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Environmental Negotiations Cherokee Power in the Arkansas Valley, 1812-1828

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ENVIRONMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS
CHEROKEE POWER IN THE ARKANSAS VALLEY, 1812-1828

by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have often described my choice to attend graduate school as a journey to create “intellectual roots.” As my friends have heard me say, my underlying compulsion to study 19th century environmental history has been to “read about people walking around in the woods and seeing new worlds.” In the academic process, I have learned to explore these new worlds with historical and historiographical questions. I present this thesis as a token of appreciation for the journey I have been on these last few years.

This journey has not been solitary. I thank my first professional mentors, Bill Worthen and Swanee Bennett, at Historic Arkansas Museum for entrusting me with a research project that was powerful in its social consequence and which gave me the confidence to apply to graduate school. My research on slavery in Little Rock also introduced me to the staff at the Arkansas History Commission, who also aided in portions of this project. I also thank John Willis and the History department at Sewanee for creating a space for my intellectual curiosity. Allison Marsh, Woody Holton, Tom Lekan, Mark Smith, and the faculty at South Carolina have subsequently encouraged and honed my interests into intellectually compelling projects.

I continue to revitalize my curiosity about the land, the past, and my place in it both professionally and personally. I love my yearly adventures as a ranger in the National Park Service where I can share my ideas and findings with the broader public. Finally, thank you to my mom and dad, who have taught me that there is history in every place, music for all occasions, and maps pointing to the next adventures.

ABSTRACT

In the early 19th century, the Arkansas River Valley existed as a borderlands region of powerful Indian nations and immigrant Euro-American and Native American settlers. In the resulting contests over settlement, Cherokee chiefs recreated the Arkansas Cherokees' ecological identity from hunters to agrarians to differentiate themselves from their Osage and white rivals. During the 1820s, Cherokee chiefs expanded on their agrarian rhetoric by appropriating American scientific systems in order to stymie white settlement. By the end of the 1820s, Arkansas Cherokee chiefs had infused their arguments of preferred agricultural lands, appropriate survey methods, and accurate cartography into the debates over the contours of cultural settlement in the region. With the treaty of 1828, Arkansas Cherokees helped to determine the boundaries of sovereignty in the Southern borderlands.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1824, the Cherokee Indian agent in Arkansas, Edward Duval, wrote a surprising report concerning the Cherokees' contested land claims in the Arkansas River Valley. The council of Arkansas Cherokee chiefs had insisted that DuVal's report include their Cherokee-made map, a "sketch of the country," showing the full extent of Cherokee claims to the region between the Arkansas and White Rivers. The disputed lands would later encompass the mountains of northwest Arkansas and the prairies of eastern Indian Territory. In the map, the Cherokees' western boundary extended well west of the mountainous area acknowledged by federal officials and up to the falls of the Verdigris River, encompassing a large tract of highly desired prairies and river bottoms known informally as "Lovely's Purchase."

Though Cherokees were concerned about white encroachment from the east, Duval informed the Secretary of War that the disputed western boundary of Cherokee claims was "the greatest... source of discontent...among the nation." Half of the Cherokee towns on the map lay west of the most recent American survey boundary, which was also drawn on the map. The mapmaker made sure to depict that, per the survey, Cherokees were restricted to "a large portion of mountainous and unarable lands." For an agricultural society, such restrictions were tantamount to an attack on their future prosperity. Put simply, the map, commissioned by Arkansas Cherokee chiefs, visually consolidated Cherokee negotiating strategies to use appeals to agricultural land

use and American survey systems to dispute settlement patterns in the Arkansas River Valley.¹

The Arkansas Cherokee map was only one of numerous communications with federal officials wherein Arkansas chiefs attempted to shape the contours of settlement in the Arkansas River Valley. This thesis particularly centers on the area between the Arkansas and White Rivers, west to the Verdigris, that includes the bottomlands of the Mississippi Delta, the uplift of the Ozark Mountains, and the eastern prairies of the Great Plains. Between 1812 and 1828, Arkansas Cherokee chiefs redefined the nation's ecological identity from an immigrating group of hunters to a highly agricultural society. Given the reality of the Cherokees' mixed hunting-farming land use, this agrarian identity was more an attempt to present a civilized society than a consensus reality.² As Arkansas Cherokees encountered competition over land from other white and Native American groups, Cherokee leaders moved beyond ecological rhetoric to develop hierarchical, highly adaptive, and environmentally-grounded negotiating strategies that used scientific survey and cartography systems to assert Cherokee settlement interests in the Arkansas River Valley.

During the early 19th century, the Arkansas Valley was a southern borderland where waves of migrating Euro-American and Indian societies encountered a geographically diverse landscape occupied by long-time Native and European inhabitants. Thousands of Cherokees from Tennessee and Georgia voluntarily migrated

¹ Edward Duval to the Secretary of War, March 1, 1824, *The Territorial Papers of the United States: The Territory of Arkansas, 1819-1825*, ed. Clarence Carter, vol. 19 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1953), 613. Hereafter noted as *Territorial Papers*. The described map has not been located.

² Kathleen DuVal, "Debating Identity, Sovereignty, and Civilization: The Arkansas Valley after the Louisiana Purchase," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26, no. 1 (2006): 25–58 While DuVal examines Cherokees' attempts to define themselves as civilized agrarians, my thesis narrates how that self-characterization was, in fact, part of a longer series of rhetorical strategies from Arkansas Cherokee chiefs.

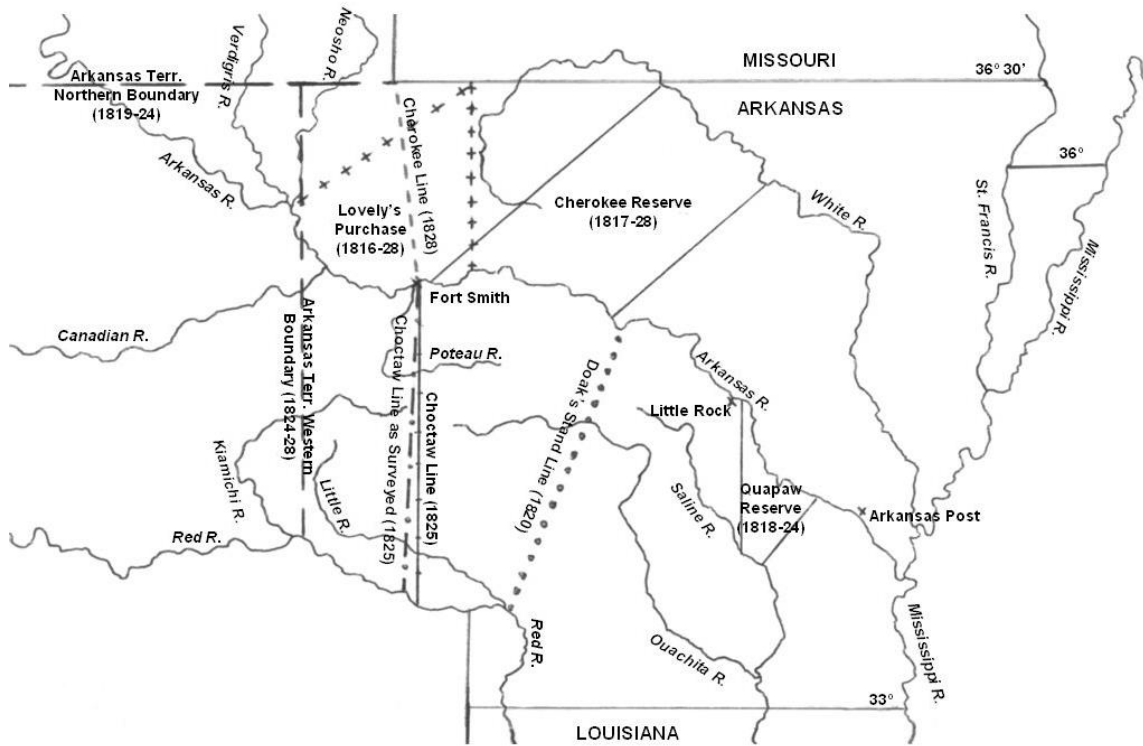


Figure 0.1 Derek Everett. *The Arkansas Frontier*. In Derek Everett. “On the Extreme Frontier: Crafting the Western Arkansas Boundary,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 2. The Arkansas River Valley contained a unique congruence of western waterways, bottomland forests, mountain uplifts, and prairies. Through much of the 1820s, Cherokees and white settlers vied for control of the region north of the Arkansas River and west of the Ozark Mountains, much of which was included in the popularly named “Lovely’s Purchase.”

west decades before the forced removal of Cherokees. Their arrival aided American efforts to push Southeastern Indian nations west of the Mississippi, though with the unwelcome consequence of inciting jealousy and even violence with Osage Indians and with American settlers also lobbying the federal government for rights to the same lands. Cherokee immigrants established their prominence in the Arkansas River Valley by the late 1810s, initially promoting themselves as ideal hunters in the fur-rich region before Arkansas chiefs intentionally transformed their ecological identity to one of European-like agriculture.

Cherokee's ecological rhetoric proved successful in contrasting the immigrant society with the Osage, but Cherokees turned to more scientific arguments to counter white settler intrusions into the Arkansas Valley. After 1820, Cherokee chiefs began to denigrate the poor agricultural lands of the mountains and clamored for more Osage prairie lands to the West. Cherokee chiefs also used official meetings with federal agents as well as informal encounters with American scientific expeditions to promote Cherokees' agrarian interests. However, white settlers dampened the impact of Cherokee agrarian rhetoric by promising to utilize the prairie lands for agriculture as well, thus increasing the threat of white settlement to the west of the Cherokees. In the early 1820s, Cherokee chiefs turned to survey systems to hinder settlement of Lovely's Purchase by questioning the methods and results of American survey teams. This tactic held off white settlement for several years while expanding Cherokee acreage in the Arkansas Valley. The Cherokee map in 1824 thus served as a visual demonstration of Cherokee claims regarding arable lands and survey lines, and it placed Cherokee cartography in conversation with recent Anglo-American maps of the Arkansas Valley. However, the western lands remained contested as Cherokees and white settlers offered competing visions of patchwork settlements along ecological boundaries and clear cultural segregation. The 1828 treaty between the Arkansas Cherokees and the federal government ultimately established a stark cultural boundary between Cherokee and Anglo-American settlements as the Cherokees abandoned their Arkansas homes while gaining the fertile lands of Lovely's Purchase to the west.

Arkansas Cherokee chiefs' use of environmental language, survey systems and cartography constituted an adaptable and multi-faceted effort to re-furbish Anglo-

American knowledge systems to exert Cherokee influence over settlement west of the Mississippi.³ Historians of the Arkansas Valley have gone so far as to describe the region as a “Native Ground” into the 1820s, dominated by native diplomacy.⁴ However, Cherokees’ appropriation of Anglo-American science and ecological rhetoric enabled Cherokees to determine the boundaries of regional settlement, and to thus maintain their influence in the Arkansas Valley, far beyond the 1820s.

The contest over regional settlement patterns created highly political settings in which the exchanges of environmental knowledge between Cherokees and Americans developed.⁵ Cherokee chiefs sought to control their environmental messaging in formal encounters with American governmental representatives, like agent Edward Duval. However, they also personified agrarian identities during informal encounters with American scientists journeying through the region in the exact period that they formally advocated an agrarian identity.⁶ Throughout the 1820s, these chiefs maintained an effective dialogue with federal officials, capitalizing on federal interest in Indian removal and seeking to use their agriculture identity to gain access to new lands. For historians of

³ For more on early American and Indigenous cartography, see Juliana Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the ‘Borderlands’ of the Early Southwest,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2011): 5–46; Martin Brückner, *Early American Cartographies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

⁴ Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) While DuVal’s analysis ends in the 1820s with the decreasing power of Arkansas Cherokees and the closing of the “Native Ground,” my thesis regarding Cherokee environmental strategies is less bold in its implications. As such, my work suggests the continued influence of Cherokee political geography in the Arkansas River Valley throughout the antebellum period.

⁵ Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) Parrish’s work analyzes the transmissions of scientific knowledge during the Enlightenment Era, extending the source of scientific knowledge across the Atlantic to North America. My thesis extends the cross-cultural knowledge study geographically and temporally into the early American West and while also highlighting Native American appropriation and dissemination of scientific systems and knowledge.

⁶ James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000) Merrell’s landmark work on frontier negotiations in Pennsylvania argues that cross-cultural dialogue weakened over the course of the 18th century. Borrowing his methodology of examining the specific sites of cross-cultural encounter, my thesis reveals how Cherokee chiefs enforced a consensus, hierarchical dialogue that largely stabilized discussions on the western frontier.

early American environmental science, the pivotal role of immigrant Cherokees in horizontal knowledge transfers in the Arkansas River Valley elevates Indian roles in 19th century American science as well as the influence of Cherokee migration in Southern environmental history.

Understanding Arkansas Cherokees' adaptive environmental ideologies in the Arkansas River Valley's varied and contested geography brings this southern borderland into discussions of early American science and Native American political power. Rather than focus on lowland cotton, Cherokees and their rivals were engaged in a contest over how to harness the varied ecologies of mountains, alluvial plains, and sparse prairie.⁷ By the late 1820s, debates raged over whether Cherokees should remain isolated in the mountains and surrounded by white farmers in the fertile lowlands or if they should be removed well west of the fertile Lovely's Purchase region. These environmentally-informed debates became proxies for discussions of political geography, science, ecology, race, power, and identity in the Arkansas borderlands. In the Treaty of 1828, however, a Cherokee delegation made the controversial decision to leave the mountains but gain access to the highly-coveted prairies along the Arkansas. With this final treaty, Cherokees wrote their environmental interests into the contours of the antebellum Arkansas River Valley settlement.

⁷ For more on southern environmental history in Arkansas, see Joseph Patrick Key, "Indians and Ecological Conflict in Territorial Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2000): 127–46; Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and Its Peoples from Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) Morris' work is the most prominent recent southern environmental history to examine Indian and American relations west of the Mississippi Valley. My work, though, expands the geography of southern environmental history by examining those cultural encounters in southern mountains and prairies as well.

CHAPTER 1

ECOLOGICAL RHETORIC

CHEROKEE HUNTERS AND THEIR ALLY, THE UNITED STATES

Waves of Cherokee migrations in the late 18th and early 19th century brought thousands of Cherokees west of the Mississippi, eventually settling along the Arkansas River Valley in a variety of hunting and farming communities. Despite the diversity of practices, as Cherokee chiefs jockeyed for land cessions and federal aid, Cherokee leaders successfully promoted a Cherokee ecological identity focused singularly on hunting to gain treaty rights and even fur trade support in Arkansas. Capitalizing on federal interests to settle the Arkansas Valley with friendly allies, Arkansas Cherokees helped to define the valley as a hunting region and position themselves as some of its most profitable agents in the American fur trade.

Prior to the Louisiana Purchase, Cherokee hunters had already recognized the Arkansas River Valley as one of the most promising hunting regions in southern North America. Months after the Purchase, federal officials reported that “a scarcity of game on the eastern side of the Mississippi has late induced a number of Cherokee, Chactaws [sic], and Chickasaws to frequent the neighborhood of Arkansas, where game is still in abundance.”¹⁸ The increased pressures on deer, bison, and other game in the Southeast

¹⁸ An Account of the Indian Tribes in Louisiana, September 29, 1803, *Territorial Papers* 13: 60.

had made the Arkansas region some of the most promising hunting grounds for westward-moving populations.¹⁹

In 1809, Cherokee leaders from the Chickamauga region of Tennessee promoted Cherokee hunting practices to convince the federal government to support their removal to the Arkansas region. Thomas Jefferson, the outgoing president, listened to Cherokees “desirous to move across the Mississippi” where they might “retain their attachments to the hunter’s life, and having little game on their present lands,” and invited them to “reconnoiter the country on the waters on the Arkansas and White Rivers.”²⁰ Following the stated agreement, hundreds of Cherokee families crossed the Mississippi and settled amongst Cherokee families already living in the St. Francis River bottoms to the north of the Arkansas River watershed.²² Hunting parties soon traveled the mountains and valleys to the west as well as in the extensive cane brakes along the St. Francis.

Cherokees in the St. Francis River Valley, in fact, practiced a mixed-agricultural and hunting subsistence, but the hunter rhetoric of the 1809 discussions was re-energized following a series of earthquakes in beginning in late 1811. In the spring of 1811, a young Cherokee chief informed an American agent that “we have good corn fields...plenty of Cattle & hogs...Buffaloe and Deer.”²³ However, months later, the ground around the St. Francis River shook violently in a series of earthquakes that sunk

¹⁹ Patrick Key, “Indians and Ecological conflict in Territorial Arkansas” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (Summer, 2000), 134.

²⁰ Jefferson to Cherokees, January 9, 1809, *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 2: 125. Robert A. Myers, “Cherokee Pioneers in Arkansas: The St. Francis Years, 1785-1813,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1997): 127–57.

²² John Treat to the Secretary of War, Dec. 31, 1806, *Territorial Papers* 14: 56. For more on the political debates amongst lower and upper Cherokee towns for removal to Arkansas, see S. Charles Bolton, “Jeffersonian Indian Removal and the Emergence of Arkansas Territory,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2003): 253–71.

²³ Meigs to Secretary of War, April 6, 1811, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75.19.8, Records of the Cherokee Indian Agency, East (National Archives, Washington, D.C.)

the once promising lands into a swamp-like region. The Cherokee prophet Skawuaw, fearing that the earthquakes were a sign of disfavor, called for Cherokees to give up Anglo-American practices and migrate west to the Arkansas where they might “plant corn and hunt in peace.”²⁴ While The tensions between Cherokee agricultural practices and rhetoric followed the western immigrants to the Arkansas.

Cherokees incorporated the Arkansas Valley’s varied geography into their subsistence practices even as leaders largely highlighted their less agricultural practices. A year after the earthquakes, Toluntuskee, the chief who had led the recent migration from Tennessee, wrote to an Agent that the Cherokees had “settled among the mountains” of the Arkansas.²⁵ Despite Toluntuskee’s assertion, the Cherokees built their major settlements in the alluvial bottoms along each significant tributary to the Arkansas with only dispersed homesteads among the Ozark Mountains to the north. The Ozark Mountains, ranging several hundred square miles above the river, were the recently ceded hunting grounds of the Osage Indians, but white settlers noted that the Cherokee councilmen had successfully negotiated for a “rich and valuable tract of country” along the Arkansas River upon which they were soon clearing land for farms and even taking over the homesteads of American squatters.²⁶ In contrast with Cherokee leaders’ rhetoric, Cherokees, who had also incorporated the bison hunting grounds to the west, were bringing the area’s diverse landscapes into production under their mixed subsistence practices.

²⁴ Louis Bringier, “Notices of the Geology, Mineralogy, Topography, Productions, and Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Region Around the Mississippi and Its Confluent Waters,” *American Journal of Science and Arts* 3 (1821), 39-40. For more on the environmental history of the New Madrid Earthquakes, see Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Lost History of the New Madrid Earthquakes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

²⁵ Talontiskee to Meigs, March 14, 1813, Records of the Cherokee Indian Agency.

²⁶ William Russell to Delegate Hempstead, November 1, 1813, *Territorial Papers* 14: 720.

These immigrants from the Tennessee River Valley possibly felt that the environmental adjustment to the Arkansas River Valley would be quick. Five hundred miles from their homeland, Cherokee families had found the region west of the Mississippi that was the most topographically similar to the Chickamauga area. The Tennessee River winds through the eroded, 2,400 foot elevations of the Cumberland Plateau much like the 2,400-foot vertical relief of the Arkansas flowing south of the peaks of the of the Ozark Plateau. The Cherokees were also on familiar soils. Today, the Southern Appalachian soil region includes the noncontiguous Arkansas River Valley. Both contain similar Udisol soil, with small bands of a silty alluvial soil along the river.²⁸ Some locations possibly bore such similarity that Cherokee place names were repeated from the Tennessee to the Arkansas Valley.²⁹ In choosing to move to the Arkansas River Valley, Cherokees had found familiar geographical and ecological surroundings west of the Mississippi in which to practice their mixed-agrarian lifestyle.

Ironically, despite Cherokees' declarations of hunting acumen and their potential environmental familiarity, immigrant Cherokees relied on local area hunters to acclimate to the ecological potential of their new region. Cherokee hunters were only the latest inhabitants of this well-regarded hunting region and agreed to follow "tallowing folks," hunters who collected only fat from bear and bison carcasses, to maintain meat supplies in their first years in the Arkansas Valley. Indian agent William Lovely reported that

²⁸ "Georgia Soil Survey 128 - Southern Appalachian Ridges and Valleys | NRCS Georgia," accessed February 28, 2017,

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ga/soils/surveys/?cid=nrcs144p2_021879.

²⁹ Chataunga Mountain, the eastern boundary marker of the 1817 Indian Treaty, was possibly a corruption of the Cherokee word gadusi, "hill." An 1824 letter marked it as "Chatanuga mountain" which bears remarkable similarity to a modern spelling of Chattanooga, meaning "a rock that goes up to a point," which has present-day use near Chickamauga Creek in Tennessee. Jeannie M. Whayne, *Cultural Encounters In the Early South: Indians and Europeans in Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), 147. Edward Duval to Secretary of War, March 1, 1824, *Territorial Papers* 19: 613.

these hunters would “kill the buffaloe & leave the carcass” to rot in the “hunting grounds,” and Cherokee hunters saw an opportunity to simplify their early hunting excursions.³² These unidentified hunters might have been French or American hunters in the region who were acting as guides to the newly arrived Cherokees. Unfortunately, there is little record of what the first Cherokee scouts thought of the Arkansas River Valley; however, Arkansas Cherokee hunters would actively hunt the region for at least the next decade, and Cherokee leaders continued to negotiate for American aid around this hunting identity.

Several years after arriving in the Arkansas Valley, immigrant Cherokees used their hunting practices to seek sought greater economic support as well as land cessions from the federal government. Land negotiation had stagnated as eastern Cherokees refused to approve land cessions in exchange for lands in Arkansas.³⁵ To push for American economic support, however, Cherokee repeatedly invoked their hunting potential to seek institutional support from federal officials, including their own agent to Josiah Meigs, commissioner of the General Land Office. Based on a letter from Meigs to Secretary of War William Crawford, Cherokee’s ecological marketing as hunters was proving successful. Nearly five hundred “may be considered as good hunters & good warriors,” Meigs would write. With this self-proclaimed ready-made force on the frontier, a fur trade “Factory might be placed with great prospect of advantage to the government.” Within the mountains and prairies of the Arkansas Valley, Cherokees could reap profit from the “almost immense quantity of the finest furs and peltry” and increase

³² William Lovely to Governor Clark, October 1, 1813, *Territorial Papers* 15: 51.

³⁵ In fact, eastern Cherokee wished immigrant Cherokees were “compelled to return and live with the nation.” Secretary of War to Indian Commissioners, September 17, 1816, *Territorial Papers* 15: 174.

trade of 15,000 furs in in the lucrative market at New Orleans.³⁶ No longer were Cherokees following European hunters. In three short years, these new Cherokee immigrants were defining the region by its hunting prospects and positioning themselves as its prime ecological and economic agents.

In an era of mounting tensions between the United States and Indian nations, Arkansas Cherokees and U.S. officials found cooperation based on Cherokee hunting practices to be mutually beneficial. For federal officials, the Cherokee negotiations were likely welcomed because they addressed ongoing problems on the western frontier. The Arkansas Valley was part of a region over which American officials recognized they were “not in in sufficient strength, of men or means...to occupy or control.”³⁷ Military projections in 1817 judged the “roving bands” of western Indians to be around 20,000, and protection against “hostile” and “dispersed” Indians still likely required an “expense of millions.”³⁸ With over 2,000 Cherokees immigrants in Arkansas, American officials eagerly considered the prospects of a friendly border population. Meigs fur-trade plan entailed acquiescing to Cherokee interests for a “home” near the U.S. supported factory with the hopes that Cherokee warriors could be relied upon as “a force at any time at the service of the United States.”³⁹ Cherokee hunters potentially solved the problems of frontier unrest that had worried American officials for a decade.

Cherokees also replaced Osage hunters in the Ozark Mountains as more advantageous trade partners for the American government. Osage hunters, hoping for closer ties to the United States, had ceded their Ozark Mountain hunting grounds in 1808.

³⁶ Josiah Meigs to Secretary of War, February 17, 1816, *Territorial Papers* 15: 121.

³⁷ Governor Wilkinson to Secretary of War, September 22, 1805, *Territorial Papers* 13: 227.

³⁸ Indian Tribes in Missouri Territory, August 24, 1817, *Territorial Papers* 15: 304.

³⁹ Josiah Meigs to Secretary of War, February 17, 1816, *Territorial Papers* 15: 121.

During those negotiations, American officials were reminded of the lucrative potential of the hunting grounds as “the [Osage] expressed more concern for the loss of the Hunting Country on white river, than any other lands they were about to seed [sic] to the United States.”⁴⁰ Nonetheless, federal support for Cherokee settlement and hunting in the region was much louder than for the Osage. Less hostile to the federal government, Cherokees migration also supported federal efforts to gain lands east of the Mississippi. The prospect of a factory among the Cherokees added monetary interests to the equation for supporting Cherokee settlement and increased the to the handful of frontier fur trading posts at which deer, bear, bison, and elk were more profitable to regional trade than subsistence farming .⁴⁵ With the promise of U.S.-friendly frontier forces and a fur trade that would benefit U.S. merchants, American officials had interest in promoting Cherokee migration to Arkansas country, not simply removing Indians from the southeast.

Remarkably, Cherokee settlement in Arkansas also displaced white squatters. Land speculators in the region complained that the Indian agent William Lovely was removing white settlers from their houses and homes. William Russell, a St. Louis-based land agent reported that “Indians were going from farm to farm, allotting one farm to [one] Indian, and another farm to another.”⁴⁸ Lovely himself even acknowledged that measures needed to be taken to “keep peace and harmony between them and their white

⁴⁰ William Clark to Secretary of War, September 23, 1808, *Territorial Papers* 14: 224.

⁴⁵ For more on the multi-racial frontier exchange economy, see Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

⁴⁸ William Russell to Delegate Hempstead, November 1, 1813, *Territorial Papers* 14: 720.

brothers;” however, the developing policy of making the Arkansas Valley an Indian land persisted, even to the direct detriment of white settlers.⁴⁹

Despite the hopes of federal officials, federal support for Cherokee settlement based on Cherokee hunting interests increased violence and unrest along the frontier. Winter hunts took the Cherokees high up the Arkansas River and passed settlements of Osage. The Osage, bitter that their land cessions were being considered for Cherokee settlement, frequently clashed with Cherokees over these contested hunting grounds. Cherokee and Osage war leaders led attacks in which they murdered hunters, raided villages, and stole horses. The violence compelled the federal government to establish a frontier outpost at the present-day site of Fort Smith to keep the peace between the warring nations.

The United States government remained willing to support Cherokees’ westward migration even if it led to war between the Cherokees and Osage. John C. Calhoun, Secretary of War, urged the territorial governor to “as far as practicable...make the arrangement favorable to the Cherokees.”⁵¹ The federal government, desperate for voluntary Indian migration, was willing to support Cherokee hunting interests even if those interests compromised frontier peace.

In 1817, President Monroe and the Cherokee chiefs codified Arkansas Cherokees’ self-promotion as hunters in the signing of the Turkeytown Treaty. While the treaty would perhaps be best known for its “acre for acre” exchange of lands in Georgia and Tennessee for millions of acres in Arkansas, the opening lines reveal the extent to

⁴⁹ William Lovely to the Cherokees, July 20, 1813, *Territorial Papers* 14: 721.

⁵¹ Secretary of War to Governor Clark, May 8, 1818, *Territorial Papers* 15: 390. For more analysis of the power struggles between Osage and Cherokees for control of the region, see chapter 7, “A New Order,” DuVal, *The Native Ground*.

which Arkansas Cherokee negotiators had embedded their hunter identity into the negotiation. Referring to the 1808 negotiations with Thomas Jefferson, the treaty reiterated that “deputies...ma[d]e known their desire to continue the hunter life...across the Mississippi River.”⁵² As Cherokee leaders negotiated using historical agreements, the consistent ecological language of hunting and game scarcity proved to be successful in gaining an invitation to move to the Arkansas Valley, in advocating for economic support from a fur factory, and in adding pressure for the 1817 land cession treaty.

In less than a decade in the region, and only five years after arriving in the Arkansas Valley, Cherokees had established themselves as a hunting population able to provide a formidable border population to the benefit of the United States government. In using the rhetoric of traditional hunting culture, Cherokees did not attempt to identify with European motifs of the noble savage, or even vie for land based on a proto-environmentalist strategy. Instead, the hunter ecological rhetoric offered clear economic and political advantages for settlement in the Arkansas River Valley. Though their presence antagonized rival Osage and white settlements, Cherokees had become a pioneer nation extracting resources from the Arkansas valley and protected by legal treaty. Nonetheless, Cherokee leaders in Arkansas would soon begin a public transformation of their ecological identity from hunters in the prairies and mountains to settled farmers on the river.

FARM CULTURE

The ink was days old on the Turkeytown Treaty when Arkansas Cherokee leaders began to shift their political and ecological language towards an agrarian identity. In the

⁵² “Treaty with the Cherokee, 1817,” Charles Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 141.

summer of 1817, as rains fell greater than they had at any point during Cherokee inhabitation of the Arkansas River Valley, Cherokee chiefs wrote directly to the Governor of Missouri Territory claiming that “to raise our crops for the support of our families has been our wish.”⁵⁸ Though Cherokees had long practiced farming even prior to their migration from the Tennessee Valley, Arkansas chiefs began to express agrarian ideologies through their statements about Cherokee agriculture, the Arkansas Valley landscape, and political geography. A focus on farm ground was new to a sovereignty debate originally focused on hunting grounds, but the Cherokee leaders perhaps were testing a way to distinguish themselves as civilized agriculturalists in contrast to uncivilized Osage hunters.⁵⁹

Cherokee agricultural rhetoric likely shifted gradually among Cherokee leaders. In February 1818, President James Monroe wrote to Arkansas chiefs that the United States would permit the Cherokees to have “good mill seats, plenty of game, and not to be surrounded by the white people.”⁶⁰ Rather than a denial of Cherokee hunting practices, Cherokee negotiators seem to have advocated for access to game in the mountains and prairies as well as rights to Ozark streams capable of supporting grist mills. Cherokee families had long practiced this mixed agriculture in the Arkansas River Valley, but the first indications of agrarian rhetoric in political negotiations only appeared in the months following the Turkeytown Treaty.

⁵⁸ Cherokee Indians to Governor Clark, July 11, 1817, *Territorial Papers* 15:304; David W. Stahle and Malcolm Cleaveland, “Texas Drought History Reconstructed and Analyzed from 1698 to 1980,” *Journal of Climate* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1988), 61.

⁵⁹ For more on Cherokees appropriating the language of European civility, see DuVal, “Debating Identity, Sovereignty, and Civilization”; For more on the agricultural development of Arkansas, see S. Charles Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800–1860: Remote and Restless* (University of Arkansas Press, 2014).

⁶⁰ The President to the Arkansas Cherokees, February 1818, *Territorial Papers* 20: 333.

This shifting mixed agrarian rhetoric also indicated transitions in gendered ecological practices amongst Cherokees. Despite a rhetorical shift to agricultural lifestyles, in Cherokee marriage customs in Arkansas as late the early 1820s “the groom presents his venison, and the bride her corn.”⁶¹ Early immigrant Cherokee leaders had thus associated Arkansas Cherokee society with male hunting practices. The new negotiation emphasis on mill seats and agricultural production might have indicated increased economic opportunity for Cherokee women. Conversely, the shift to agricultural practice might have indicated that some Cherokee males were shifting to agriculture, thus keeping the chiefs’ rhetoric male-oriented while appealing to American agrarian gender practices.⁶² Regardless, the development of mills would have aided Cherokee women’s participation in the Cherokee economy. Given accounts of male Cherokee farmers, though, the agricultural rhetoric was a reference to shifts in gendered labor practices within some sectors of Cherokee society.

While Cherokees employed a mixed ecological identity of farming and hunting to request a variety of American aid, Cherokee leaders employed stronger agrarian language when seeking to distinguish themselves from their Osage rivals. Cherokee chiefs re-cast their immigration to the well-hunted region of the Arkansas Valley as removal to a “new and unexplored wilderness.” Such a reference to the Arkansas “wilderness” as undeveloped and potentially dangerous, a familiar motif in American settler rhetoric, suggested that Cherokee chiefs were situating themselves within the European narrative

⁶¹ Cephas Washburn and J.W. Moore, *Reminiscences of the Indians* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1869), 207.

⁶² For more on gender in Cherokee society, see Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998) Perdue argues that while elite Cherokee women likely experienced a dramatic shift in gendered responsibilities, the social life of most Cherokee women remained traditionally agricultural. .

of westward-moving civilization.⁶³ In the morality tale of civilizing pioneers, Cherokees easily recast Osages as a “band of savages” who “inhumanely murdered, butchered, and plundered” Cherokee settlements.⁶⁴ Associating uncivilized Osage with the undeveloped landscape of Arkansas hinted that Cherokees’ agrarian rhetoric was part of a larger ecological and cultural identity that Cherokees carefully crafted for political negotiations.

The strong agricultural rhetoric even spilled into judgements of the Arkansas landscape itself. Cherokee chiefs complained that the lands they had been granted were “encumbered with barren mountains,” thus necessitating more fertile lands to the west. For a society so recently removed to the mountains, complaints about the relative unfitness of the Arkansas mountains for their land use practices represented a startling new negotiating tactic in their contest with Osage to the west.

Nonetheless, Arkansas Cherokees appeared to experience internal shifts to promote greater amounts of agriculture. In 1818, John Jolly, a recent arrival from the eastern Cherokee, was elected the principal chief of the Arkansas Cherokee in a short contest with a much more traditionalist chief, Takatoka. Jolly was, in fact, much more amenable to Cherokee agriculture. He became an early supporter of a New England mission for Cherokee children that taught American-style agriculture to Cherokee boys.⁶⁵ For Arkansas Cherokees who did, in fact, turn to agriculture, cow and pig livestock replaced seasonal hunting as the source for meat. Corn and cotton became the prominent crops of Cherokee farmers who were clearing cane breaks and forests along tributary

⁶³ For more on the religious implications of “wilderness,” see, Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

⁶⁴ Arkansas Cherokees to the President, March 17, 1821, *Territorial Papers* 19: 273.

⁶⁵ Robert Paul Markman, “The Arkansas Cherokees, 1817-1828” (PhD. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1972), 111.

streams. Some apple and peach orchards could be seen from the river. In a letter to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, Jolly promised that Cherokees would “settle more compactly” in Arkansas in newly established farming settlements than in dispersed, hunting oriented settlements.⁶⁶

Despite a perceptible internal shift towards greater agricultural emphasis and a diplomatic rhetoric sometimes decidedly agrarian, outside observers likely remained skeptical of Arkansas Cherokees. Internal reports among federal officials continued to focus on the hunting-based tensions with the Osage.⁶⁷ White settlers complained that Cherokees had been unfairly given the best soils of the Arkansas Valley.⁶⁸ Eastern Cherokees overwhelmingly perceived Arkansas Cherokees as reliant on hunting to the detriment of civilized agriculture and husbandry.⁶⁹ The Cherokees’ agrarian rhetoric was simply one diplomatic tool in a sea of competing interests who, by the end of the decade, found greater advantage in remembering Cherokee hunting practices than welcoming Cherokee farming rhetoric.

In the months following the Turkeytown Treaty acknowledging Arkansas Cherokees’ hunting practices, a subtle rhetorical shift moved Cherokees’ diplomacy towards an ecological diplomacy grounded in mixed agriculture, and at times a decidedly agrarian identity. Shifts between the two new identities seemed to be gradual as Cherokees sought economically diverse aid or contrasted themselves firmly with the hunting economies of their Osage rivals. While initial reception of this diplomatic rhetoric was mixed, Cherokee chiefs would soon seek to maintain this new agrarian

⁶⁶ Markman, “Arkansas Cherokees,” 95.

⁶⁷ Reuben Lewis to Secretary of War, January 21, 1820, *Territorial Papers* 19:137.

⁶⁸ Reuben Easton to Secretary of War, March 1819, *Territorial Papers* 19: 60.

⁶⁹ John Ross to James Monroe, March 5, 1819. Gary E Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross: 1807-1839*, vol. 1 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 35.

identity through the centralized voice of the Cherokee council. This hierarchical structure would prove to be highly adaptable in responding to external challenges to a consensus Cherokee identity.

COUNCIL VOICE

Cherokee leaders were successful in implementing this rhetorical shift by utilizing a consensus approach in Cherokee councils and a consistent ecological language that centered on Arkansas Cherokee's agricultural practices. Despite dividing power between a principal chief and district chiefs, Arkansas Cherokee chiefs frequently delivered a singular voice in deliberations with American officials both verbally and in writing. By controlling the language of these formal encounters, Cherokee chiefs persisted in promoting their new agrarian identity during negotiations.

Deliberations between Cherokee councils and federal officials repeatedly invoked the singular voice of the Cherokee chiefs. In an 1819 letter signed by 16 Cherokee chiefs, they identified themselves as the collective "Arkansas Cherokee Chiefs" and jealously guarded their authority as spokesmen for "we the Cherokees of the Arkansas."⁷⁰ Edward Duval was once careful to note that he was reporting on a council convened at "the request of the chiefs and headmen of the Cherokee nation."⁷¹ Thus, Cherokee chiefs positioned the council, and by extension themselves, as the locus of formal encounters with American negotiators

⁷⁰ Arkansas Cherokee Chiefs to the President, August 3, 1819, *Territorial Papers* 19: 91. Domestically, power did not seem to be nearly as centralized as council declarations might suggest. During the late 1810s and early 1820s, Cherokee settlement and power was, in fact, relatively dispersed among different villages and chiefs. Even with the election of John Jolly as principal chief, the centralization of power only developed gradually. In 1820, Jolly supported the creation of a policing force of horsemen. In 1824, the Arkansas Cherokee would divide themselves into 4 districts with two district representatives serving on the National Council. Markman, "Arkansas Cherokees," 114.

⁷¹ Edward Duval to Secretary of War, March 1, 1824, *Territorial Papers* 19: 613.

Letters and transcriptions extended Chiefs' consensus voice beyond the council house and offered the benefit of direct communication. As Cherokee chiefs communicated directly with John C. Calhoun, the Secretary of War, they re-iterated their authority as a governing body. Furthermore, the lists of chiefs included at the end of every letter indicated the broad approval of terms, and council letters never mentioned infighting among the chiefs.⁷²

However, numerous letters were marked with the "X" of illiterate chiefs, which threatened to damage Cherokee chiefs' well-controlled message. Cherokee chiefs found a solution in James Rogers, who provided the otherwise illiterate Cherokee chiefs a recent immigrant, the son of a Cherokee mother and Irish father, who acted in the official capacity of translator. Able to write in English, the young Rogers was the Cherokee chief who notarized the 1817 treaty emphasizing Cherokee hunting interests. He later represented the Cherokees in a three-person mission to advocate for Cherokee access to salt springs in the western prairies.⁷³ With literate, bi-lingual Cherokee translators embedded in the council hierarchy, Cherokee chiefs re-enforced their developing agrarian message in both verbal and written testimony.

In this hierarchical and centralized negotiating model, Cherokee agrarian identity solidified. The "Chiefs of the Arkansas Cherokee" continued to describe a "barren country fit for nothing" two years after having first lamented a landscape with "barren mountains" and few resources. The letter was addressed to the Secretary of War and

⁷² There was, in fact, significant disputes amongst Cherokee chiefs. An anti-assimilation faction led by Takatoka opposed missionary schools that taught agricultural skills to male Cherokee students. Markman, "Arkansas Cherokees," 111.

⁷³ Additional Instructions to Cherokee Delegation, March 25, 1821, *Territorial Papers* 19: 341.

signed by seven Arkansas chiefs, led by John Jolly.⁷⁴ Coincidentally, in an expedition report published that same year, Stephen Long's chronicler Edwin James described that same region in almost identical terms as "mountainous and barren, and unfit for cultivation."⁷⁵ Cherokee chiefs had not only found a consistent voice, but their agrarian identity drew them parallel, at least in language, to the famed western explorer Stephen Long.

Given the Arkansas Cherokees' isolation on the extreme western edge of the American frontier, the chiefs' apparent strategy of official, consensus language might have sufficed to convince others of their new agrarian identity. After all, even their Osage rivals were imitating the hierarchical agrarian language when referring to the Cherokee economic system. In a remarkable 1821 speech to the Osage council, the Osage chief Clermont acknowledged that "we cannot farm like the Cherokees...[nor] learned how to raise Hogs and Cattle like the Cherokees."⁷⁶ In rhetoric, and practice, the Cherokees' rivals were beginning to see Cherokees as a powerful agrarian society in the Arkansas River Valley.

During the turn of the decade, however, the arrival of prominent scientific expeditions was an unexpected threat to the validity of Cherokees' agrarian rhetoric. Two prominent Anglo scientists visited the Arkansas River Valley in 1819 and 1820, necessitating an expanded strategy beyond general councils. The Cherokee leadership had long sought to control written communications for their agrarian identity, and the

⁷⁴ Chiefs of the Arkansas Cherokees to Secretary of War, June 24, 1823, *Territorial Papers* 19: 525.

⁷⁵ Edwin James, Stephen Harriman Long, and Thomas Say, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Performed in the Years 1819 and '20, by Order of the Hon. J. C. Calhoun, Sec'y of War: Under the Command of Major Stephen H. Long. From the Notes of Major Long, Mr. T. Say, and Other Gentlemen of the Party*, vol. 3 (Longman, Hurst, Pees, Orre & Brown, 1823), 135.

⁷⁶ Speech to an Osage Council, September 15, 1821, *Territorial Papers* 19: 320.

scientists' reports could have been an uncensored revelation of Cherokees' continued hunting activities. Instead Cherokee leaders capitalized on informal encounters with these Anglo-European scientists outside of the controlled setting of the council house. The chiefs, mostly wealthy and agrarian, appeared in the reports as the personifications of Cherokee farming identity, creating an ad hoc two-pronged strategy wherein Cherokee chiefs shifted their ecological identity in formal channels as well as travel literature.

Cherokees found risk and opportunity in the reports of Stephen Long and Thomas Nuttall. Long would later be recognized for his enduring description of the "Great American Desert" while Nuttall published some of the first popular descriptions of Cherokee settlement on the Arkansas. Their scientific analyses of the ecological potential of the Arkansas River Valley was of great interest to prospective American land buyers. In fact, eastern Cherokees would use Long's description of the Great American Desert a decade later to combat attempts for forced removal. In these scientific expeditions, Cherokees encountered an unanticipated opportunity to define their identity on the western frontier for white Americans' cultural consciousness.

The most pressing threat to Cherokees, though, was that these explorers deprived Cherokee chiefs of the ability to censor written descriptions of Cherokees' ecological practices. Cherokees' ongoing tensions with the Osage necessitated a civilized language of agricultural practice, but, unlike in careful descriptions of council discussions, they could not write the scientists' reports. In fact, Cherokees' fears would prove partially validated. Stephen Long would later note that "of late years, the Cherokees have almost uniformly been the aggressors...and all the Cherokees of the Arkansas are in the habit of

hunting and committing depredation upon the Osage hunting grounds.”⁷⁷ Differentiation from the Osages was a key element of Cherokee diplomacy, and Long’s description equated Cherokee and Osage hunters while suggesting that Cherokees were largely at fault for much of the frontier unrest. By calling all Cherokees depraved hunters in one sentence printed in 1823, Stephen Long might have unwittingly undone over a half decade of intentional Cherokee rhetoric.

Additionally, despite the new agrarian rhetoric of Cherokee chiefs and societal changes towards settled agriculture, hunting among Arkansas Cherokees remained widespread. In 1819, the year Nuttall traveled up the river valley, over 15,000 deer skins were delivered to the fur factory at Belle Point.⁷⁸ By 1821, the Arkansas fur factory was the western frontier’s leading supplier of bear oil, second leading supplier of deer skins, second leading supplier of raccoon skins, provided 276 wolf skins, 159 beaver pelts, and easily provided the most bear skins at 346. The Cherokees’ local factory was the second most profitable post west of the Mississippi.⁷⁹ With the relative success of the fur factory and reality that many Arkansas Cherokee continued to supplement farming produce through hunting excursions, rhetorical descriptions of Arkansas Cherokees that emphasized agriculture intentionally ignored the continued hunting practices of many Arkansas Cherokee families.⁸⁰

Indeed, Long and Nuttall interacted with numerous Cherokees who undermined claims of Arkansas Cherokee agrarianism. A detachment of Stephen Long’s expedition

⁷⁷ James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 3, 130.

⁷⁸ *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, Indian Affairs*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 208.

⁷⁹ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 352.

⁸⁰ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Journal of a Tour Into the Interior of Missouri and Arkansas: From Potosi, Or Mine a Burton, in Missouri Territory, in a South-West Direction, Toward the Rocky Mountains: Performed in the Years 1818 and 1819* (London: Sir R. Phillips and Company, 1821), 40.

arrived in Cherokee territory from the west, and encountered several parties of Cherokees who “frequently visit this vicinity on hunting excursions.”⁸⁵ To compound the issue, male-centered hunting limited Anglo contact with Cherokee women performing traditional farming roles. Thus, it was Cherokee males who were entrusted as guides due to their growing landscape knowledge. Both Long and Nuttall also employed individual Cherokees to conduct the expeditions through the mountains and prairies of the Arkansas valley. As Cherokee men earned two dollars to direct these scientists to “traverse [the] rugged and mountainous region[s]” around the Arkansas Valley, the carefully crafted messages of chiefs were nowhere to be seen.⁸⁶

Facing the threat of a weakened agrarian rhetoric, Cherokee chiefs made a concerted effort to position themselves as the primary informants of the expeditions. While the Cherokee hunters had gone unnamed, specifically identified principal chiefs populated the travel journals’ more personal descriptions. “Walter Webber, a Metis, who acts as an Indian trader, is also a chief of the nation,” Nuttall explained, of the man who also signed onto many Cherokee council documents. His “several negro slaves, a large, well cleared and well fenced farm” reinforced the agricultural promise of Cherokee settlers.⁸⁷ John Jolly appeared in Nuttall’s work as “a Franklin amongst his countrymen” who “dressed as a white man” and was “scarcely...distinguished from an American.” One host told Long of Cherokees’ long history with “the culture of cotton.” By welcoming these travelers into their homes, Cherokee chiefs exploited a series of

⁸⁵ James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 3, 121.

⁸⁶ James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 3, 148.

⁸⁷ Thomas Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels Into the Arkansas Territory: During the Year 1819* (Philadelphia: Thomas H. Palmer, 1821), 129.

informal encounters that provided an explicit agricultural contrast to their more traditional, hunter brethren.

Cherokee chiefs also manipulated the white American scientists' limited communication skills in arranging these informal encounters. English speaking among the Arkansas Cherokees was sporadic. In fact, English speaking was more common amongst farming communities than traditional hunting communities.⁸⁸ Cherokee hunters, despite their expanding knowledge of the Arkansas landscape, were therefore constrained by in their relative inability to communicate with American scientific groups. Long's expedition recorded an encounter with Cherokees on a "hunting excursion" who "communicated with considerable ease by means of signs."⁸⁹ While sign language offered a convenient cross cultural communication tool amongst plains inhabitants, the information transfer in Anglo-Cherokee encounters was limited to sharing general directions and locations. Indeed, Nuttall alluded to his preference for bi-lingual, "civilized Cherokee, with whom alone I could conveniently hold converse."⁹⁰

Intriguingly, some Cherokee chiefs could only converse as "civilized" hosts through the bilingual abilities of their slaves. Cherokee chiefs welcomed the opportunity to influence the scientists' perceptions, but were only successful given their status as slave holders. One traveler reported that Walter Webber, one of John Jolly's closest allies, dressed "in the costume of the whites" but "would converse only in the Cherokee language" even though he understood English. Instead, Webber insisted that his black

⁸⁸ Alfred Finney to Jeremiah Evarts, August 12, 1824, "Dwight Mission," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 12, no. 1, (March 1934), 44.

⁸⁹ James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 3, 32.

⁹⁰ Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels Into the Arkansas Territory*, 130.

slave act as interpreter.⁹¹ Webber was not alone in this strategy. Tom Graves, another chief, lived in a home “surrounded with enclosed fields of corn, cotton, sweet potatoes.” Unable, or unwilling to speak English, he alternated between sign language and the assistance of “a black girl, one of his slaves, who interpreted the Cherokee language.” Whether Webber or Graves intended to emphasize their ownership of slaves, Long’s subsequent report mentioned Cherokee slave ownership, thereby re-enforcing Cherokees’ agrarian identity. Regardless, the Cherokee chiefs’ approach worked. Despite depictions of widespread hunting, Long, undoubtedly to the delight of Cherokee chiefs, noted that Cherokees on the Arkansas were “almost exclusively agriculturalists, raising large crops of corn and cotton.”⁹² Slave ownership thus enabled some Cherokee chiefs to control informal encounters and to re-enforce the agrarian message of their official council communications through their position as slaveholders.

Cherokee chiefs’ personification of agrarian lifestyles was likely re-enforced by the scientists’ river travel corridor. Many of the Arkansas Cherokees’ wealthiest citizens occupied the river bank settlements and presented perhaps an outsized impression of the nation’s European-like habits.⁹³ Traveling up the Arkansas River by pirogue in 1819, Nuttall observed “both banks of the river were lined with the houses and farms of the Cherokees....well fenced and stocked with cattle,” offering the impression of a “happy approach towards civilization.”⁹⁴ The Arkansas Valley thus appeared to water-born

⁹¹ Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs: Comprising a Narrative of a Tour Performed in the Summer of 1820* (New Haven: Howe & Spalding, 1822), 74.

⁹² Such communication likely required the fascinating story of a Cherokee farmer unable to speak English to have purchased English-speaking slaves, most likely in Tennessee, and to have brought them west to a new farm on the Arkansas floodplain. James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 3, 128.

⁹³ Webber’s home was highly visible and highly visited “beautifully situated on a high bluff upon the bank of the Arkansas.” Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs*, 74; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 217.

⁹⁴ Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels Into the Arkansas Territory*, 123.

travelers as the location of fertile lands being actively transformed into a civilized landscape by Cherokees.

The combination of crops and slaves among riverside Cherokee settlements convinced Anglo-American observers that plantation culture was being advanced by wealthy Cherokees. While Americans never described Arkansas Cherokee leaders as explicitly as planters, they did refer to Cherokee “plantations,” largely based on their agricultural production and land clearing.⁹⁵ Other American travelers defined Cherokee plantations by the presence of agricultural equipment and the ability of Cherokees to control human labor to clear the “rich forests and luxuriant cane brakes...for their plantations.”⁹⁶ As such, Cherokee leaders’ control of slave labor, whether to act as interpreters or in their ability to subdue the Arkansas landscape for crop production, provided a material example to their agrarian rhetoric. While American travelers did not specify the number of slaves on these plantations and suggested that they were “scattered” in number and situation, these and their participation in the highly-esteemed plantation society.

Cherokees, whose agricultural centers were often established along the banks of the rivers, also had their knowledge of cropland evaluated by these passing scientists. These scientists noted that Cherokees had constructed farms on “considerable tracts of fertile land” along the river.⁹⁹ Nuttall’s naturalist perspective provided an implicit approval of Cherokees’ soil judgement. American soil science in the period was still in its infancy. The scientific team of Long’s expedition used vernacular techniques like the “occurrence of black walnut” to mark boundaries of regions where “soil [is] somewhat

⁹⁵ Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs*, 255.

⁹⁶ James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 3, 126.

⁹⁹ Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels Into the Arkansas Territory*, 137.

adapted to the purpose of agriculture.”¹⁰¹ The few scientific soil samples tests in the Arkansas valley would only appear towards the end of the 1820s. Most would comment on the high salt content in the Ozark region of the valley because of the “salt works” west of the Cherokee lands. Commentators a decade later would declare cotton as “most productive in alluvial soils a little touched by salt.”¹⁰² The scientists’ river pathway thus framed all Cherokee-Anglo interactions in an agricultural lens and demonstrated Cherokees’ knowledge of soil fertility to the white American readers.

To counter widespread evidence of traditional Cherokee hunting practices, Cherokee chiefs had to control the agrarian message in formal negotiations while also navigating the potentially detrimental visits of American scientific expeditions. The two-pronged nature of navigating formal and informal encounters with American officials and scientists had required a highly adaptable approach from Cherokee chiefs, whether in the use of translators or in understanding the power of written testimony. The agrarian language, coupled with the agricultural practices of prominent Cherokee chiefs, suggested that Arkansas Cherokees could be civilizing agents upon the landscape and a “civilized...example” to the “interior Indians,” namely the Osage.¹⁰³ In the pursuit of distinguishing themselves from the Osage, the fundamental shift to agrarian language had proved to be a successful tool for the Arkansas Cherokees.

LIMITS OF AGRARIAN RHETORIC

While Cherokees were successful in asserting an agrarian identity to distinguish themselves from their Osage competitors, the emphasis on Cherokee agricultural practices did not prove as successful in challenging white settlement. In the late 1810s

¹⁰¹ James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 2, 317.

¹⁰² *Farmers Register* Vol. II, ed. Edmund Ruffin ((Richmond: Edmund Ruffin, 1834), 361.

¹⁰³ Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs*, 75.

and early 1820s, Arkansas Cherokees faced a new threat in the form of white settlers hoping to settle west of the Cherokees' mountainous lands. Cherokee leaders re-employed their agrarian language but the results were mixed. White settlers continued to threaten Cherokee settlement, and Cherokee leaders turned to a superior knowledge of the human geography and settlements in the Arkansas Valley region to assert their power in land negotiations.

In the years surrounding Arkansas' creation as a territory, Americans were extolling the fertility of the western fringe of the Arkansas Valley. While the Cherokees occupied the Ozark highlands, to their west the mountains seemingly shifted immediately to hills and prairies. Much of the area was bought by Indian agent William Lovely in 1816 as a buffer between Cherokees and Osages, and it became popularly known as Lovely's Purchase. The American commander at Belle Point, later Fort Smith, called the lands west of the Cherokee territory "extremely rich and fertile, well-watered and timbered."¹¹⁰ While Stephen Long famously described the Great American Desert as "a wide sandy desert... forever... the unmolested haunt of the native hunter, the bison, and the jackal," he, too, noted Lovely's Purchase's "fertile prairie [and] many advantageous sites for plantations."¹¹¹ Buoyed by such pronouncements, Lovely's Purchase was quickly becoming the next locale for white settlement.

Territorial officials advocated for white settlers to replace Cherokees as the inhabitants of Lovely's Purchase. Prospective cotton growers were already establishing farms during the expeditions of Long and Nuttall, and American officials wanted to protect a valuable salt work from Indian claims. In 1823, the acting governor appealed to

¹¹⁰ William Bradford to Secretary of War, March 28, 1818, *Territorial Papers* 19: 58.

¹¹¹ James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 3, 121; 173.

the Secretary of War to open settlement to white families. He promised that on the three million acres of desirable land, “five to ten thousand souls, without exaggeration would be residents upon it and cultivating it next spring.”¹¹² According to territorial leaders, for the Arkansas Territory to flourish, white settlers were the key to a population surge that could double the territorial population in a year and create a new border population to replace the Cherokees.

Cherokees simultaneously prized the region and dreaded American settlement in Lovely’s Purchase. As early as 1820, numerous Cherokees were “restless” to move west upriver and settle on in the Purchase lands.¹¹³ They were likely drawn by the promise of plentiful hunting grounds along with fertile soil. Moving West also would solve their fears of being encircled by white settlement. As Cherokee chiefs again reminded President James Monroe in 1821, they felt that previous treaty negotiations had confirmed that Arkansas Cherokees would “not be surrounded by white people.”¹¹⁴ For whites and Cherokees alike, the eastern prairie, not the mountains, was the most desirable environment of the Arkansas Valley.

As the Cherokee leadership had done in their disputes with the Osage, Arkansas chiefs utilized an agrarian rhetoric by dismissing the ecological potential of the mountains, perhaps to demonstrate their civilized practices and to appeal for access to the west. It was in these deliberations for more western lands that Cherokee chiefs lamented that “we shall have a mountainous, broken—barren country fit for nothing among all the good land.”¹¹⁵ The claims of poor “fitness” would be repeated to bolster Cherokee

¹¹² Acting Governor Crittendon to Secretary of War, September 28, 1823, *Territorial Papers* 19: 549.

¹¹³ Governor Miller to Secretary of War, March 24, 1820, *Territorial Papers* 19: 153.

¹¹⁴ Arkansas Cherokees to President, March 17, 1821, *Territorial Papers* 19: 273.

¹¹⁵ Chiefs of the Arkansas Cherokees to Secretary of War, June 24, 1823, *Territorial Papers* 19: 525.

arguments for either more western lands or to block white settlement. A Cherokee delegation in Washington pleaded with the Secretary of War to not “place us in a county unfit for agricultural pursuits.”¹¹⁶ In the contest with white settlers, any references to mixed land use were gone, replaced by a staunchly agricultural need.

In contrast, American officials frequently diverted discussions of Arkansas Valley land from agricultural quality to simple *quantity*. These officials affirmed that their only obligation was to “make the quantity of and allotted to them on the Arkansas equal to what they surrendered East of the Mississippi.”¹¹⁷ Besides a promise in 1817 negotiations for lands full of game and the establishment of mill seats, American officials made no commitments regarding the quality of lands for agricultural use. In fact, despite occasional white settler claims to the fertility of Cherokee farm grounds, maps and physical descriptions of much of Cherokees lands echoed the judgement of the barren, mountainous land put forth by Cherokees. As such, American officials largely enjoyed the benefits of a straightforward acre-for-acre “exchange of country” with Cherokees.

Additionally, white settlers could easily counter Cherokee’s agrarian rhetoric. No longer were Cherokees in a contest with an Osage society that openly admitted a “strong desire to change their mode of life” and sought to “imitate the [Cherokee] example.”¹¹⁸ Rather, white settlers offered themselves as a pro-active civilizing force on the landscape, promising to change “the now useless forests on our western limits...into cultivated fields.”¹¹⁹ Without a clear advantage in rhetoric, Cherokees seemed to add their greater geographical knowledge to their repertoire of negotiating tools.

¹¹⁶ Cherokee Delegation to Secretary of War, March 12, 1825, *Territorial Papers* 20: 4.

¹¹⁷ Secretary of War to Reuben Lewis, July 22, 1819, *Territorial Papers*, 19: 87.

¹¹⁸ Stephen Long to Thomas Smith, January 30, 1818, *Territorial Papers* 19: 7.

¹¹⁹ Memorial to the President by the Territorial Assembly, 1825, *Territorial Papers* 20: 127.

Cherokees attempted to capitalize on the federal governments' occasional lapses in human geography knowledge. American officials suffered from a significant lack of human geographical understanding. Cherokees had often acted as guides for scientific expeditions, positioning themselves, rather than American troops, as the most knowledgeable of the landscape. In one telling episode, President Madison assured a delegation of Cherokee chiefs that he would seek to purchase from the Quapaw that he thought were west of the Cherokee. Unfortunately, it came to light that the President "was mistaken, and that [the land] belonged to the Osage."¹²⁰ Though the land was subsequently acquired from the Osage, the federal government had had to bear the burden of constructing and maintaining the military outpost at Fort Smith to negotiate relations between the now-warring nations.

While the episode in question was partially rectified by American officials, Cherokees frequently sought to exploit their knowledge of the landscape's inhabitants. During disputes in 1823, the federal government attempted to force 1,000 Cherokees living south of the Arkansas to relocate onto their treaty lands. Cherokees outmaneuvered federal officials by noting that the land belonged to the Choctaws via a treaty.¹²¹ Cherokee chiefs also attempted to organize their lands to extend the northern line of Cherokee claims up above the "Buffaloe Fork" where they would have "200 families of Shawnees and Delaware Indians" as neighbors.¹²² One delegation even sought to "concentrate the Shawnees on our western border" in order to protect against white

¹²⁰ Secretary of War to Reuben Lewis, July 22, 1819, *Territorial Papers* 19: 87.

¹²¹ Markman, "Arkansas Cherokees," 159.

¹²² Indian tribes were offering to exchange eastern lands for a place in the Arkansas Territory. Edward Duval to Secretary of war, March 1, 1824, *Territorial Papers* 19: 613.

encroachment.¹²³ The federal government seemed self-aware of their poor geographical knowledge. Stephen Long's 1823 map very obviously labeled the areas of settlement of each Indian nation, perhaps to aid in future negotiations. Nonetheless, Cherokee attempts to play the chess board of other nations' lands largely failed. By 1825, the Cherokees were the only nation remaining in the interior of Arkansas Territory.

The Cherokee's agrarian rhetoric, even coupled with a superior knowledge of cultural settlement, did little to stymie white settlement. Surveyors employed to mark the western limits of Cherokee settlement were already closing off Cherokee lands from Lovely's Purchase, perhaps even hoping that Cherokees would become "excessively dissatisfied" and exchange their lands.¹²⁴ With the growing threat of surveys and white settlement, Cherokee chiefs shifted their negotiating strategy from a rhetoric of ecological identity to the science of the American survey system.

¹²³ Arkansas Cherokee Delegation to Calhoun, February 21, 1825, "Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-80." (National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

¹²⁴ Matthew Arbuckle to Secretary of War, October 27, 1823. *Territorial Papers* 19: 560.

CHAPTER 2
RERAFTING AMERICAN SCIENCE
SURVEY SYSTEMS

By 1823, American officials had taken the first scientific steps to open lands in Lovely's Purchase to extensive white settlement; survey teams were sent along the Arkansas River to mark the eastern boundary of the Cherokee treaty land as well as to determine its western limit. Cherokee chiefs adapted to the impending encirclement by shifting their ecological negotiating framework from culture to the heart of American science: precision. While never dismissing the survey system, Cherokee chiefs undermined the results by questioning the survey methods and exact acreage and refusing to approve the survey finding. Their scientific strategy kept the western boundary unsettled for several years.

Survey teams helped to rationalize landscape around Cherokees for public sale and provided key geographical information for a government frequently pursuing policy with limited understanding of the actual environment. Survey officers stressed that the accuracy of initial lines would become the basis for the accuracy of all subsequent surveys. Given the tedious work of marking off 640 square acres for townships, survey teams in Arkansas were directed to first survey areas that might prove the most lucrative for land sales. They were also politically-driven. Surveyors were encouraged to extend townships to "the lands adjoining the westerly part of the Cherokee boundary" if they

seemed “a good quality and fit for settlements.”¹²⁵ Such townships capitalized on quality soil and simultaneously enclosed Cherokees in the mountains.

The Cherokee council’s scientific strategy used the strength of the survey system—its precision methods—to challenge both the method and the results of the 1823 survey. According to treaty agreements, Cherokees were guaranteed 3,285,710 acres between the Arkansas and White Rivers. Before allowing surveys to commence, Cherokee leaders requested to “appoint a commissioner” to accompany surveys along their western border.¹²⁶ It became the first instance of Cherokees seeking oversight of the survey process, but Cherokee leaders would offer more subtle critiques as well. Several months later, the chiefs simply dismissed the “three million...some odd acres of land” while arguing simply that “we have not a sufficiency of land allowed us.” Requesting more land, they hoped, would require officials to add acreage from land ceded in Alabama and cause delays by requiring a new survey.

However, Cherokees also questioned the methods and starting point that survey teams had undertaken to conduct their survey. Curiously, the situation of the survey results prompted John Jolly to leave the collective voice of the council and address the Secretary of War directly. Not only had he found the acreage insufficient, but he challenged two elements of geographical framework of the survey. The survey had started at the eastern Cherokee boundary line rather than the western boundary, limiting Cherokee ability to include some of the fertile riverside plains on their western border. Interest in shifting the survey team to the west represented an attempt at Cherokee control of an American scientific system. More egregiously, the survey had included more land

¹²⁵ William Rector to Thomas Rector, September 26, 1818, *Territorial Papers* 15: 437.

¹²⁶ Secretary of War to Governor Miller, March 4 1823, *Territorial Papers* 19: 498.

along the rugged White River to the north and less on the densely populated and fertile Arkansas valley. Jolly asked that Cherokees receive a “fair construction...[as] we are entitled to as much front on one river as the other.”¹²⁷ Jolly’s complaint of limited Arkansas River frontage echoed an earlier letter from the collective council that lamented “we shall not have more than seventy miles [total] on the Arkansas and White Rivers” with adjacent white settlement blocking any outlet to the west.¹²⁸

Cherokee challenges to the survey results caused uncertainty and discord among federal officials. Matthew Arbuckle, the commander at Fort Smith, formerly called Belle Point, remarked to the Secretary of War of “the anxiety of the people of this territory as well as the Cherokees on this subject.” Though he advised a quick solution and mentioned Cherokees’ preferences to remove west to Lovely’s Purchase, the survey challenges had caused local agitation that was relayed directly to John Calhoun.¹²⁹ Several months later, reports inside Washington D.C. swirled that the surveys had been “badly done.”¹³⁰ In addition to the unsettled Cherokee boundary, it had poorly marked lines and frequently charted accessible but poor soil areas. By throwing metaphorical dirt in the precision machine of scientific surveys, Cherokees had scored a reprieve.

In fact, in contrast to the urgent solution advocated by Arbuckle, Cherokee chiefs found their best solution in keeping the western boundary unresolved indefinitely. In March of 1824, a Cherokee delegation to Congress requested that “all the lands from the Lower Cherokee lines... to the Osage boundary line remain and be unsettled and

¹²⁷ John Jolly to Secretary of War, November 6, 1823, *Territorial Papers* 19: 563.

¹²⁸ Chiefs of the Arkansas to Secretary of War, June 24, 1823, *Territorial Papers* 19: 25.

¹²⁹ Matthew Arbuckle to Secretary of War, January 3, 1824, *Territorial Papers* 19: 587.

¹³⁰ William Bradford to William Rector, April 29, 1824, *Territorial Papers* 19: 658.

untouched...until the quantity ceded by the Cherokees shall be ascertained.”¹³¹ Cherokee chiefs saw great opportunity in making the survey system a tool for Cherokee benefit and refused to approve the 1823 survey.

The Cherokee strategy of maintaining unresolved survey boundaries was in some ways more accommodating than their older ecological rhetoric. Cherokee chiefs had utilized the shift from a hunting identity to a ‘civilized,’ agrarian identity to secure Cherokee interests in the face of Osage and white competition. In the survey disputes, Cherokee deliberations around the survey results, including their delegates’ promise to Congress to indefinitely “confine their settlement,” suggested greater compromise. While evidence of Cherokee interest in the western lands was well established, the Cherokees were willing to pursue an intermediate plan of simply keeping white settlement off the land rather than annexing it for themselves. The appropriation of survey systems for Cherokee interests also demonstrated the adaptable negotiation tactics in the political geography of western lands.

Nonetheless, the debate over the specificity of the survey system proved much more successful for Cherokee chiefs than agrarian rhetoric. White settlement in Lovely’s Purchase would remain suspended for nearly three more years. In the meantime, federal officials re-adjudicated the amount of ceded Cherokee lands east of the Mississippi with an 1825 survey team. The survey proved to be a crucial part of Cherokee diplomacy, as they gained roughly a million more acres, increasing their land in the Arkansas Valley by one third. American officials, now on the losing end of federal surveys, internally

¹³¹ U.S. Congress, House, Arkansas Delegation to McKenney, March 23, 1824, Document 263, 20th Cong., 1st Session, 1828, p. 14.

expressed relief that the additional 200 square miles of Lovely's Purchase territory did not include the valuable salt springs or all its choice farm land.¹³²

Arkansas Cherokee Chiefs had essentially turned the survey system against its own purpose. For a system that was geared to "ascertain the quality of the country" for sale and settlement by whites, Cherokees had used survey precision to gain leverage in the settlement debate of Lovely's Purchase, gained an indefinite reprieve, and even increased its land allotment. However, this would not be the last time Cherokee Chiefs inserted themselves into the systems of American science systems to limit American settlement. Perhaps the Cherokee leadership's most surprising strategy was to incorporate the breadth of their rhetorical, geographical, and scientific arguments into the tools of American cartography.

HYBRID CARTOGRAPHY

Amid the debate over survey lines, Cherokee "chiefs and headmen" requested a council with Edward Duval to convene near the Illinois Bayou. Their primary objective seems to have been to deliver a map to Duval, who would then send the map directly to the Secretary of War. With the "sketch of the country," the council hoped to "illustrate more clearly...their opinions and wishes in relation to the lands ceded to them." While no copy of the map is known to exist, Duval was apparently so impressed by it that he included a detailed description of its cartographic style and content in his report. Based on his descriptions, the map was meant to visually consolidate the council's various ecological, geographical, and scientific arguments of the previous several years. Furthermore, in the contest for control of the American west, Cherokees had inserted

¹³² Thomas McKenney to John Cocke, December 15, 1826, *Territorial Papers* 20: 326.



Figure 2.1 Zebulon Pike. *The First Part of Cap't Pike's Chart of the Internal Part of Louisiana*. Map. [ca 1:2,534,400]. Philadelphia: C. & A. Conrad, 1810. Zebulon Pike's map was one of the first American maps to offer detailed renderings of the Arkansas River Valley and its geography. While Pike's chart provided federal officials a better understanding of the waterways and settlements of the region, the geographical distortions of the region would not be corrected for over a decade. Descriptions of the imprecise quality of the 1824 Cherokee map suggest that it might have looked similar to Pike's depiction of the Arkansas Valley.

themselves into the growing cartographic representations of the Arkansas River Valley and asserted their own influence over settlement in the region.¹³³

The Cherokee cartographer had created a map more interested in the relative distribution of territory than precise scientific lines. According to Duval, the most important visualization of the map was to demonstrate “the upper settlement of the Cherokees & the relative position of their lands according to the recent survey.” The key information was therefore the human geography of the region. The mapmaker was certainly careful to include the environmental resources of the region, even sketching the

¹³³ Barr, “Geographies of Power.” Barr argues that Spanish officials acknowledged and even incorporated Indian territorial claims into their own official maps. Maps served as the primary means for this exchange of geographical knowledge. Brückner, *Early American Cartographies*. Brückner argues that recent studies of cartography have over-emphasized the development of precise mapping. This insistence on Enlightenment style maps obscures the plethora of maps, such as Indigenous ones, that emphasized cultural organization more than scientific precision.

“small bayous emptying into each river,” but the map was not fussy about exactness. As Duval first described it, “it was not given as a correct delineation of . . . rivers or topography of the country.” The political geography of the region, which Cherokees had previously utilized in refusing to remove from Choctaw lands, was evident in the Cherokee map.

Despite the emphasis on relative locations rather than precision, the map was, in fact, specifically created to add further contestation over the survey lines of Cherokees’ western boundary. Perhaps using the imprecise river channels to his advantage, the mapmaker drew the “great disproportionment” between the amount of land given to Cherokees on the White River rather than the Arkansas. For council members delivering the map, the message was clear: “the manner in which the line for the upper boundary [as they term it]” was a gross negligence to Cherokee interests on their western boundary. The map had been made in response to the recent survey, and it seemed clear to Duval that shifting the western boundary further west was “the principle inducement and object of this communication.”¹³⁴ The Cherokee debate over the contested western boundary had made its way into a diplomatic map.

Though created in response to the survey line, the map was related to a growing development of American cartography in the Arkansas Valley. Maps of the western territories were only gradually filling in empty space of the Louisiana territory. The shifting populations were quickly rendering earlier maps obsolete. Zebulon Pike’s “Chart” of his western exploration had been printed in 1810, well before the settlement of Cherokees along the Arkansas. Given the embarrassing episode in which the President

¹³⁴ Edward Duval to Secretary of War, March 1, 1824, *Territorial Papers* 19: 613.

had mistaken the region's human geographical knowledge, it was little surprise that one of the most important aspects of Long's exploration was the publication of a map in 1822.

Long's map acknowledged the political implications human geography of the Arkansas River valley. While Pawnee and Choctaw settlements were identified on the map, the Cherokee, Osage, and Quapaw figured so prominently that much of the new territory appeared to be labeled as Indian lands. On Long's map, the Cherokee, furthermore, were largely associated with the mountainous region of Arkansas and while the prominent settlements demonstrated their dominant presence in the region. The region west of the Cherokees was well watered with tributaries and invited investment given the unassociated "salt works." These salt works, the only resource mentioned on the map, were frequently referenced by regional commentators, one of whom supposed they could "supply...the whole of this country...with salt."¹³⁵ Long's map was later sent to the War Department to visually demonstrate the "limits of the Lovely's Purchase" and clarify a "rapid sketch" of "efforts to...remove the Indians further west."¹³⁶ The use of Long's maps for political understanding reveals the ongoing cartographic developments in which the Cherokees made their own map.

Like the later Cherokee map, the Long map highlighted the broad political and human geography of the region. Long had used the series of maps drawn by Zebulon Pike after his 1807 journey, but Pike's charts were less interested in mathematical precision, instead identifying the relative position of individual settlements and sites of historical significance. Long's Arkansas map outlined both the theoretical survey lines of Indian cessions as well as areas of Indian prominence. Reflecting a growing interest in

¹³⁵ William Bradford to the Secretary of War, March 28, 1818, *Territorial Papers*, 19: 58.

¹³⁶ Thomas McKinney to John Cocke, December 15, 1826, *Territorial Papers*, 20: 326.

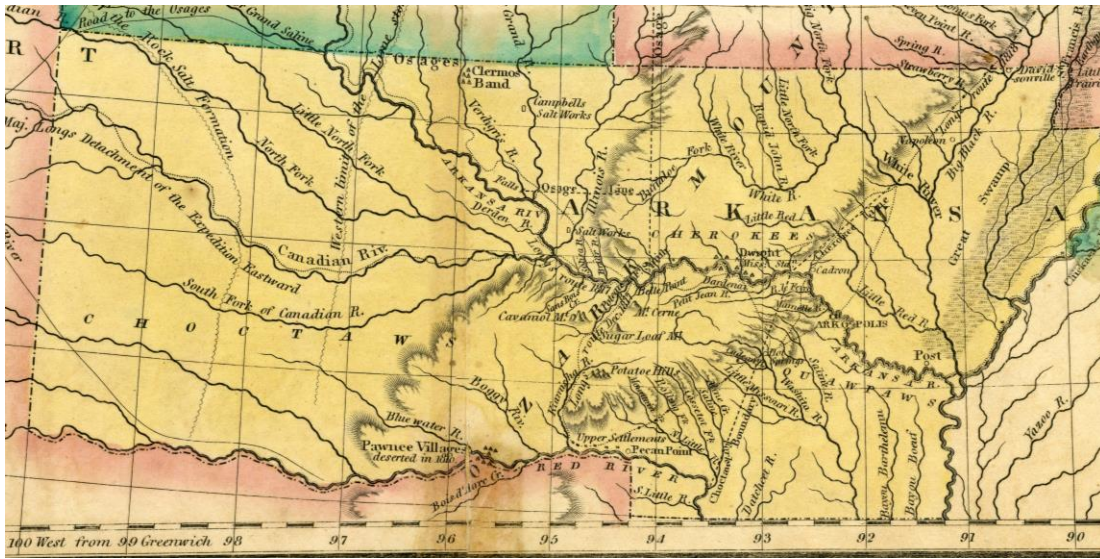


Figure 2.2 Stephen Long. Geographical, Statistical and Historical Map of Arkansas Territory. Map. In *A Complete Historical, Chronological, and Geographical American Atlas*. 35. Philadelphia: H.C. Carey and I. Lea, 1822. The Stephen Long expedition created detailed reports of much of the landscape of the Arkansas River Valley. Long’s map made the landscape legible through cultural and environmental notations. Long, differently from Zebulon Pike or the Cherokee cartographer, reported that his map was drawn according to precise daily measurements. His map also demonstrated how overlapping Euro-American and Indian settlements developed in the context of the geography and natural resources of the Arkansas Valley.

geographical positioning, Long cautioned that the map “project[ed] conformity to the results of numerous astronomical observations, but at places at present not known by [name] to fix to them.”¹³⁷ His large map, the “Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Map of Arkansas,” notably included all the Louisiana Purchase north of Arkansas as well as his excursion’s path, sites of historical note, and the first print of his famous moniker “Great Desert,” west of Arkansas Territory. Long’s mixture of survey lines, geographical coordinates, and Indian sovereignty offer a profound interweaving of measurement and humanity in the Arkansas valley.

Where the Cherokee map fundamentally differed from the Long map was in its depiction of the western extent of Cherokee settlements. Apparently stringing out

¹³⁷ James, *Account of an Expedition*, vol. 3, 318.

Cherokee settlements far up the river, the mapmaker drew the “injurious” survey line such that more than half of the Cherokee population was “cut off, or left without & above the line.” Such a survey line would have had to have been drawn from the council house at Dardanelle to be accurate, and there is no evidence of that action from the survey teams. Nonetheless, the mapmaker clearly inserted this distorted survey line to seek “ample and complete justice” from the government. Proper justice, according to council, was “80 to 100 miles of front on the Arkansas.” The Cherokees were engaged in a war of maps with Long.

While distorting the western reach of Cherokee settlements, the Cherokee map also claimed more land than any American map or official had previously offered. The map extended west all the way to the falls of the Verdigris River, effectively the western edge of the disputed Lovely’s Purchase area. In doing so, Cherokees literally mapped out the area that American officials knew many Cherokees wished for. Yet, in contrast to those western prairies, the mapmakers drew the survey results to show that the 1823 survey would have restricted the Cherokees to “a large proportion of mountainous country and unarable lands.”¹³⁸ Perhaps having sketched the contours of mountain uplift, the mapmaker gave cartographic expression to the agrarian rhetoric that Cherokees used to prove their own civilized status.

Much like the Cherokee appropriation of the survey system, the Cherokee map proved a successful hybrid of American scientific tools. Borrowing elements of recent American cartographic depictions, particularly Stephen Long’s map, Cherokees depicted the environmental and demographic conditions of the Arkansas Valley to challenge the 1823 survey system. Given Duval’s apparent amazement at the map and Cherokees’

¹³⁸ Edward Duval to Secretary of War, March 1, 1824, *Territorial Papers* 19: 613.

successful challenge to the 1823 survey, the Cherokee chiefs' supplementing of agrarian language with scientific literacy positioned Cherokees in an influential position once again in the debates over settlement in the interior of the continent. These maps, though, hinted at irreconcilable visions among Cherokee and American settlers regarding how to develop the cultural settlement boundaries in the Arkansas Valley.

PATCHWORK LANDSCAPE

The success of Cherokee chiefs' environmental, geographical, and scientific strategies did not finalize the Arkansas Valley settlement patterns so much as keep the council in a position of persuasion to influence settlement. The territorial legislature also sought a solution to regional settlement that favored white farmers, while federal officials hoped to keep frontier tensions in check and continue to encourage southeastern Indians to emigrate voluntarily. However, the maps of Long and the Cherokees, highlighted an ideological divide between Cherokees who sought a clear segregation from white settlement and white Americans who debated between segregation and inclusion based on ecological zones. The resolution of this debate with the treaty of 1828 would ultimately determine the contours of settlement in the Arkansas River Valley.

The Cherokee map demonstrated a decided interest among Cherokees to remain segregated from white settlers. Cherokee chiefs had repeatedly requested to not be "surrounded by white people." The 1823 map extended Cherokee claims to the western extent of viable farm land. Some reports in Washington occasionally described "restless" Cherokees who sought to move up river. However, the council interest seemed to be to maintain the lands along the Arkansas while extending Cherokee rights further west. In 1825, a delegation to Washington declared "we cannot remove from houses and farms

anymore...our desire is to concentrate Shawnees on our western border.” To announce this policy, an 1825 Cherokee law promised death to any member of the nation who proposed a sale or exchange of lands.

Thus, when the Cherokee mapmaker extended Cherokee claims to the falls of the Verdigris, perhaps 80 miles west of the Cherokee boundary, the message was that Cherokees intended to remain on the western border by simply adding the desirable land to the west. “Surely it cannot be the wish...of the government to monopolize all the good lands for our white brethren,” the delegation exclaimed.¹³⁹ Cherokees sought to cross ecological boundaries by claiming both the barren hills as well as the fertile alluvial plains.

Surprisingly, the separation of Cherokees and white was debated amongst American officials and white settlers. A survey of the western Cherokee boundary might have had the effect of surrounding Cherokee families—limiting them small parcels of farmland along the Arkansas and with a preponderance of mountain landscape. In 1824, white settlers anxious about access to Lovely’s Purchase petitioned Congress to extend the territorial boundaries west to include all of Lovely’s Purchase, including the profitable salt works. Surrounding the Cherokee with white settlement would have matched the ecological contours of the Arkansas Valley with the lines of cultural settlement. In contrast to a general east-west division between white settlers and Cherokees, the patchwork of white settlement based on soil fertility would have isolated the Cherokees within a wider population of white farmers.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Markman, “Arkansas Cherokees,” 170.

¹⁴⁰ Markman, “Arkansas Cherokees,” 167.

Other American settlers and politicians proposed a segregation policy more like the Cherokees'. Matthew Arbuckle, commander at Fort Smith, argued for seeking a land cession from the Osage west of Lovely's Purchase to which Cherokees might remove. His proposal was based on Indian interest in avoiding encirclement, but it required the removal of Cherokees from their lands and re-settlement far to the west at the edge of the fertile area of the prairies.¹⁴¹

In late 1826, the American patchwork settlement pattern became reality. Survey teams drew townships onto the landscape, and within a year an Arkansas territorial politician lauded the "three thousand souls" who had taken root in "the most healthy—populous and wealthy portion of Arkansas."¹⁴² Lovely County, created in 1827, walled off the Cherokee from their western outlet, and filled in the unclaimed area on Stephen Long's 1822 map for white settlers. The American vision of explicitly dividing valley settlement by overlapping ecological and racial lines had prevailed.

Cherokees found their rhetorical pleas for their civilized land use had become exhausted. In April 1828, a literate, farming Cherokee named Nu-Tah-E-Tuil vehemently denounced a memorial from the territorial legislature that Cherokees had no rights to lands in Arkansas. Challenging the notion that Cherokees were not civilized, he responded in the *Arkansas Gazette*, "What is civilization? Is it a practical knowledge of agriculture? I am willing to compare the farms of this nation with those of the mass of white population."¹⁴³ For Cherokees, the solution of a patchwork landscape was equivalent to a slow death on limited land and a rejection of a decade of highly coordinated agrarian rhetoric.

¹⁴¹ Markman, "Arkansas Cherokees," 169.

¹⁴² Delegate Sevier to Secretary of War, February 18, 1828, *Territorial Papers* 19: 604.

¹⁴³ DuVal, *Native Ground*, 238.

In the spring of 1828, a desperate Cherokee delegation was sent to Washington D.C. to seek a clear title for Lovely's Purchase. Familiar council faces like Black Fox and Thomas Graves, along with literate negotiators like Sequoyah and John Rogers, were instructed explicitly to not negotiate a land cession. Success would have encouraged a clear separation of cultures and a removal of white families from Lovely's Purchase. However, the delegation met staunch resistance to its request for increased land to the west. During the negotiations, Cherokee chiefs again revealed their agrarian rhetorical strategies by depicting western lands as inferior in quality to their claims along the Arkansas, countering years of explicitly contrasting statements. However, aside from a plan that would allow the Cherokees to have the land east from the falls of the Verdigris to essentially the existing western border, American negotiators were willing to either maintain the new status quo or remove Cherokees far to the west.¹⁴⁴ In May of 1828, the delegation signed an agreement relinquishing their Arkansas lands for lands immediately west.

Amongst Arkansas Cherokees, the news of the treaty was not a sign of political success but a gross betrayal of national trust. When news reached the Arkansas Cherokee of the land sale, poles were erected upon which the heads of the delegation were to be placed. The treaty delegates even remained for some weeks with the eastern Cherokee to let tensions simmer.¹⁴⁵ Principal chief John Jolly led an unsuccessful bid to reverse the treaty. For Cherokee families and farmers, the immediate tragedy was that they would be forced to abandon their farms east of Fort Smith. In addition to that immediate concern,

¹⁴⁴ Markman, "Arkansas Cherokees," 188.

¹⁴⁵ *Arkansas Gazette*, July 2, 1828, p. 3.

the greatest ill was the uncertain precedent the treaty created for future federal land appropriation west of the Mississippi.¹⁴⁶

While the delegation disobeyed instructions to not sign a treaty, the Cherokee treaty of 1828 effectively reversed the development of a patchwork settlement in favor of a stark cultural division between Cherokees and white settlers in the Arkansas River Valley. The treaty immediately curtailed white settlement in the recently-opened Lovely County, and promised the Cherokees a “permanent home” with no “white population...to annoy the Cherokees.” Having used agrarian rhetoric, survey systems and cartography to limit competing claims to the region, the Cherokees had gained the tract they had sought since at least 1820. In fact, the negotiators continued to successfully appeal the landscapes’ relative agrarian potential—claiming that Lovely’s Purchase was *inferior*—to gain nearly three million more acres than they had enjoyed in their previous location. Though the treaty ceded the farms of the Cherokees, the Cherokee vision of a stark cultural divide had been written into American law.

The effectiveness of Cherokees’ decade-old agrarian rhetoric was displayed in the opening terms of the 1828 treaty. The treaty noted that the Cherokee lands in Arkansas had become “unfavorable” and would lead to a “future degradation and misery.”¹⁴⁷ The implications were that limited farm land, and extensive mountainous tracks were detrimental to a society that had turned to agriculture. The United States, anxious to induce eastern Cherokees to emigrate, likely understood that farming practices were crucial to Cherokee society. A grist mill was promised along with sufficient land for

¹⁴⁶ *Cherokee Phoenix*, September 17, 1828, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ “Treaty with the Western Cherokee, 1828,” Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 288.

farmers and cattle grazers. The moral justification, then, of the treaty hearkened back to the long decade of Cherokee council's agrarian rhetoric.

Within the larger frame of settlement in the Arkansas River Valley, the 1828 treaty marked a stunning blow to white settler interests in the territory. Thousands of white settlers were forced to abandon their farms, and the promising region, thought to be well-suited to an extension of cotton production, was curtailed by Cherokee settlement. Prior to the treaty, the multiple strategies of the Cherokee council had compelled the territorial legislature to complain that "it is a well-known fact to the people of Arkansas, that the Cherokee have long desired to possess themselves of Lovely's purchase, and that they have exercised every art which their ingenuity could invent to induce the government to withhold it from sale and settlement."¹⁴⁸ The Cherokees, with the acknowledgement of their rivals, had successfully influenced, if not controlled, the settlement patterns in the region, which might have otherwise favored white agriculturalists.

¹⁴⁸ Memorial to the President by the Territorial Assembly, December 24, 1827, *Territorial Papers* 20: 572.

EPILOGUE

CHEROKEE REMOVAL

In the aftermath of the 1828 treaty, eastern Cherokee felt increased pressure to immigrate west to the newly settled Lovely's Purchase lands. That same year, the first editions of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the famed bi-lingual Cherokee newspaper, would repackage many of the ecological arguments once used by the Arkansas Cherokees to resist forced migration west.

Much as in Arkansas, the Eastern Cherokees editors of the *Cherokee Phoenix* promoted an entirely agrarian identity. The earliest columns cited editorials about the "scarce" game and "scanty crops of corn" that awaited Cherokees who refused to raise livestock and utilized plows.¹⁴⁹ Even sympathetic missionaries used the agrarian identity to resist removal. Guest writers remarked that "agricultural pursuits engage the chief attention of the people." With the rich soils in the valleys and plains of Georgia, ideal for producing Indian corn and cotton and orchards of apples and peaches, the rhetorical question remained of "why we should remove them from this situation?"¹⁵⁰ For Eastern Cherokees, the land and Cherokee land use served to re-enforce their civility.

In addition to their agrarian rhetoric, the *Phoenix* sought eye-witness reports to create a negative ecological depiction of the Arkansas Valley to support its anti-removal position. As scientific reports flowed in to support the growing antagonism, eastern

¹⁴⁹ *Cherokee Phoenix*, March 20, 1828, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Cherokee Phoenix*, May 21, 1828, p. 4.

Cherokees ironically lambasted the landscape that Arkansas Cherokees had desired for a decade. One report from an informant “who accompanied the surveyor” along the eastern treaty boundary, found it “the poorest country in the universe.”¹⁵¹ Others claimed that the “Cherokees have ceded to the United States all their best land,” while Arkansas Cherokees were reported to call it “poor, deficient in wood and water.”¹⁵² Much as the Arkansas Cherokees had denigrated their mountainous tract in order to negotiate settlement interests, eastern Cherokees were doing the same by deriding the landscape that Arkansas Cherokees and white settlers alike had long desired. They were in effect, creating a new ecological history to build anti-removal sentiment within the Cherokee nation by appealing to their own civilized qualities and the fundamental inadequacy of the Arkansas Valley.

In a fascinating irony, the eastern Cherokee utilized the scientific reports of American scientists by distorting the analysis of Major Stephen Long, who had extolled the region’s potential a decade before. Quoting from the *Connecticut Observer*, the *Phoenix* noted that the Long report described the proposed future residence of southeastern Indians. Their excerpt quoted the exact passage of the “Great American Desert” in which the conditions rendered “it an unfit residence for any but a nomad.”¹⁵³ The very expedition that the Arkansas Cherokee chiefs had used to establish their agricultural prowess was now being used to denigrate the western lands.

The debates over the fitness of the western lands for agriculture allowed Cherokee writers to engage discussions of scientific veracity and exchange. Distrusting federal officials, Cherokee writers found federal promises of the fertility of the Lovely’s

¹⁵¹ *Cherokee Phoenix*, September 9, 1829, p. 3.

¹⁵² *Cherokee Phoenix*, December 16, 1829, p. 2. February 3, 1830, p. 2.

¹⁵³ *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians’ Advocate*, March 3, 1830, p. 4.

Purchase landscape to be almost conspiratorial and untrue. Reports from the Secretary of War as to the “fertility of soil and profusion of game” were included in some *Phoenix* editions, but editors actively derided the source of such information.¹⁵⁴ For the editors, though, this was nothing more than propaganda in the form of environmental science, meant to “misrepresent the Indians and mislead the public.”¹⁵⁵ In other cases, they felt that federal officials imagined Cherokees as only hunters and were thus incapable of determining appropriate landscapes for the Cherokees. Much as Arkansas Cherokees had helped define the ecological potential of the Arkansas Valley, the debate raged anew over what sources of environmental knowledge could be trusted by native populations.

Eastern Cherokee also sought to make their Arkansas cousins a semi-savage foil to their own society as a way of announcing the de-civilizing dangers of the western frontier. In many editorials, writers expressed derision of the Arkansas Cherokees by associating them with the hunter life style. Reports in the *Cherokee Phoenix* suggested that the Arkansas Cherokees were “connected to us by every tie of blood...[but] differed widely from this nation.” According to the writer, reunion would not work because they had “traits more peculiar to Indians in a rude and uncivilized state.”¹⁵⁶ In one unfiltered libel, an editor commented, “sir, we are not Arkansas men. The chase we despise...we delight in cultivating the soil.”¹⁵⁷ In a landscape where “the voice of the civilized man gave place to the yells of savage man and ferocious beasts,” Arkansas Cherokees were portrayed as the savage man.¹⁵⁸ In effect, the eastern Cherokee were recycling the

¹⁵⁴ *Cherokee Phoenix*, January 7, 1829, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian's Advocate*, June 10, 1829, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Cherokee Phoenix*, September 9, 1829, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate*, July 8, 1829, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian's Advocate*, July 15, 1829, p. 2.

Cherokee strategy towards the Osage by building up a case against removal that denigrated their Arkansas cousins.

Seen through a rhetorical lens, the eastern Cherokee utilized an ecological ideology to frame political debates in much the same way that their Arkansas cousins had. While the audience for these statements seems to have been more internal than external, the effect was to promote an agrarian Cherokee identity to position the nation to better resist coerced removal and unfavorable settlement. These newspaper reports also suggest that Arkansas Cherokees' agrarian rhetoric, which seems to have convinced Osage and white settlers to acknowledge its efficacy, had not reached or otherwise convinced the eastern Cherokee. Within a decade, however, the eastern Cherokee would be forced from their lands in the east and made to join their uncivilized cousins in the Arkansas Valley.

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