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Native Americans, the Market Revolution, and Culture Change:

The Choctaw Cattle Economy, 1690–1830

JAMES TAYLOR CARSON

The market revolution has emerged as an important interpretive paradigm for the study of cultural, economic, and social change among societies around the world. However, Charles Sellers, the preeminent historian of the American market revolution, excluded Native Americans from his study.¹ The early nineteenth-century cattle economy of the Choctaw Indi-

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1. Charles Grier Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). The Indians in Sellers' study vanish from the scene before the market economy emerges. Among other studies of the market's impact, Nancy Cott's *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) was the first to argue that women's "separate spheres" and a "cult of domesticity" emerged to segregate women from the market revolution in New England. In contrast to Cott, Catherine Clinton's *The Plantation Mistress: Women's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) argues that southern women did not necessarily experience the same changes that had occurred in the North. Nancy Hewitt's *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822–1872* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) has broadened further the debate in American historiography on the market economy's impact on gender by examining women from different social classes and their responses to social and economic change.

Anthropologists Henrietta L. Moore, *Space, Text, and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Regina Smith Oboler, *Women, Power, and Economic Change: The Nandi of Kenya* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985) have argued that in Kenya the patriarchal structure of the Marakwet and Nandi peoples structured their responses to colonialism and the market revolution in ways that perpetuated men's dominance and weakened the position of women. Their work and that of Cott, Clinton, and Hewitt suggest that far from exerting a uniform influence, the market revolution caused disparate, culturally conditioned changes in economic production and gender segmentation.

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ans offers a striking example of how Native Americans responded to the revolution. Generally speaking, students of the cattle economy of the Old Southwest have either overlooked the involvement of Native Americans, or, as Richard White and Daniel Usner have done, considered it solely as an economic innovation without examining its cultural ramifications. Contrary to Sellers' argument that land was the most conservative force opposed to the American market revolution, culture proved to be an even more conservative force because it structured the Choctaws' adaptation to and participation within the market economy. Men adapted by incorporating cattle herding into their warfare and hunting traditions, and women exploited cattle and expanded their economic roles too without transgressing the cultural conventions that had patterned their lives well before the first cattle ambled into the Lower Mississippi Valley.²

Cattle and the cattle trade first became important in the Lower Mississippi Valley when the French settled the region at the end of the seventeenth century. Tribes like the Houmas, Tunicas, Chitimachas, Pascagoulas, Natchez, Avoyelles, and Attakapas valued European trade goods, and they incorporated the French into what historian Daniel Usner has termed a

2. Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southeastern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1933); Jack D. L. Holmes, "Joseph Piernas and the Nascent Cattle Industry of Southwest Louisiana," *McNeese Review* 17 (1966): 13–26; Jack D. L. Holmes, "Livestock in Spanish Natchez," *Journal of Mississippi History* 23 (October 1961): 15–37; John Hebron Moore, *Agriculture in Antebellum Mississippi* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971); John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi 1770–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Kenneth D. Israel, "A Geographical Analysis of the Cattle Industry in Southeastern Mississippi from its Beginnings to 1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 1970); John D. W. Guice, "Cattle Raisers of the Old Southwest: A Reinterpretation," *Western Historical Quarterly* 8 (April 1977): 167–87; Terry Jordan, "The Origins of Anglo-American Cattle Ranching in Texas: A Documentation of Diffusion from the Lower South," *Economic Geography* 45 (January 1969): 63–87; Terry Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); Lauren C. Post, "The Old Cattle Industry of Southwest Louisiana," *McNeese Review* 9 (1957): 43–55; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

See also Michael F. Doran, "Antebellum Cattle Herding in the Indian Territory," *Geographical Review* 66 (January 1976): 48–58, for a discussion of cattle raising among the Choctaws in Indian territory; and Louise Spindler, *Culture Change and Modernization* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977) for an overview of cultural change and adaptation.

frontier exchange economy. These tribes, the *petites nations*, traded, among other goods, cattle, which they had acquired as early as 1650 from tribes who traded with the Spanish in New Mexico, to the beef-starved French. In return these tribes received guns, ammunition, and other manufactured items. The commercial success of the *petites nations* was, however, short lived. By the mid-eighteenth century, disease, dependency, and European political and demographic expansion had reduced their remnants to economically and politically marginal groups. Moreover, by the 1740s French settlements at Opelousas and Natchitoches had begun to produce enough cattle to satisfy much of the Louisiana colony's needs.³

Only the Choctaws withstood colonial pressures and remained a forceful presence in the Lower Mississippi Valley throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Among the region's tribes, the Choctaws were

3. Charles W. Arnade, "Cattle Raising in Spanish Florida, 1513–1763," *Agricultural History* 35 (July 1961): 116–24; William Beer, ed., *Early Census Tables of Louisiana*, vol. 5 of *Publications of the Louisiana Historical Society* (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1911), 79–104; David I. Bushnell Jr., "Drawings by A. DeBatz in Louisiana, 1733–35," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, vol. 80, no. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1927); Heloise H. Cruzat, trans., "Louisiana in 1724: Banet's Report to the Company of the Indies, Dated Paris, 20 December 1724," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 12 (January 1929): 121–33; Gary Dunbar, "Colonial Carolina Cowpens," *Agricultural History* 35 (July 1961): 125–30; M. de Rémonville, "Memoir, addressed to Count de Pontchartrain, on the importance of Establishing a colony in Louisiana"; André Pénicault, *Annals of Louisiana*, vol. 1 of *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida, Including Translations of Original Manuscripts Relating to Their Discovery and Settlement with Numerous Historical and Biographical Notes*, new series, ed. Benjamin French (New York: J. Sabin & Sons, 1869), 2–14, 62, 144; Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southeastern United States to 1860*, vol. 1, 79; Pierre Margry, *Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique Septentrionale (1614–1754)*, vol. 6 (Paris: Imprimerie D. Jouaust, 1888), 245–46; Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana Translated from the French of M. Le Page du Pratz*, ed. Joseph Tregle Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 166; Lauren C. Post, "The Domestic Animals and Plants of French Louisiana as Mentioned in the Literature with References to Sources, Varieties, and Uses," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 16 (October 1933): 560–63; Lauren C. Post, "Some Notes on the Attakapas Indians of Southwest Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 3 (Summer 1962): 233–34; Dunbar Rowland and A. G. Sanders, eds. and trans., *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1729–1740: French Dominion*, vol. 3 (Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1932), 268; Nancy M. Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana during the French Regime, 1699–1763* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 253–55; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 57 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1900), 257; Daniel H. Usner Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), see particularly chapters 1, 2, and 3.

by far the most numerous and politically influential. They numbered around twenty thousand throughout the period, inhabited several towns in present-day east central Mississippi, and practiced a mixed economy of horticulture and hunting. Women directed domestic life and oversaw farming. They fabricated clothing and tools from animal skins and bones, manufactured earthen containers, prepared food, and sowed and harvested crops. Their expansive fields of corn, pumpkins, beans, and squash provided two-thirds of the Choctaws' diet and made the Choctaws what British surveyor Bernard Romans termed a "nation of farmers." Men, on the other hand, oversaw vitally important public ceremonies, but hunting, trading, and warfare were equally important occupations, and their social prestige depended on their success in these endeavors. Together men and women fashioned a surplus subsistence economy predicated on a sexual division of labor. Thus, when the frontier exchange economy made itself felt among the Choctaws in the eighteenth century, women traded foodstuffs, baskets, clothing, and firewood, and men offered deerskins and military service to the French in exchange for manufactured goods. Whether or not the Choctaws, like the *petites nations*, traded cattle in this economy is unclear, but linguistic evidence indicates they may have done so.⁴

Choctaws and other Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley had conceived of cattle as a trade good since their first contact with the animals in the late seventeenth century. Jesuit priest P re Jacques Gravier visited them in 1701 and reported their use of the word *waka*, derived from the Spanish *vaca*, for cow. *Waka* is one of the few European loanwords Choctaws incorporated into their language. They typically named European goods with indigenous words that reflected their conception of the good's function or form. For example, Choctaws called horses *isuba*, deer-resembler, and guns were *tanampo*, from the verb *tanampi*, to fight. The use of the Spanish

4. Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida; a Facsimile Reproduction of the 1775 Ed.* (1775; reprint, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), 71, 76; White, *Roots of Dependency*, chap. 2, 4; Jean-Bernard Bossu, *Travels in the Interior of North America, 1751–1762*, ed. and trans. Seymour Feiler (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 169–70; John Swanton, ed., "An Early Account of the Choctaw Indians," in *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Lancaster, Penn.: American Anthropological Society), 59, 67–68; Patricia K. Galloway, "Choctaw Factionalism and Civil War, 1746–1750," *Journal of Mississippi History* 44 (November 1982): 289–327.

loanword was a regional phenomenon because the languages of many tribes that bordered the Lower Mississippi Valley and that had extensive contacts—belligerent and peaceful—with the Choctaws also included derivatives of *vaca*. The Mobilian trade dialect that served as a regional *lingua franca* employed *waka* as well. Linguistically, *waka* constructed cattle in such a manner that they became inseparable from the European colonial presence, and their use as a trade good conformed to Spanish expectations of regional trade and alliance. Moreover, the incidence and prevalence of the loanword suggests that the Choctaws and other tribes may not have integrated cattle into their daily lives like they had horses and guns.⁵

Frenchman Régis du Roullet visited the Choctaws in 1732, and he recorded evidence that reveals the extent to which cattle were becoming an integral part of what historian James Merrell has called the “Indians’ New World.” While traveling westward from Mobile to the Choctaw nation, du Roullet crossed a small river about eight miles outside of Mobile, the

5. Marc de Villiers du Terrage, “Notes sur les Chactas d’après les journaux de voyage de Régis du Roullet (1729–1732),” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris* 15 (1923): 234; Cyrus Byington, “A Dictionary of the Choctaw Language,” Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin* 46 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915).

Besides the Choctaw language and the Mobilian trade language, the Wichitas, Biloxis, Cherokees, Creeks, and Chickasaws used some form of *vaca* for cattle. David S. Rood, *Wichita Grammar* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976), 295; John Owen Dorsey and John R. Swanton, eds., *A Dictionary of the Biloxi and Ofo Languages*, Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin* 47 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), 301; Durbin Feeling, *Cherokee-English Dictionary* (Talequah: Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, 1975), 187; Henry Frieland Buckner, *A Grammar of the Masjwke [Muskogee], or Creek Language: to Which Are Prefixed Lessons in Spelling, Reading, and Defining* (Marion, Ala.: Domestic and Indian Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1869), 35; James M. Crawford, *The Mobilian Trade Language* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), 4, 76, 83; Kenneth H. York, “Mobilier: The Indian *Lingua Franca* of Colonial Louisiana,” in *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, ed. Patricia K. Galloway (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1982), 139–45.

See J. L. Dilliard, “The Maritime (Perhaps *Lingua Franca*) Relations of a Special Variety of the Gulf Corridor,” *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 2 (1987): 244–49, for a discussion of the diffusion of Spanish loanwords in the Gulf Coast region; Terry Crowley, *An Introduction to Historical Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 267, 308; Theodora Bynon, *Historical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 256–61; M. Mosha, “Loan-words in Luganda: A Search for Guides in Adaptation of African Languages to Modern Conditions,” in *Language Use and Social Change*, ed. W. H. Whiteley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 288–308; Florian Coulmas, ed., *Language Adaptation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), for discussions on the development of pidgins and incorporation of loanwords.

Choctaw name of which translated to “bayou where cattle pasture.” In contrast, the French name for the river, Mill River, reflected an altogether different conception of the river’s utility. Perhaps this was the site where Choctaws raised cattle for trade with the French colonists. Regardless, by the 1730s cattle had become a feature of the postcontact landscape.⁶

Inferences drawn from toponyms are far from conclusive, but artifactual evidence substantiates the links between Choctaws and cattle in the early eighteenth century. Warriors and hunters used powder horns made of cattle horn; buffalo horn may also have been used. Native doctors used horns, open on both ends, to bleed their patients in a cupping fashion, and women fabricated winter cloaks from cowhides.

The impact of cattle on Choctaw place-names and material culture signaled an acceptance of the animals that allowed for more important and far-reaching innovative uses of cattle in community and individual life later in the century.⁷

By the last half of the eighteenth century Choctaws certainly had begun to raise cattle, and they altered their settlement patterns to accommodate their herds. In the early 1770s many Choctaws abandoned the towns and moved out to unsettled land that had been previously reserved for hunting and warfare. Here they dispersed along the Yazoo and Tombigbee Rivers to take advantage of the thick stands of cane and rich fields of grass that proliferated in the river bottomlands.⁸

6. The river was named “bouk ouaka apouka” (*Bok wak hopohka*). Marc de Villiers du Terrage, “Notes sur les Chactas d’après les journaux de voyage de RJgis du Roulet (1729–1732),” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris* 15 (1923): 234–35; James Merrell, *The Indians’ New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

7. Bushnell, “Drawings by A. DeBatz in Louisiana, 1732–1735”; John R. Swanton, “An Early Account of the Choctaw Indians,” *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1918): 71, describes a Choctaw medicine man using a horn in his treatments but does not specify whether it was a cow or buffalo horn. The use of buffalo wool in the treatment suggests it may have been a buffalo horn, but, like powder horns, Choctaws could have used both types.

8. White, *Roots of Dependency*, 102–5; *Missionary Herald* 25 (November 1829): 350; Horatio B. Cushman, *A History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians* (Greenville, Tex.: Headlight Publishing House, 1899), 389–91, 403; Francis Armstrong to Lewis Cass, 21 September 1831, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–1880, Choctaw Agency, 1824–1876, Reel 169, Microfilm Series M234, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives [hereafter RG 75]; Adam Hodgson, *Letters from North America Written During a Tour in the United States and Canada*, vol. 1 (London: Hurst, Robinson, 1824), 224.

The expansion of the Choctaws collided with the expansion of the United States. In other parts of the continent such conflict usually led to war, but the United States and the Choctaws signed the Treaty of Hopewell on 3 January 1786 to ensure peace on the frontier. The treaty, and the wane of imperial rivalries in the region, brought an end to the intertribal and imperial wars that had characterized the Lower Mississippi Valley throughout much of the eighteenth century. Consequently, the peace imperiled the social and political prestige of Choctaw warriors. The Hopewell treaty, however, reserved for the Choctaws the right to punish illegal American squatters “as they please,” and “rouguish young men,” coming of age in a society where the traditional forms of social advancement were no longer present, took to raiding the cattle of American squatters as a substitute for warfare. In 1803, eight warriors, for example, raided Daniel Grafton’s farm outside of Natchez and killed one of his work steers and wounded the other. Other Americans who lived closer to Natchez complained to the territorial governor incessantly about Choctaw depredations against their herds. The young men so valued cattle raids that they incorporated *waka* into their war names. By the early nineteenth century several men named Wakatubbee, which means cow-killer, bore testimony to the juxtaposition of an innovative mode of warfare within the broader persistence of a more ancient tradition.⁹

The federal government had failed to foresee the “problems” that resulted from Choctaw enforcement of the punishment clause, and President Jefferson sought to end the cattle raids without resort to hostilities. In the early 1800s the trading firm of Panton, Leslie and Company, a company run by Englishmen that operated out of Spanish Mobile and Pensacola, be-

9. John McKee to Choctaw Headmen, 11 December 1815, Letters Received by the Secretary of War Relating to Indian Affairs, 1800–1823, Reel 1, Microfilm Series M271, War Department, RG 75; Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Official Letter Books of William C. C. Claiborne, 1801–1816*, vol. 1 (Jackson, Miss., 1917), 13, 60; Dunbar Rowland, ed., *The Mississippi Territorial Archive, 1798–1803*, vol. 1 (Nashville, Tenn.: Brandon Printing, 1905), 32, 350, 393, 527–29; Lawrence Kinnaird, ed., “Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765–1794,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1949), 26; Roster of Choctaws claiming to have lost horses during removal, 8 October 1837, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–1880, Reel 184, Microfilm Series M234, Choctaw Agency West, 1825–1838, Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG 75; Treaty of Hopewell, 3 January 1786, Articles 4 and 5, Reel 2, Microfilm Series M668, Ratified Indian Treaties, 1722–1869, Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG 75.

gan to demand from the Choctaws repayment of debts incurred by their purchase of bullets, guns, and powder on credit. By 1803 the debt exceeded \$46,000, and the firm demanded a Choctaw land cession to retire it. Opposed to the cession of Indian land to private individuals, and wary of Spanish and British intrigues in the Lower Mississippi Valley, Jefferson intervened and federal commissioners held treaty talks with the Choctaws. The resulting 1805 Treaty of Mount Dexter ceded a substantial portion of southeastern Mississippi to the United States for \$50,000, and the federal government extinguished the Choctaw debt owed to the company with most of the cash settlement. The federal government earmarked what cash remained after paying off Panton, Leslie and Company to compensate citizens who had suffered depredations committed “on stock, and other property by evil disposed persons of the said Choctaw nation.” Holding the Choctaws corporately liable for the legal livestock raids and punishing them collectively for such actions brought an end to the raids.¹⁰

In addition to cattle’s vital place in male warrior culture, the animals emerged as an important part of its counterpart, hunter culture. Although deerskins overwhelmingly dominated the Choctaw skin trade throughout its duration, cowhides and beef tallow became important exchange commodities by the early 1800s. In 1802 the federal government built a trading factory on the banks of the Tombigbee River in present-day western Alabama to facilitate trade with the Choctaws, and it flourished. (At a later date the factory was moved up-river closer to the Choctaw towns.) Though the quantities of cowhides brought to the factory were small in relation to the amounts of other skins, in terms of value they rivaled bear skins as the second most important skin traded. Unlike the deer, bear, fox, and wildcat skins and beaver pelts, cowhides were not destined for consumption in distant markets. Instead, American factors, that is, government traders and their slaves, cut the hides into strips and used them to tie up the bundles of deerskins and other furs for shipment. The factors also used cowhides to

10. William Simpson, Abstract of debts owed to Panton, Leslie and Company, 20 August 1803, Letters Received by the Secretary of War Relating to Indian Affairs, 1800–1823, Reel 1, Microfilm Series M271, War Department, RG 75; Article 2, Treaty of Mount Dexter, 16 November 1805, Ratified Indian Treaties, 1722–1869, Reel 3, Microfilm Series M668, Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG 75.

shield the decks and crews of the factory's two boats from balls and arrows shot by hostile Indians. Another important trade commodity was beef tallow, but it never overtook its rival, beeswax, which was used in the manufacture of candles and was worth twice as much per pound. Cowhides and tallow obtained an important but secondary position in the vast array of skins, peltries, and other products that the Choctaws traded at the United States factory, but this trade allowed hunters, like warriors, to establish a relationship with the animals that comported with cultural norms.¹¹

By the 1810s the Choctaws had become entirely dependent on the deerskin trade. Never able to trade enough skins to pay off their debts, they had mortgaged their economic and political independence first to the French, then to the British, and then to the United States. This decline, as Richard White has written, further undermined their society and degraded their environment. When the United States trading factory closed its doors in 1822, the Choctaws lost perhaps the only source of credit available to them, as well as the guaranteed prices that had been set by the federal government. Left on their own to cope with an emerging market economy that set prices according to demand and had little need for deerskins, the Choctaws for the most part abandoned commercial hunting. As Usner and White have argued, cattle raising offered an alternative to the increasingly impracticable deerskin trade.¹²

After over a century of contact with cattle, Choctaw warriors and hunters laid down their rifles, saddled their horses, strapped on spurs, unfurled their rawhide whips, and began to herd livestock as their primary economic endeavor. How they managed their herds, beyond free-ranging them, is unclear because there is no evidence to indicate that they selectively bred animals or culled their herds, or that they used traditional land

11. Indent Books, 14 December 1805, 24 January 1809, 6 February 1809, and Miscellaneous Accounts, 3 April 1816, Reels 1, 2, 3, Microfilm Series T500, Records of the Choctaw Trading House, Under the Office of Indian Trade, 1803–1824, RG 75; Deborah A. Hay, "Fort St. Stephens and Fort Confederation: Two U.S. Factories for the Choctaw, 1802–1822" (master's thesis, Auburn University, 1979), 39–43, 88–93, 112.

12. White, *Roots of Dependency*, chaps. 4, 5; Daniel H. Usner Jr., "American Indians on the Cotton Frontier: Changing Economic Relations with Citizens and Slaves in the Mississippi Territory," *Journal of American History* 72 (September 1985): 297–98; Michael F. Doran, "Antebellum Cattle Herding in the Indian Territory," *Geographical Review* 66 (January 1976): 102–4.

management techniques like burning to manage their cattle and the cattle range.

As Terry Jordan has argued, other features of the nineteenth-century Choctaw cattle complex bore a strong Anglo-American imprint. English traders and cattlemen from Georgia and the Carolinas had settled in Mississippi in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and they imparted much of their knowledge to the Choctaws. At round-up times, Choctaw herdsmen, *wak apistikeli*, summoned their cattle from the canebrakes, pastures, and forests with loud cracks of the whip, herded the cattle on horseback, and enclosed them in cow pens. Once penned cattle could be driven down innumerable cow trails, *wak aiitanowa*, to markets in surrounding American communities. To distinguish between herds, they branded their animals, as was common practice among non-Indians of the region. Choctaw cowboys like Mushulatubbee, Puckshenubbee, Mastubbee, and Indian countrymen John Pitchlynn and Charles Juzan bartered deerskins and cowhides for, among other things, saddles, bridles, spurs, whips, cow bells, and salt. (Salt was essential for the cattle's nutrition, and they would never venture far from a secure source of it.) Although Choctaw men retained deeply rooted hunting and warfare values in their relationship to cattle, they nevertheless also had learned how to use the accoutrements and techniques of the Anglo-American cattle economy.¹³

Cattle raising was an innovative economic behavior that fit perfectly

13. Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers*, 182–83; *Missionary Herald* 18 (May 1822): 150; *Panoplist and Missionary Herald* 15 (October 1819): 460, 463; Hodgson, *Letters from North America*, 1: 23, 241, 253; Byington, *Dictionary of the Choctaw Language*, 74, 77, 361–62; Francis Baily, *Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America in 1796 and 1797* (London: Baily Brothers, 1856), 373; Israel, “A Geographical Analysis of the Cattle Industry,” 26, 65; Harry Toulmin, comp., *Digest of the Statutes of the Mississippi Territory* (Natchez, Miss.: Territorial Publisher, 1807), 403; Dunbar, “Colonial Cowpens,” 125–30; Guice, “Cattle Raisers of the Old Southwest,” 167–87; Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney, “The Antebellum Southern Herdsmen: A Reinterpretation,” *Journal of Southern History* 41 (May 1975): 147–66; Daybook entries, 18 August 1808, 16 September 1808, 22 May 1809, 13 July 1809, 9 October 1809, 18 April 1810, 8 March 1811, and 19 February 1813, Daybooks, 1803–1824, Reel 4, Microfilm Series T500, Records of the Choctaw Trading House, Under the Office of Indian Trade, RG 75; Henry Halbert, “Origins of Mashulaville,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, vol. 7 (Oxford: Mississippi Historical Society, 1903), 393; André Michaux, “Travels to the West of the Allegheny Mountains in the States of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, . . .” in *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clarke, 1904), 246.

within the regional market economy. Choctaws could raise cattle with ease, and the demand for beef in the Old Southwest remained constant because the region's plantation and subsistence economies depended to a large extent on cattle. Indeed, federal Indian agent William Ward remarked that the Choctaws "generally supplied (in part) the neighboring whites with . . . beef." The average price for a cow in Mississippi in the 1820s was between eight and ten dollars, and the price of fresh beef was four cents a pound. In the late 1820s, when the Choctaw herd numbered over 43,000 head, it had a maximum market value of almost four hundred thousand dollars on the hoof and a half million dollars when converted into fresh beef. In addition to its value, the Choctaw herd's size was comparable to that of non-Indian herds in the region.

In 1828 there were 2.07 cattle per capita in the Choctaw nation. In Spanish Natchez, for example, the same ratio was obtained in 1784, and in 1840 the state of Mississippi had a much lower ratio of 1.8 cattle per capita. The size of the Choctaw cattle economy meant that unlike their cotton economy it was not concentrated in the hands of a few entrepreneurs.¹⁴

Whether they owned herds of several hundred head or only a few animals, by all accounts most Choctaws participated in the cattle economy. Families would have had access to approximately 1,290,000 pounds of beef annually, or just under three ounces per capita per day, and incalculable quantities of milk and butter. Whereas formerly adults had taught boys to hunt and girls to farm, the Choctaws began impressing on the young the value and importance of stock raising. Sons and daughters received from their families, if possible, a cow and calf, a sow and piglet, and a mare and colt. As the child grew older, his or her herd multiplied and provided the owner with a sound source of income and subsistence in adulthood. The recognition of cattle as the key for future generations' prosperity prompted

14. *Niles' Weekly Register* 38 (3 July 1830): 345; Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southeastern United States to 1860*, vol. 2, 812, 1042; United States Bureau of the Census, *The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 30. In 1828 the American Board missionaries took a census of the Choctaw cattle herd in the eastern district of the nation and counted 5,627 people and 11,661 cattle, yielding a ratio of 2.07 cattle per capita. Using this ratio I have reconstructed the Choctaw herd for a total population of 21,000 Choctaws in 1828 to be over 43,000 animals. *Missionary Herald* 25 (February 1829): 61, 153; *Missionary Herald* 17 (April 1821): 110.

Choctaw leaders to attempt to control strictly the trade of cattle with Americans.¹⁵

American cattle traders frequently ventured into the nation to buy and trade for Choctaw cattle. Mushulatubbee, one of the nation's principal leaders, often entertained buyers from Alabama at his home. With what such men bought Choctaw cattle is unknown, but the most noteworthy, and hence recorded, transactions between Choctaws and American buyers involved midnight swaps of cattle for alcohol. Indians took whisky from the traders and exchanged it with other Choctaws for their cattle, blankets, and guns and then traded these items back to the Americans. Failing this, some tribesmen simply stole their fellow Choctaws' cattle for trade with the Americans, and this drew the ire of reform-minded leaders such as Hwoolatahoomah, who banned livestock stealing and whisky trading in his district. Despite the trouble caused by the whisky trade, most Choctaws seem to have adapted to the market economy by raising livestock.¹⁶

But not all uses of cattle reflected market concerns. Choctaws also incorporated them into rituals that affirmed kin and community relationships and obligations. When a Choctaw died, kinfolk shot and killed the deceased person's cattle, horses, and dogs for the funeral ritual. Choctaws reasoned that the animals "would be equally useful and desirable in the state of being which they enter at death." Of use to the deceased in the afterlife, the meat of the slain animals served the kinfolk as well. Relatives feasted on the meat

15. Senate, *Report on Indian Tribes*, 20th Cong., 2nd sess., 3 January 1829, vol. 1, S. Doc. 27, 6; Guice, "Cattle Raisers of the Old Southwest," 175–77; Israel, "A Geographical Analysis of the Cattle Industry," 5–7, 79; Thomas L. McKenney, *Memoirs, Official and Personal...*, vol. 1 (New York: Paine and Burgess, 1846), 323.

In the absence of figures that might reveal how much of their herds Choctaws consumed annually, I have used Leonard Brinkman's estimates for cattle weight and Harold K. Schneider's figure of 10 percent of the herd annually as a maximum for consumption, coupled with his estimation that a cow yields half of its body weight in meat. Choctaw cattle probably weighed about six hundred pounds. Harold K. Schneider, *Livestock and Equality in East Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 62, 101; Leonard W. Brinkman Jr., "The Historical Geography of Improved Cattle in the United States to 1870" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1964), 38.

16. William A. Love, "Moshulitubbee's Prairie Village," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, vol. 7 (Oxford, Miss.: Mississippi Historical Society, 1903), 375; *Missionary Herald* 17 (March 1821): 74; *Missionary Herald* 19 (January 1823): 9–10; Samuel Brown, *The Western Gazetteer; or Emigrant's Directory Containing a Geographical Description of the Western States and Territories* (Auburn, N.Y.: H. C. Southwick, 1817), 242.

to honor the passage of the deceased and to reaffirm symbolically the bonds of kinship and community, and life and death.

Such a ritual use of cattle found further expression in another form of social behavior, reciprocity. At a council held in August 1819, Choctaw headmen donated eighty-five cows and calves for the support of the Boston-based American Board missionaries, who had begun building the Elliot missionary station and school in the western part of the Choctaw nation. When the missionaries accepted this gift, they unwittingly committed themselves to the system of reciprocal social relations and obligations that characterized Choctaw society.¹⁷

Adam Hodgson, an Englishman who visited the Elliot mission in 1820, witnessed firsthand the juxtaposition of tradition and innovation among the Choctaws, for he recorded both the use of cattle in traditional funerals and the prosperity of the new cattle economy. During his journey through the Choctaw nation, Hodgson stopped and visited two Choctaw brothers who raised cattle for a living. The size of their herds, the lushness of their range, and the sturdy prosperity of their farmsteads impressed him, and he decided to spend the night at their home. As the sun set their cattle ambled in from the forest for milking, and Hodgson's host shot one of the cows for supper just as, a half century earlier, he might have killed a deer or turkey. That evening the Englishman sat down with the family for a meal of fresh beefsteaks. What escaped Hodgson's normally observant eyes, however, were the women who had milked the cows and who had cooked the steaks.¹⁸

The infrequent mention of Native American women in historical

17. *Panoplist and Missionary Herald* 15 (October 1819): 461; *Panoplist and Missionary Herald* 15 (December 1819): 535; Louis LeClerc de Milford, *Memoir or a Cursory Glance at My Different Travels & My Sojourn in the Creek Nation*, ed. John Francis McDermott, trans. Geraldine de Courcy (Chicago: R. R. Donnelly and Sons, 1956), 204; White, *Roots of Dependency*, 105.

For further discussions of Choctaw funeral rites, see Hodgson, *Letters from North America*, vol. 1, 216; Henry Frieland Buckner, "Burial among the Choctaws," *American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal* 2 (July–September 1879): 55–58.

18. Hodgson, *Letters from North America*, 1: 224, 241, 253. Hodgson does not state that women milked the cows and cooked the steaks. In the absence of documentary evidence, I have used the methodology of ethnohistory and my own interpretation of what we know about the Choctaws to infer that it was women who did this.

sources makes any study of their lives difficult and any conclusions reached tenuous, but linguistic evidence can open new lines of inquiry and illuminate what otherwise would be overlooked or incomprehensible. Anthropologists Mary Haas and Amelia Rector Bell have shown that the Muskogee language family, to which the Choctaw language belongs, contains grammatical structures and vocabulary that differentiate in subtle ways the language that the men spoke from the language that the women spoke. By drawing on the Choctaw language and the few references to women and cattle in the documentary sources, a number of suggestions about Choctaw women and cattle may be offered.¹⁹

Gendered social structures historically have exerted a considerable influence on different societies' development of a cattle complex and their participation in a market economy. Among patrilineal peoples such as the Marakwet and Nambi of Kenya, men controlled property like cattle and, consequently, entry into the market economy. Women could own cattle, but what animals they owned were added to the men's herds. More importantly, men had the final say in whether cattle owned by women would be sold, traded, or left in the men's herds. Women's participation in the market economy was thus limited to the marketing of vegetable produce and sex. In early nineteenth-century New England a similar process occurred whereby women were cordoned off into "separate spheres" and hindered by law and custom from participating in the male-dominated economy.²⁰

Unlike the Marakwet and Nambi of Kenya and the Americans of New England, Choctaws were matrilineal. Descent was traced through the mother, and children belonged to the mother's family. Moreover, they were matrilineal. Families lived grouped in matrilineages that further enabled Choctaw women to have a considerable if not decisive say in the distribution and control of land, property, and labor. Matriliney, therefore, differentiates the Choctaws' experience from that of their Kenyan and American counterparts.²¹

19. Mary Haas, "Men's and Women's Speech in Koasati," in *Language in Culture and Society*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 228–33; Amelia Rector Bell, "Separate People: Speaking of Creek Men and Women," *American Anthropologist* 92 (June 1992): 332–45.

20. Moore, *Space, Text, and Gender*, 66–67, 144; Oboler, *Women, Power, and Economic Change*, 9–11, 25–28, 153–55, 191, 229, 243; Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*.

21. John R. Swanton, "Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw

Just as men's relationship to cattle was conditioned by their warrior and hunter traditions, so too was women's relationship with the animals structured by their link to the home and horticulture. Like male Choctaws, females incorporated *waka* into their names, and the names reveal much about the complex intersection and discrete segmentation of Choctaw gender structures. According to Amelia Rector Bell, the Creek language differentiates gender distinctions according to definitions of male behavior. Thus, the woman "food maker" can only be understood in secondary opposition to the primary male "warrior." One of the translatable female names that incorporated *waka*, Wakaihoner, means "cow cooker." When contrasted to the male name Wakatubbee, which means "cow killer," the names bear a striking resemblance to the pattern described by Bell. For women, it seems cattle could define them in relation to men insofar as women performed a gendered function like food preparation that was predicated upon a male behavior like hunting. But cattle could also be defined in terms that were predicated upon distinctly feminine activities like farming.²²

Another Choctaw term for cattle—*alhpoa*—means literally "fruit trees such as are cultivated" and suggests a uniquely feminine construction of the value and utility of livestock. The fruit trees that proliferated among Choctaw towns offered a sensible linguistic construction of cattle for several reasons. Just as women tended plum or peach trees for their fruit, so too could they care for cattle and obtain milk. The association of women with the formidable power of fertility also may have created a special relationship between them and cattle because, like fruit trees, the annual reproduction of cattle was what made the animals particularly valuable. Above all, orchards were an integral part of the town landscape, and other cattle-related terms derived from *alhpoa* suggest this held true for cattle as well.

Indians," Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin 103* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931), 139–40; Henry Clark Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw Indians* (Cincinnati: L. Swormstedt & A. Poe, 1860), 31–32.

22. Amelia Rector Bell, "Separate People: Speaking of Creek Men and Women," *American Anthropologist* 92 (June 1990): 332–35. The Choctaw names come from a roster of Choctaws claiming to have lost possessions during removal, 8 October 1837, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–1880, Reel 184, Microfilm Series M234, Choctaw Agency West, 1825–1838, RG 75.

For example, *alhpoa aiimpa* meant pasture, and *alhpoa imilhpak* meant fodder. Both terms imply the careful tending and close proximity to the towns that characterized women's farming as opposed to the neglect that characterized the free-range herding practiced by the men.²³

The linguistic construction of cattle as fruit trees may have allowed women to adapt to changing Choctaw settlement patterns. When the Choctaws abandoned their towns in the 1770s, relocated in the borderlands that had once been reserved for hunting and fighting, and began to raise cattle, the women had to abandon the orchards that had been a part of their land holdings and subsistence cycle. Once settled in the borderlands, they would have been unable to reconstitute immediately their orchards because native fruit trees took at least three years before they started to bear fruit. But, in a cognitive sense, women could have taken their cattle, as fruit trees, into the previously unsettled and uncultivated borderlands that had been reserved for male hunting and fighting and reconstitute immediately what had been an integral part of village life.²⁴

The cognition and exploitation of cattle as fruit trees further facilitated women's entry into the market economy. Early in the contact period Choctaw women had welcomed explorers, travelers, and traders with gifts of food and shelter, but newer market sensibilities pervaded this ethic and transformed it by the 1800s. Women obtained scarce hard cash from travelers who were beholden to their Choctaw hosts by selling them milk, beef, corn, fodder, peaches, and other foods. This hospitality economy allowed women both to participate in the wide range of opportunities made possible by the market economy and to obtain hard cash for further participation in it. What the women purchased with this money is impossible to discover, but cloth, sewing necessities, and agricultural implements constituted the bulk of purchases made by women at the United States trading factory. Although the hospitality economy grew out of an older ethic of reciprocity, its transformation reflected the extent to which custom

23. du Pratz, *History of Louisiana*, 234; Post, "The Domestic Animals and Plants of French Louisiana," 560; U. P. Hedrick, *The Peaches of New York* (Albany: J. B. Lynn, 1917), 44–45.

24. White, *Roots of Dependency*, 103–5, 130–37; *Missionary Herald* 25 (November 1829): 350; Hedrick, *The Peaches of New York*, 44–45.

had given way to innovation, and reciprocity and subsistence had given way to sale and profit.²⁵

Whereas selling beef or milk had precedent in the hospitality economy, the selling of livestock as animals did not. Nevertheless, *alrhoa* constructed cattle so that women like men could trade or sell cattle. However, as a result of the *alrhoa* construct, women, like men, could trade or sell cattle. In July of 1820 a thirteen-year-old Choctaw girl tried to enter the Elliot missionary school, located in present-day west central Mississippi. The missionaries, however, denied her request for admission because the school was already overcrowded. Reluctant to crush the girl's hopes of going to the school, her friends told her that because she lacked a school uniform, she could not enter the school. Undaunted, the girl determined to sell her cow for cash to buy a uniform. Touched by her resolve, the missionaries agreed to take the girl in, and her uncle offered to pay any expenses to cover the cost of her schooling.²⁶

What the missionaries mistook for youthful precocity, and what some might mistake for an everyday occurrence in the Old Southwest, in fact revealed the juxtaposition and interplay of Choctaw culture and newer market sensibilities. The girl's conception of the cow as a good that could be sold for cash suggests the prevalence of a distinctly market-oriented mindset. Furthermore, selling the entire cow rather than its milk or meat represented an elaboration of the feminine hospitality economy that was nevertheless sanctioned by the language of the Choctaws' gendered economy and culture.

The Choctaws' transition from the early eighteenth-century frontier exchange economy to the nineteenth-century market economy failed to upset the gendered economic structures of their culture. By killing, hunting, raising, trading, and selling cattle, they adjusted to the new world wrought by

25. Baily, *Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America*, 373; Eron Opha Rowland, "Peter Chester, Third Governor of the Province of West Florida under British Dominion, 1770–1781," in *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, vol. 5, Centenary Series, Franklin L. Riley, ed. (Jackson: Mississippi Historical Society, 1925), 83–84; Lists of travel expenses, George Gaines, 31 March 1811 and 30 September 1811, Miscellaneous Accounts, 1811–1815, Reel 2, Microfilm Series T500, Records of the Choctaw Trading House, Under the Office of Indian Trade, 1803–1824, RG 75.

26. *Panoplist and Missionary Herald* 16 (July 1820): 320.

European colonization and American settlement. Moreover, Choctaw women avoided the economic marginalization and social subjugation that had characterized women's experiences in New England and Kenya by drawing on their traditional roles and responsibilities to sanction innovative economic activities. Contrary to Charles Sellers, market revolutions are not contests of impersonal forces but struggles waged by individuals within a changing world economy, and language and culture are crucial elements in understanding how different peoples have managed the fight.