokee culture were present can be shown in the various adjustments that different tribes in Oklahoma have made to American "civilization."—The Southern Plains tribes were settled in western Oklahoma. They were outwardly, at this time, much less acculturated than the full-blood Cherokee. Yet these tribes have made a far better adjustment, probably because of more individualistic tendencies in the aboriginal pattern, than have the full-blood Cherokee.

The acculturation of the full-blood Cherokees can best be summed up by the following statement of Angie Debo in The Road to Disappearance in which she is writing about the full-blood Creeks who had acculturated in primarily the same way as the full-blood Cherokees:

"Although the Creeks attained a measure of what the white man defines as 'civilization,' their greatest strength always lay in their native steadfastness. They could—and did—change their style of dress, they were quick to
see the advantage of planting peach trees around their dwellings or buying an ax from a trader, they were glad to substitute the convenience of owning domestic animals for the uncertainties of the chase, they even established schools as a measure of self-defense, and they found in Christianity a compensation for the loss of their ancient faith; but the attempt to replace their group loyalties with the white man's individualism brought a spiritual collapse from which they never fully recovered. After all the 'civilizing' work of their missionaries and agents, they remained to the end essentially unchanged, and their hope of survival still rested upon the unyielding tenacity of their native traits."

Debo, Angie, *The Road to Disappearance*, p. x, para. 2.