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Decolonizing the Choctaw Nation: Choctaw Political Economy in the Twentieth Century

SANDRA FAIMAN-SILVA

This article will analyze the Choctaw living in the southeastern Oklahoma timber region, concentrated mainly in Pushmataha and McCurtain counties, to ascertain how they “make do” in the face of a history of nearly complete land alienation and profound economic challenges to their traditional strategies for maintaining a livelihood. Southeastern Oklahoma has been home to the Muskogean-speaking Choctaw since their forced removal from Mississippi and Alabama in 1829–31, known as the Trail of Tears. This region, an extension of the Arkansas and Missouri Ozark Mountains, resembles the New England countryside, with dense forests, clear mountain streams, dirt roads, and sparsely populated villages. Its uneven terrain and lack of good topsoil make it largely unfit for large-scale cultivation.

The Choctaw today are a mere remnant of their former status as owners of a 6.8 million-acre tribal estate granted in 1829 in the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. Following resettlement, many full-blood Choctaw occupied small parcels of land in the Kiamitia Mountains timber region, today the Kiamichi Range (see figure 1), and subsisted mainly through small-scale farming and animal husbandry, supplemented by hunting, fishing, and gathering. By

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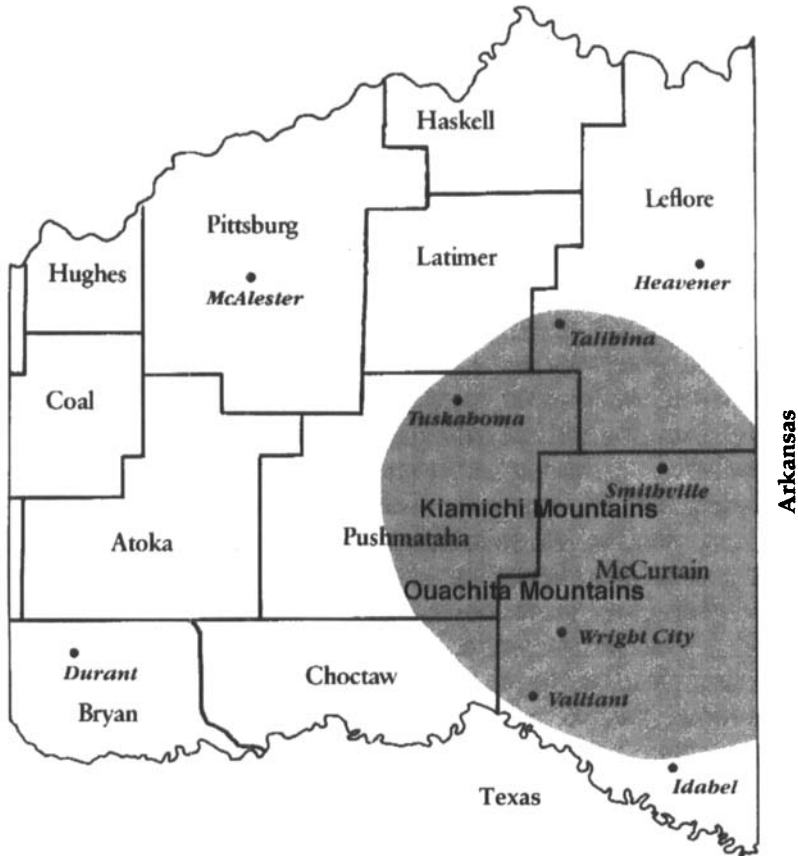


FIGURE 1. Choctaw nation, showing county boundaries, regional towns, and major forestland concentration in the early 1980s.

Source: Adapted from Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Planning Department, *Comprehensive Plan of the Choctaw Nation* (Durant, Oklahoma: 1980).

the early 1980s, the Choctaw, numbering about 16,000 members by blood, constituted only about 10 percent of the original Choctaw Nation population and owned collectively only about eleven thousand acres, mostly in scattered tracts of twenty acres or less.

Today much of the timber region is covered with forest plantations, largely loblolly pine. Dramatically visible clearcuts, often as large as 350 acres—the maximum allowable—signal the locally active private timber industry, the heart of the local economy.

These clearcuts transform the dense forest into a wasteland of denuded, treeless stubble, devoid of nearly every visible sign of life, including wood and most undergrowth.

Today Weyerhaeuser Corporation, Inc., a multinational wood products firm, is the region's single largest private landowner, with approximately 1.79 million acres, about 850,000 acres in Oklahoma's Pushmataha and McCurtain counties, the heart of its local timber base. Weyerhaeuser entered southeastern Oklahoma in 1969 when it purchased 1.6 million acres of timberland from Dierks Forests, Inc., in the largest single land transaction in the history of the United States forest industry.¹ In addition to its vast land holdings managed under scientifically based forestry practices, Weyerhaeuser locally owns a seventy-five-mile railroad, office headquarters at Wright City, and various state-of-the-art timber processing plants at Wright City and Broken Bow, Oklahoma. With close to two thousand employees, Weyerhaeuser is the region's largest private employer.

The current study will critically analyze the complex intersection among economic, political, and cultural variables to show how the Choctaw have served as an internal colony within the United States political economy: a dependent labor force alienated from their former substantial strategic land resources and a politically dependent native nation subsumed under United States political authority. In an 1831 Supreme Court decision, Justice John Marshall termed this a "domestic dependent nation."²

This unequal relationship between the Choctaw Nation and the United States government has fostered economic underdevelopment reminiscent of many Third World settings, where centrally based multinational corporations control strategic resources, while the local population serves as a cheap, readily available labor force and the local landscape a valuable raw materials base for multinational corporate enterprises.³ This relationship has challenged Choctaw sovereignty and cultural integrity by at times denying the Choctaw autonomy in decision-making and persistently fostering ambiguity in the definition of Choctaw native nationhood.

The Choctaw, as the following analysis reveals, have devised various strategies to compensate for their lack of access to strategic resources, including various nonwage subsistence economic activities and recent Choctaw Nation development initiatives. In this paper, I will examine economic benefits as well as moral and ethnic costs of Choctaw economic initiatives, particularly high-

stakes bingo and other enterprises, during the era of Reagan's so-called new federalism policies. These initiatives offer perhaps the Choctaws' only hope for economic viability and self-sufficiency, albeit within the ever-present context of internal colonial status. In addition, I will show that the ostensibly common goals of indigenous sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and economic self-determination, framed within divergent and often opposing federal and native nations agendas, in fact promote indigenous cultural deterioration and economic marginalization.⁴

The question looms: If decolonization and native economic independence are achieved, will the Choctaw emerge as just another segment of United States society, devoid of all vestiges of indigenous identity and autonomy, as merely a cheap labor force for the southeastern Oklahoma regional economy? Or can the Choctaw maintain a viable ethnic community while they develop a sustainable contemporary economy?

TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHOCTAW NATION DEVELOPMENT

By the early twentieth century, the Choctaw Nation timber region was already experiencing the effects of the 1887 Dawes Allotment Act, the federal policy enacted to allot the collective tribal estate, making way for white entry and private land title. Even before the actual allotment process began, whites fenced Choctaw tribal land illegally and claimed title to it in violation of existing treaties still in effect.⁵ By 1900, the Choctaw were vastly outnumbered by whites, most of whom had entered their nation illegally. A 1907 Five Tribes census indicated that Indians numbered only 9.1 percent of the region's population and whites 79 percent.⁶

Once allotments were assigned, the Choctaw quickly saw their land base eroded, as whites took advantage of the allotment legislation to buy up vast amounts of the tribal estate, resulting in what Angie Debo has called "an orgy of plunder and exploitation unparalleled in American history."⁷ With passage of the act of 27 May 1908, the so-called restrictions act, more than 3.6 million acres of Choctaw land, more than half of the tribe's original 6,688,000-acre estate, was available for sale to outsiders.⁸ It was during this era that the Dierks family, which later sold its vast Oklahoma/Arkansas timberland holdings to Weyerhaeuser, began to pur-

chase land from Choctaw allottees and later their heirs. Much of Weyerhaeuser's land was located in a vast two-million-acre tract of prime forest land set aside by the United States government and never given to Choctaw allottees.⁹

Between 1925 and 1970, in a trend typical of rural America generally, the region's economy was transformed from a system dominated by small-scale farms into one characterized by private timberland ownership concentration—a direct result of the land allotment policies and subsequent sales of surplus and unrestricted Choctaw land to whites.¹⁰ A major byproduct was increased government subsidies, particularly public sector employment and public assistance. According to a 1973 Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) report, “[U]ntil the 1940s the major source of income was from cotton and corn on small subsistence farms.”¹¹ Between 1929 and 1959, the number of farms in McCurtain County declined by more than 50 percent and in Pushmataha County by nearly 60 percent. Farm size and acreage under cultivation actually increased during that period, however, reflecting patterns of farm consolidation and ownership concentration prevalent nationally since the 1920s.¹²

Also like the rest of rural America,¹³ the region experienced a noticeable population decline between 1930 and 1960, felt by all sectors, especially the Choctaw, whose population fell by nearly 40 percent.¹⁴ Depopulation was prompted by a combination of push and pull factors, including declining agricultural employment opportunities coupled with federally sponsored Indian relocation programs during the 1950s. Since 1960, the trend has begun to reverse, as the Choctaw have returned to their homeland, many to take advantage of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) “mutual help housing” program instituted in 1969. In Pushmataha County alone, the Native American population doubled between 1960 and 1980. Southeastern Oklahoma was home to about 16,000 Choctaw in 1980, about 10 percent of the region's population.

With the Depression and the Second World War, the Choctaw increasingly entered the wider cash economy, in Works Projects Administration (WPA) jobs both before and after the war and in military service. As Barnett has shown among the Gaziera, it was during this era that the Choctaw Nation “socio-economic structure . . . underwent a fundamental change Land was converted into a commodity and labour into a factor of production.”¹⁵ As it had been since the allotment system's inception in 1902, land was

bargained in exchange for subsistence commodities when necessary, a practice that saw nearly complete Choctaw Nation land alienation by 1950.¹⁶

By about 1960, the Choctaw controlled only about 144,000 acres of allotted and less than ten thousand acres of collectively held land, land holdings so reduced that they could no longer be relied on for traditional subsistence activities. Land alienation had reached a near-desperate state for some Choctaw families. As Angie Debo noted, many “live[d] in appalling poverty” on tracts of land averaging twenty acres¹⁷; allottees and heirs desperate for cash to meet subsistence needs were forced into the long-standing strategy of selling their land.

Many landless Choctaw families resorted to a practice of living on church grounds in substandard dwellings used formerly for church gatherings.¹⁸ A survey of Choctaw households conducted in 1980–82 found that at least one landless Choctaw family—unable to afford to purchase even the single acre of land needed to qualify for a federally subsidized “mutual-help” Indian home—occupied nearly every Indian church ground, some without electricity or running water. Of fifty households surveyed in 1980–82, 65 percent owned five acres or less, while only 8 percent owned forty acres or more.¹⁹ Table 1 below summarizes the results of this land study, showing land holdings according to household type: younger nuclear, older nuclear, or extended.²⁰

Since World War II, the timber region has provided few citizens with economic stability, particularly the Choctaw, and public assistance has increasingly become a major income source. Between 1950 and 1963, public assistance payments in McCurtain County rose by 60 percent and in Pushmataha County by one-third.²¹

TABLE 1
Average Choctaw Land Holdings
According to Household Type

	Younger Nuclear	Older Nuclear	Extended
# Households Surveyed	20	16	14
Avg. # Acres/Household	5.6	21.55	37.04
Avg. # Acres/Indiv.*	1.15	8.21	5.61

*Computations include only permanent residents living in household.

In Pushmataha County, only about 35 percent of Indian males worked full-time or from fifty to fifty-two weeks in 1969, an unemployment situation the BIA report termed "critical."²² In 1970, Choctaw unemployment in the ten-county region was more than twice the state average.²³

Southeastern Oklahoma's poverty and unemployment woes persisted throughout the 1970s, and, by the early 1980s, this region boasted the state's highest unemployment rate, about 10 percent, while the state's overall jobless rate was 4.8 percent. Local minority unemployment in 1981 was the highest statewide, 18.6 percent.²⁴ By the mid-1980s, Choctaw sources estimated that more than one-third of the Choctaw living in the timber region were unemployed.²⁵

This tenuous employment situation has fostered dependence on public assistance in both McCurtain and Pushmataha counties, as noted previously, since wages often fall below federally established poverty levels. Nearly half of Pushmataha County's population in 1980, 45.4 percent, lived below the poverty level. McCurtain County fared somewhat better, with 37.1 percent below poverty, while the overall state average for the same period was 18.8 percent.²⁶

CHOCTAW WAGE LABOR AND WEYERHAEUSER'S PRODUCTION STRATEGY

Southeastern Oklahoma has emerged since World War II as what Jorgensen has called a "domestic dependent niche," serving private sector interests as a source of cheap, readily available labor.²⁷ Enduring commitments to the region, both culturally and historically, make the Choctaw easily exploitable workers willing to take jobs under almost any conditions of employment. Jobs are simply too scarce to do otherwise.

Drawn to this ideal setting for private entrepreneurial development, with its cheap and largely nonunionized labor force and favorable political and economical climates,²⁸ the multinational wood products firm, Weyerhaeuser Corporation, entered southeastern Oklahoma in 1969. The company was attracted to the locality not only for its vast timber resources but also for its reputation for paying low wages and hostility to union organizing.²⁹ Weyerhaeuser's development strategy has indeed brought corporate success, while only minimally improving the living conditions of local Choctaw workers.

The Choctaw work in the heart of Weyerhaeuser's local timber-harvesting operations, as timber cutters and tree planters organized into about twenty-five independent (nonunionized) crews of four to seven men, under the employ of a head contractor. This contractor, or crew boss, obtains work contracts directly from Weyerhaeuser through competitive bidding and then hires his own crew for a particular job.³⁰

Larger crews are headed mainly by white contractors from outside the Choctaw Nation. Smaller crews are generally composed of kinfolk. For example, one crew consisted of two brothers, two half-brothers, and one unrelated individual, most of whom were part Choctaw. Another Choctaw crew consisted of a husband and wife.

The head contractor supplies all heavy equipment for his crew, while the cutters supply their own chainsaws. One contractor stated that he had \$240,000 invested in heavy equipment in 1982, including a skidder³¹ and logging truck, which he repaired himself to reduce operating costs. This same contractor explained how he and fellow contractors turn a profit in a business directly tied to fluctuations in Weyerhaeuser's demand for timber. His crew consisted of five, including himself, although optimally he would hire two additional log cutters if sufficient work were available. Timber workers earn \$6.00 per hour, averaging a three-day work week, with occasional weeks without work due to lack of contracts, inclement weather, or other factors. The crew boss's profit margin depends on tax remuneration for depreciation allowances on his heavy equipment, which in 1981 amounted to \$76,000 on equipment worth about \$296,000. The contractor claimed that he trades in his heavy equipment every two years to write off depreciation costs. In this way, he pays nothing for his equipment and profits substantially more from his gross earnings than he would under a different taxation system. As this crew boss claimed, a successful contractor "must be foremost a good businessman."³² The timber slump of 1981-82 reduced logging activities for this crew to a three-day week, although it appears that logging crews normally work less than full-time anyway, due to the unpredictability of work, weather, and tools.

Contractors typically provide only legally mandated benefits to their workers. The contractor interviewed said that his workers are eligible for worker's compensation, although they do not receive family health insurance benefits, nor are they paid for layoffs, holidays, or sick days.

Tree planting and tree maintenance, including thinning and insect control, are also performed by privately contracted part-time crews. These contractors afford tree planting crews even less job security than do logging contractors, since the tree planting season is only about four-and-one-half months long, from January through mid-May. Tree planters are paid at piecework rates, averaging \$36.00 per thousand trees in 1982. Workers reported planting from one thousand to fifteen hundred trees per day, with women planting fewer than men and novice workers planting more slowly than experienced workers. Tree planting is physically rigorous, entailing trekking through recently clearcut acreage, rough with deep grooves and stumps where seedlings must be set. Approximately half the tree planters are females and older workers attracted to the seasonally available work. Workers are told that if trees are planted too far apart or if the stand does not take, they must return to the site to replant, the cost of which is taken out of their wages.

Working as a contractor, crew member, or independent logger is a cyclical business dependent on Weyerhaeuser's demand for timber. Throughout the 1980s, Weyerhaeuser's reliance on contractors to harvest timber, plant new trees, and maintain stands remained largely constant, at approximately 70 to 75 percent of timber cut, according to International Woodworkers of America Local 5-15 president Daryl Tharp, whose union represents about eighteen hundred Weyerhaeuser timber workers in two states.³³ This contract labor system benefits Weyerhaeuser substantially by eliminating or greatly reducing various costs of production, which are borne instead by workers and contractors, including maintaining a work force that may not be profitably used throughout the year. Furthermore, costs to transport workers to widely scattered regions of their estimated 890,000 acres of active timberland in southeastern Oklahoma, or to maintain tree harvesting equipment, are borne by the contracted crews themselves. Fringe benefits, such as health insurance, vacation pay, and other employee benefits, are not paid by Weyerhaeuser but rather by contractors or workers, or not at all, further eroding already substandard wages.

The Choctaw employed at chicken processing plants located in nearby Arkansas and Oklahoma towns face similar employment problems as nonunionized and part-time workers. Hourly entry-level wages in 1982 were approximately \$4.00 per hour for second and third shifts, although workers were not paid when the assem-

bly line broke down. One chicken plant worker stated that employee efforts to unionize the shop in 1978 had resulted in termination of about thirty workers. She quit as a result and was rehired only after pledging to refrain from further unionization activities. She said, "I didn't want to go back there, but I had no choice. There was no place else to work."³⁴

The exploitive relationship between Choctaw workers and these corporations is somewhat different from that between a company and a fully proletarianized urban industrial labor force, however. The Choctaw, like migrant laborers analyzed by Laite³⁵ or Meillassoux,³⁶ move between the domestic subsistence sector and the wage labor sector, rather than being wholly submerged in the wage sector as landless workers. The Choctaw, facing formidable obstacles to earning a decent living through wage labor and further limited by their diminished land base, have devised various strategies at the household, family, and community levels to resolve their persistent economic dilemmas.³⁷

CHOCTAW SUBSISTENCE STRATEGIES: JUST "MAKING DO"

As among other economically marginal segments of our society, extended families and households are crucial to economic survival in rural Choctaw communities. These units are mobilized to achieve basic levels of subsistence, successful rearing of children, and access to strategic resources.³⁸ Choctaw production and reproduction strategies combine traditional subsistence and contemporary production strategies. Households are mobilized in day-to-day social and economic livelihood-maintaining strategies, while extended family networks operate more intermittently (although at times, daily), depending on a particular family's social class membership and adherence to traditional cultural practices.

Extended families refers to the entire network of consanguineal, affinal, and fictive kin,³⁹ including those members who are geographically dispersed. Following Rapp, *households* refers to "entities in which people actually live . . . the empirically measurable units within which people pool resources and perform certain tasks."⁴⁰ Households are social units characterized by a common residence whose members variously constitute the units of production, reproduction, distribution, and consumption.⁴¹

Fifty Choctaw households were surveyed in depth over an eighteen-month period between 1980 and 1982 as part of the current study, using participant observation fieldwork methods along with an oral questionnaire and open-ended interviews. The families interviewed, many related consanguineally and/or affinally, inhabited several geographically dispersed Choctaw residence enclaves in three distinct regions of the Pushmataha/McCurtain county timber region, each thirty miles apart. This allowed comparison and contrast of widely separated Choctaw settlements, all located within the two-county timber region dominated today by Weyerhaeuser's presence.

A study by Stack showed how urban poor Black families maximize available resources by mobilizing family and household members in complex, predominantly kin-based sharing networks, which allows families to extend their resources during lean times of the month or year.⁴² The Choctaw have devised similar methods to cope with the lack of available resources, particularly housing, jobs, and cash. Food, child care, and personal services such as cutting of firewood or transportation typically are redistributed through sharing networks. Firewood may be cut by a son, son-in-law, or grandson for an elderly widow. Similarly, grandparents provide child care for their grandchildren while parents work.

Informal resource-sharing occurred in nearly all households surveyed, although this was not the only means of broadening one's resource base among the Choctaw. Other methods of extending resources included sharing of housing space and participation in various nonwage subsistence activities, including hunting, gathering, and fishing, in a lifestyle reminiscent of traditional indigenous subsistence strategies. A principal form of sharing was that of housing and, by extension, subsistence resources originating within the household. Shared housing was particularly evident in extended households (28 percent of those sampled), although younger, unmarried adults also took advantage of shared housing space.

By pooling household resources, members are protected from being left wholly without essential housing and food, a strategy Rapp notes is common among working class families:

The ideal autonomy of an independent nuclear family is constantly being contradicted by the realities of social need, in which resources must be pooled, borrowed, shared When a married child is out of work, his (or her) nuclear family turns to the mother, and often moves in for a while.⁴³

Rapp concludes, “[T]ies to family, including fictive family, are the lifelines that simultaneously hold together and sustain individuals.”⁴⁴

Younger workers in particular struggle with the region’s prevailing dilemma: an abundance of resources that are out of their reach. They face a dilemma found throughout the Third World, where, as E. Bradford Burns describes the situation in Latin America, “[p]oor people inhabit rich lands.”⁴⁵ A common strategy young couples resort to is seasonal relocation, moving from in-law to in-law to take advantage of work opportunities in different regions. Often the entire family relocates, and children are left with grandparents while parents work as seasonal tree-planters, in other timber-related occupations, or at chicken processing plants located in nearby Arkansas towns.

Substantial numbers of Choctaw households surveyed also engaged in various nonwage subsistence activities to supplement inadequate wages, including gardening (70 percent), fishing/hunting (64 percent), gathering wild foods (52 percent), and canning and freezing wild and home-grown produce (44 percent). Several households canned as many as thirty pints of poke salad greens annually; others harvested huckleberries, blueberries, and muscodine, which were processed for future use.⁴⁶ By relying on diverse household-based subsistence activities—such as gardening, hunting, home industries, or resources of extended kin—supplemented by public assistance, Choctaw assistance programs, and otherwise “making do,” Choctaw households shoulder many of the costs to reproduce their own labor force, further reducing corporate costs. Furthermore, the community (and its workers) rather than Weyerhaeuser or other private employers, bear costs brought by low wages and seasonally available work, because workers collect unemployment or public assistance or resort to other subsistence strategies, such as gardening, odd jobs, even collecting aluminum cans, to compensate for low or erratic wages.⁴⁷

Public assistance benefits further reduce the material desperation and sense of exploitation Choctaw workers might otherwise feel. Workers are supported when unemployed or underemployed by various sources of unearned income, including food stamps, Social Security benefits, veteran’s benefits, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and various Choctaw subsidy programs—costs increasingly shouldered by the Choctaw Nation as Reagan/Bush-era budget-cutting measures reduced federal subsidies to native nations, as a later discussion will show. In the

current study of fifty timber region households, forty-one households sampled (82 percent) received public assistance subsidies, mainly food stamps. Incidentally, Oklahoma finances public welfare subsidies through sales tax revenues. Thus, recipients, in their role as consumers, actually pay for their own welfare benefits, thereby experiencing double exploitation.

CHOCTAW DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN THE 1980S

Timber region Choctaw today face serious obstacles to making a decent living, the foremost of which is the monopoly of local resources by Weyerhaeuser, which owns 50 percent of the land in McCurtain County, where 25 percent of the Choctaw live, including the largest concentration of full-bloods. The Choctaw cannot easily amass technology, capital resources, or expertise to undertake local development projects, as can the multinationals with their substantial cash resources and readily accessible technological expertise. Today the Choctaw collectively own only about 65,000 acres, mostly in scattered tracts of less than two hundred acres, compared to Weyerhaeuser's Oklahoma holdings of approximately 890,000 acres. The Choctaw Nation's single greatest asset today is its people, and they are underutilized in the local economy, with an unemployment rate estimated at an astronomical 37 percent.⁴⁸

The Choctaw Nation faces a fundamental dilemma of providing its members with jobs while working to preserve three crucial cultural goals: (1) accommodation to a decentralized, nonreservation Choctaw community lifestyle; (2) preservation of some viable forms of Choctaw self-identity; and (3) promotion of national self-sufficiency and sovereignty. An examination of Choctaw development strategies and self-sufficiency efforts during the 1980s shows how the Choctaw continue to battle high unemployment and underemployment under current relations of production while working to maintain national sovereignty and cultural integrity.

A complex corporate entity that manages Choctaw assets and serves as intermediary between its members and the federal government, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and local communities, the Choctaw Nation government was reinstated in 1971 after more than one-half century of attenuated existence. Its legislative, executive, and judicial branches make and enforce tribal

laws, manage tribal assets, and undertake various revenue-producing activities. The Choctaw Nation offers job counseling services, programs for juveniles and the aged, employment programs, and financial assistance programs. As a major employer of the Choctaw people, the Choctaw Nation increased its workforce from four hundred to seven hundred during the decade of the 1980s, most employed at a large office complex at Durant and at the Choctaw Nation Indian Hospital in Talihiina.

The Choctaw government manages various enterprises, including a cattle-raising project at Tuskahoma, a clothing factory at Talihiina, the tribal headquarters at Durant, a tourist lodge at Arrowhead, the capitol building in Tuskahoma, and the more recent acquisitions of a tourist and bingo concession in Durant and the Choctaw Nation Indian Hospital complex at Talihiina. With an annual budget in 1988 of \$27.5 million, the Choctaw Nation is also responsible for managing its monetary assets, including trust income, revenues from land leases, business ventures, and timber contracts.⁴⁹

Since the late 1970s, Choctaw leaders have worked to promote two major objectives: (1) creation of jobs in Choctaw-owned and run enterprises and (2) takeover of BIA-contracted programs and services under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (PL 93-638), which promoted tribal takeovers of formerly BIA-run programs.

CHOCTAW RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The Choctaw Nation's major assets, aside from their potential as a labor force, are their collective land holdings, trust income, and income derived from federal programs, mainly in the areas of health, education, and jobs. National assets in June 1981 amounted to approximately \$14,568,000, compared to a whopping \$6 billion for their neighbor, Weyerhaeuser.⁵⁰ These assets include land estimated to be worth about \$10.8 million and a tribal trust fund of approximately \$3.6 million. The Choctaw also receive income from various federal sources, including the BIA, to finance programs. Assets derived from these programs amounted to an additional income of nearly \$5.4 million by 1981. Most collective assets, however, are earmarked for specific programs and therefore are not fluid assets that could be used in new revenue-producing activities.⁵¹

Under the leadership of Chief Hollis Roberts, elected in 1978, the Choctaw Nation has undertaken several development initiatives to increase native employment and enhance revenues, with varying degrees of success. An early initiative began in 1978 when feasibility studies were undertaken to construct a fiberglass boat fabrication plant in Broken Bow, Oklahoma. This project and its eventual demise after four years of planning is a revealing example of how BIA mismanagement, ineptitude, and failure to adequately advise the Choctaws worked against collective goals. These are complaints commonly heard throughout Native American communities during the 1970s and 80s.⁵²

The fiberglass boat plant proposal itself was of questionable merit, given the state of the economy at the time. The plant would have had to gross an estimated \$300,000 per month just to meet its operating expenses. Interest payments, then at their highest level in several years, would have cost nearly \$150,000 annually. Feasibility studies or market assessments were never made to determine local demand for pleasure boats. Later in the project's planning stages, the tribal council proposed diversifying the plant's productive capacity into other areas, such as fiberglass oil drilling bits and transport pipeline, a crucial component to this venture's possible success.⁵³

In mid-1982, despite the project's serious drawbacks, then-BIA agency superintendent Donald Moon called the project a good opportunity for the Choctaw, claiming that demand for pleasure craft was high.⁵⁴ Within six months, however, the BIA placed the project "on hold" in light of its serious drawbacks and shortly thereafter demanded the Choctaws' trust money as collateral, a potentially devastating option. The Choctaw Nation and the BIA were not working in consort; rather, the BIA was placing unreasonable demands on the Choctaw while failing to offer necessary information about the project's real risks.

This enterprise, although backed by the BIA and federal development agencies, typifies entrepreneurial development for Native American people supervised by agencies with little regard for or understanding of fundamental native needs. The boat plant would have offered jobs to perhaps thirty Choctaw, a paltry number given the costs for construction and project implementation. After having struggled for four years and having spent \$183,000, the Choctaw abandoned the proposal in 1983.⁵⁵

REAGAN'S TRIBAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY POLICIES: FACT AND FICTION

In that same year, Ronald Reagan unveiled a new policy initiative to promote tribal development and self-determination, reduce bureaucratic waste and excessive federal regulation in Indian administration, and reduce federal costs to administer tribal programs. A strong impetus for Reagan's initiative was the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (PL 93-638), by which native nations were encouraged to take over BIA-run programs, including health services and hospitals, jobs training, and resource management. The federal position, according to Rob Williams in *Indian Truth*, was that

only by reducing their dependence on federal funds can Indian people be successful in forcing the federal government to move away from the "surrogate role" which it has played in reservation life, a role which the Reagan policy statement claims "undermines the concept of self-government."⁵⁶

The federal government argued that, by dealing with Indians on a government-to-government basis, providing block grant seed money for private sector business initiatives, and reducing bureaucratic meddling in tribal decision-making (i. e., turning over many BIA functions to native nations), the government could help Native Americans begin to develop economically self-sustainable national economies, thereby alleviating the extreme poverty and cultural and social malaise endemic to Native American life. The Reagan policy stressed two fundamental goals: first, reduce federal funding significantly by substituting private sector development initiatives; and second, scale down bureaucratic structures that, although designed to protect native nations' trust rights, fostered serious trust abuses. According to the White House Indian Policy Statement of 24 January 1983,

Excessive regulations and self-perpetuating bureaucracy have stifled Tribal decision-making, thwarted Indian control of reservation resources, and promoted dependency rather than self-sufficiency This Administration will reverse this trend by removing obstacles to self-government and by creating more favorable environments for development of healthy reservation economies.⁵⁷

Tribal self-sufficiency would be achieved through "free market forces," which would "provide the bulk of the capital investments required to develop tribal energy and other resources" ⁵⁸

A series of "Social and Economic Development Strategies" (SEDS) were proposed to bring self-sufficiency and economic autonomy to Native American communities, while reducing federal expenses and "excessive federal control" of tribal decision-making. ⁵⁹ Policies implemented entitled native nations to apply for federally funded block grants under Title XX to finance housing, employment training, and other services previously administered through the BIA. Another byproduct of the new federalism is a recent proposal that native nations be given an alternative to tribal trust status and receive a proportional share of the federal Indian budget, called a Tribal Self-Governance Grant (TSGG), to run their own programs independently. ⁶⁰ How this proposal will affect native national sovereignty and the very definition of tribal trust status remains to be seen.

Results of these new federalism initiatives for Native American economic self-sufficiency have been mixed, prompting some to call Reagan's policies nothing more than another attempt to terminate the federal government's historic trust relationship, what one analyst called "sophisticated termination," ⁶¹ while others termed the Reagan policies "termination by accountants." ⁶² One undisputed effect has been to drastically downsize federal budget expenditures to Native Americans, reduced from \$3.4 billion in 1982 to \$2.7 billion in the 1983 budget. Essential Native American programs, including community health representatives (whose entire appropriation was cut in 1983 but later reinstated), CETA jobs programs, "mutual help" home construction monies, and BIA-funded education entitlements were all targets of Reagan-era budget-cutting measures. ⁶³

CHOCTAW RESPONSE TO "NEW FEDERALISM"

Choctaw Nation development initiatives during the new federalism era reveal the ambiguities of these federally initiated self-determination/self-sufficiency efforts, and the contradictions Native Americans face as they work toward economic viability, cultural integrity, and freedom from bureaucratic abuses. The ill-fated boat fabrication project illuminated weaknesses in develop-

ment schemes caused by poor planning, lack of effective BIA advice, and failure to address real economic problems.

Beginning in 1985, the Choctaw implemented new federalism policies in earnest when they took over operations of the 52-bed Talihina Indian Hospital—renamed the Choctaw Nation Indian Hospital—and three outlying clinics, which together employed over two hundred people. The Choctaw were the first native nation to act on their newly acquired right under provisions of the 1975 Indian Self-Determination Act to contract what were formerly BIA-run services in the area of full hospital administration. Since takeover, the outpatient census has tripled, and, in 1990, Chief Hollis Roberts announced plans to seek federal funds to build a new hospital facility on the Talihina grounds.

A second tribal initiative was the 1986 acquisition of the 256-acre Arrowhead Lodge, located in the northern Choctaw Nation, which was renovated to provide beach accommodations and an amphitheater, again with the goal of providing additional jobs for the Choctaw. The lodge complex employed more than 140 people in 1987, three-quarters of whom were Choctaw.⁶⁴ A capstone to the lodge is a recently completed 12,000-square-foot convention center that accommodates eight hundred.⁶⁵

Perhaps the boldest and potentially most controversial Choctaw undertaking occurred in 1987, when the Choctaw Indian Bingo Palace opened at Durant, creating about 140 additional jobs and promising to be a significant revenue-producer. The bingo concession attracts approximately 160,000 people per year, 80 percent from Texas.⁶⁶ In its second year of operation, the bingo concession netted more than \$1 million in profits, and the Choctaw expect to earn \$12 million annually when they take over full ownership after seven years. The complex has been expanded to include a full-service travel center, the Choctaw Nation Travel Plaza, which in 1992 grossed over \$1.4 billion per month.⁶⁷ Bingo profits subsidize health-related services not funded by Indian Health Service appropriations, including specialized medications for diabetes and arthritis,⁶⁸ funds drastically curtailed during the Reagan years. Revenues have also been used to construct community centers throughout the Choctaw Nation and to fund higher education scholarship programs, elderly nutrition programs, and emergency assistance programs.⁶⁹

With a 1988 annual budget of \$27.5 million and an estimated net worth of more than \$34 million, the Choctaw undertook additional development projects, including takeover and renovation of a

nursing home facility at Antlers and a 230-acre pine plantation at Tuskahoma on tribal ranch property. In 1989, the nation obtained a \$249,000 BIA Indian business development grant to subcontract chemical finishing operations from Texas Instruments Company under Defense Department contracts,⁷⁰ and the tribe began courting Boeing, General Dynamics, and other companies to entice them to site industrial development enterprises in the Choctaw Nation.⁷¹ In 1988, the Choctaw gained added managerial leverage when they established the Choctaw Nation Tax Commission and passed a Sales Tax Act, which would permit them to collect tax revenues on their various business operations, a right denied since the Curtis Act termination legislation was passed in 1898.⁷² These aggressive efforts brought more than three hundred jobs to the Choctaw during the 1980s; by 1990, the Choctaw Nation employed more than seven hundred people. Currently, the Choctaw have taken over contracting of all BIA services, although about 65 percent of operating funds still come from the federal government.

Chief Roberts's bold initiatives have brought him praise from constituents, who, at appreciation dinners held throughout the Choctaw Nation in 1989 and 1990, consistently lauded his development efforts. Said Randle Durant, tribal council member,

He has helped all of our communities—Honobia, Summerfield—with water systems, road work and community centers. Bingo has brought in new money and the Chief is using it to get new jobs and bring more money into southeastern Oklahoma. He got us the Lodge, the hospital and Jones Academy. I am proud of these.

The greatest thing is that all of this is helping our people. Helping ourselves.⁷³

Chief Roberts himself predicted that “[w]ithin four years we will be able to put every Choctaw Indian to work in southeastern Oklahoma” and that the tribal trust fund, currently worth \$3.4 million, will be worth \$20 million.⁷⁴

These development efforts have directed the Choctaw Nation's focus away from BIA dependency and toward its national headquarters at Durant, which Chief Roberts envisions as the nation's present and future nerve center, at “the four-way crossroads created by U. S. 70 and U. S. 69-75.”⁷⁵ The contemporary crossroads, where Choctaw visions of development and progress intersect, symbolizes a new direction taken by the chief and elected officials to bring the Choctaw into direct contact

with the wider society, through ties to business, trade, and the service economy, explicit goals of new federalism policies. As the federal government's economic development policy states, "[I]t is the free market which will supply the bulk of the capital investments required to develop tribal energy and other resources" by stimulating economic growth through private sector initiatives.⁷⁶

SOME MORE INSIDIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF NEW FEDERALISM: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Choctaw efforts to increase tribal revenues have been laudable, but at what cost? Placing the nation's development strategy into national and international contexts reveals that the Choctaw continue to be subject to exploitation and dependency, veiled in self-determination rhetoric, which compromise fundamental moral, ethical, and economic considerations in favor of singularly economic strategies. Contrary to Cornell and Kalt's assertion that "economic development is a *social* problem"⁷⁷ (emphasis in original), requiring that tribes consider a range of "opportunities and constraints" in their pursuit of successful development outcomes, tribal economic development remains foremost a problem that is simultaneously structural and political-economic, rooted in historical and contemporary conditions of exploitation. Native nations remain subsumed within the United States political economy, governed by rules outside of national tribal jurisdictions, competing with nonnatives who largely control native indigenous assets, whether natural resources or human labor.

Three significant problem areas emerge in a closer examination of Choctaw development strategies and remain as persistent obstacles to full national sovereignty and economic and cultural viability. First, the very nature and implications of private sector investment in Native American communities in general, and the Choctaw Nation in particular, place weaker native nations at the mercy of formidable development interests that may sacrifice human, environmental, and social well-being in favor of corporate profits. Native American communities, including the Choctaw Nation, have begun to compete for multinational corporate investment dollars with foreign locations too unstable to remain as sites of substantial MNC investment; and Choctaw workers have re-

placed cheap, readily available, unskilled foreign workers in the MNC formula for corporate profit-making.

Texas Instruments was just such an investor when it contracted with the Choctaw Nation for a branch of its chemical finishing operations in 1989. Forced to close its El Salvadoran chemical facility in 1985, then the largest chemical plant in Central America, due to that war-torn country's ongoing civil unrest,⁷⁸ T. I. was attracted to southeastern Oklahoma, which offered many advantages, at greatly reduced costs, over their former Central American site of operations, including a relatively cheap, docile, and readily available labor force willing to perform routine jobs using often dangerous chemicals. Native American communities seeking valuable investment dollars, which translate into jobs and income for their citizens, are ripe for such domestic corporate entrepreneurial investments, which, unfortunately, often bring heavy costs in both personnel and natural resources. Like foreign laborers, illegal aliens, and other ethnic minorities, Native American workers are willing to perform hazardous, distasteful jobs that American-born white laborers often refuse.

A second area of heavy Choctaw investment, again with an ambiguous history and potentially volatile future, is high-stakes gambling. Since 1980, dozens of native nations have invested in high-stakes bingo operations, which offer the lure of substantial revenues with minimal costs for capital outlays or technological expertise. Currently, about one-third of native nations have entered the high-stakes gambling business, in part an outgrowth of the development-for-self-sufficiency initiatives of the Reagan/Bush-era's new federalism policies, a particularly attractive option for resource-poor nations.⁷⁹

Debates—at times acrimonious—over high-stakes bingo and other gaming operations on native land have pitted factions opposed to gaming against members who favor such enterprises. Factional disputes among Canadian and New York State Mohawk led to violence that left two dead and brought intervention by the Canadian mounted and local police forces.⁸⁰ According to one native spokesperson, Mohawk factions for and against organized gambling have been likened to “two irreconcilable visions of the future—one based on greed and profit and the other on collective ownership and the extended family.”⁸¹

Not only must native nations confront the intracommunity factional disputes precipitated by gaming; they also must deal with states that refuse to endorse native-run high-stakes

gaming operations that compete with their own state-run operations. Although recent Supreme Court rulings have protected native rights to sponsor gaming, this right is by no means secure, and its reversal would deny native nations much-needed revenues.⁸²

The acrimonious and at times violent Mohawk debate over high-stakes gambling speaks to dilemmas inherent in Native American development initiatives taken under duress in response to Reagan/Bush-era budget cuts, based largely on economic rather than more holistic community goals.⁸³ This debate has not been heard in the Choctaw Nation, but it lies at the heart of the very meaning of native national existence.

A third by-product of Choctaw development has been that unemployment remains a pressing, unresolved problem. This may be a symptom of the new federalism's fundamental contradictions, based on a free market economic model that views native nations similarly to corporations competing with states for federal and private investment dollars to implement the development strategies most profitable, but not necessarily consistent with Native American cultural visions or needs. Unemployment, at astronomical levels throughout Native American communities, including the Choctaw Nation, has increased steadily during the new federalism era.

In 1981, at the height of one of the most severe recessions in U. S. history, the unemployment on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota stood at fifty percent. In 1986, after what has been described as the longest and strongest economic recovery this country has ever experienced, the unemployment rate at Rosebud was eighty-six percent, an increase of seventy-two percent in five years.⁸⁴

Choctaw Nation unemployment, currently estimated at 37 percent, has risen steadily since the early 1980s, while elsewhere Native American unemployment is a shocking 80 to 90 percent.

Current development schemes persistently compromise the most abundant Native American resource, the people themselves. Many remain unemployed and unemployable, due to lack of marketable skills. Those businesses attracted to reservations and rural Indian communities often are not labor intensive but capital intensive; where labor is needed, it is unskilled, as in virtually all the Choctaw tribal development initiatives so far undertaken.

Where dollars are being made in Native American entrepreneurial initiatives, as in the bingo jackpots, few jobs are created, and even fewer skills are being cultivated. Profits made simply replace federal dollars lost during the 1980s to provide day care and headstart programs, home weatherization programs, dental and health benefits, and food commodities for local Indians. In effect, what has occurred is that native-sponsored private sector investment initiatives now maintain the tribal welfare state that the federal government has abrogated. As one native spokesperson said, "If Reagan's new Indian policy is nothing more than the reservation component of 'Reaganomics,' Indian people indeed have cause for concern and protest."⁸⁵

As the above analysis has shown, collective sovereignty in the Choctaw Nation, signaled by collective control of resources, autonomy in tribal decision-making, and cultural integrity, remain in delicate balance, as the Choctaw work to retain a sense of community life in the late twentieth century. The Choctaw have faced economic challenges to their livelihood-maintaining abilities, political encroachment on their sovereign status as a native nation, and challenges to cultural integrity as a Native American community. Choctaw self-sufficiency initiatives have been laudable during the 1980s; however, current federal initiatives, disguised as private sector development and self-sufficiency agendas, may signal yet another attempt to abrogate the sacred trust relationship between the federal government and native nations and thereby solve the problem of "domestic dependency" once and for all. If indeed the new federalism is a disguised policy to abrogate long-standing federal trust obligations and extinguish native sovereignty along with cultural integrity, as some Native American spokespeople fear, then native nations indeed remain in jeopardy.

TAKING BACK CONTROL: THE CHOCTAW AND THE TRADITIONAL INDIAN MOVEMENT

The Choctaw are at a crossroads today in their tribal history, although perhaps not the one envisioned by Chief Roberts. They must choose between a pathway toward full participation in mainstream United States culture or one that will insure cultural integrity as well as economic viability. The Choctaw are working toward economic viability through the various development ini-

tatives described above; however, high unemployment rates persist despite the creation of more than three hundred new jobs during the 1980s.

The ability of the tribe to maintain cultural integrity may be more elusive, however. Regional community centers may provide the mechanisms needed for integrating culturally relevant activities with tribal development initiatives. The integrity of regionally dispersed Choctaw communities—at the center of which, in the early 1980s, were Choctaw churches headed by neighborhood elders⁸⁶—may be only a memory if Choctaw development initiatives do not include mechanisms for preserving the essential features of Choctaw community life, whatever they may be.

As a nonreservation people, the Choctaw have experienced a perennial struggle for their very survival because of the absence of a viable land base with which they could identify common ownership and thereby a common destiny. As Vine Deloria, Jr., argues, how Native Americans and federal agencies view tribal land resources, whether as a homeland or simply as a resource, significantly affects economic development outcomes as they interface with tribal sovereignty and cultural integrity considerations. Deloria argues that economic development will succeed only if (1) it fully takes into account existing cultural traditions; (2) the reservation is viewed as a homeland and not merely a resource base; and (3) if “appropriate technology is used to enhance the resources and advantages already found there.”⁸⁷

John Mohawk, another Native American spokesperson, explained why land is a crucial element in achieving Native American cultural integrity and economic viability:

To destroy a people's culture is to destroy their ability to survive in their environment. Whether that is by taking their land, or by enslaving them as laborers, or by destroying their environment, by taking their water, by cutting down the forest around them, by force of arms, or whatever

The reason that Indian people in the United States should be fighting to get land back is so that we can develop self-sufficiency and economic determinism so we can re-establish our cultures in a strong and vital way with an economic base on that land.⁸⁸

The diminished Choctaw land base, both tribal and individual, and the monopoly of much of the region's most valuable land assets by Weyerhaeuser limit the tribe's ability to provide a sense

of cohesiveness around a collective land base. The Choctaw, however, express strong emotional ties to their land and view their homesteads as an important asset for their children. Many expressed regret that they or their parents before them had sold parcels of land in the past, and many feared that their land assets were insufficient to provide for their children's or grandchildren's housing needs. A universal sentiment among the Choctaw interviewed was that the tribe should prioritize land purchase for collective and individual use.

Strategies being articulated elsewhere in native nations and by rural development specialists and anthropologists working to alleviate rural poverty are based on the concepts of *appropriate* and *intermediate technologies*. Such development initiatives aim to reverse trends toward land consolidation and monopoly of strategic resources by MNCs, which rely on capital-intensive technologies and nonrenewable energy sources.⁸⁹ John Mohawk calls this a "Native People's Movement" or a "Native Traditional Movement," which seeks to articulate workable, economically viable ways of preserving local Indian communities that can be self-sufficient and autonomous while serving as expressions of legitimate cultural identities. What tribes need, Mohawk argues, is to (1) develop a local economic base and (2) rebuild Native American communities based on political self-determination and local cultural autonomy.⁹⁰

Native economies as envisioned by the Traditional Indian Movement are not simply appendages of capitalist relations of production or private enterprise endeavors. The native economy should be organized to promote the community's material well-being through activities that are appropriate for that community technologically, materially, and spiritually.⁹¹ One native spokesperson called such a development strategy a "liberation technology," because it is meant to "free . . . people from dependency on multinational corporations and the governments which multinational corporations control"⁹² by offering locally appropriate activities for gaining a livelihood.

The native economic base must, according to John Mohawk, be built upon

low-cost, "labor-intensive" technologies which they can afford and which help people to become productive. The focus . . . needs to be local production for local consumption. People in a given community need to look at their resources with an eye to meeting their needs themselves. There exists the mate-

rial on Native territories to build homes, heat those homes, grow food, and develop a wide array of locally produced products. And there is a need on a very practical level for people to begin to think small.⁹³

Essential to creating a sound economic base in local communities is that technology be "appropriate," by which Mohawk means that it should be

low-cost and basically ecologically sound. The tools and skills should be under the control of the local communities, and they should be locally available resources, including materials. Those technologies should be flexible enough so that people are not locked into some kind of dependence. And they need to be technologies which do not conflict with the cultural assumptions of the community.⁹⁴

Many Choctaw expressed interest in participating more directly in tribal institutions to realize their own aspirations as Choctaw. Since the reinstatement of tribal government in 1971, a growing interest in tribally based expression of Choctaw identity has been noted. The Choctaw have developed or revived several forms of self-expression in recent decades, which are signs that tribal identity is a felt need among many Choctaw citizens. There are several Choctaw arts and crafts centers throughout the nation that produce native-made baskets, beadwork, Choctaw clothing, and quilts. Basketmaking is one craft that has been revived in recent years, and several families are relearning this ancient Choctaw craft.

Various Choctaw dance groups continue to revive ancient Choctaw dances, some borrowed from their Mississippi kinfolk, which are performed for tourists and at annual Choctaw festivals. One ancient Choctaw activity that has been preserved is stickball. Games are organized at the annual Labor Day celebration at the Choctaw capital in Tuskahoma, where young players learn the game and compete in stickball contests.

These traditional expressions of Choctaw identity are not sufficient, however, to preserve a viable, permanent existence as a tribal people, just as economic development initiatives alone are not sufficient to preserve the Choctaw as anything more than a segment of the rural, southeastern Oklahoma economy. According to one native spokesperson,

Traditionalism is not the wearing of beads or feathers or an appearance at the Sun Dance or the Antelope Dance or any other kind of dance. It is the effort to establish community identity and the internal strengthening of the community with an emphasis on the preservation of those aspects of pre-Colonial Indian life which make those communities distinct. It is the recognition that individuals have a responsibility to be active members and participants in the life of their communities.⁹⁵

A viable culturally autonomous native community must be built around economically self-sustaining local communities. As the Choctaw work to empower their people through various economic development initiatives, a persistent vision of cultural viability and integrity must be maintained. By integrating economic development initiatives with cultural goals within local Choctaw communities, the tribe will protect its cultural integrity and, perhaps, insure its very existence.

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NOTES

1. *New York Times*, 10 May 1969.

2. See Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln, NE: U Nebraska, 1975), 45; Robert J. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Burden* (New York: Random House, 1978), 163; Alfred H. Kelly and Winfred A. Harbison, *The American Constitution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 3d ed., 1963), 302–303; Steve Talbot, *Roots of Oppression: The American Indian Question* (New York: International, 1981), 38.

In his decision, *The Cherokee Nation v. The State of Georgia*, Supreme Court Justice John Marshall addressed the ongoing ambiguity regarding Native American sovereignty, calling tribes “anomalous” domestic entities, in a “relation to the U. S. [which] resembles that of a ward to his guardian . . . completely under the sovereignty and dominion of the U. S. . . .” (Berkhofer, *White Man's Burden*, 163–64). Recent federal court rulings continue to muddy the definition of Native

American sovereignty. In one decision, the court argued that the United States Constitution guarantees "paramount authority of the U. S." over Indian tribes but "recognizes the . . . inherent rights of sovereignty" of "Indian tribes as quasi-sovereign entities . . . except where restrictions have been placed thereon by the U. S. itself" (Michael Smith, "The Constitutional Status of American Indians," *Civil Rights Digest* (Fall 1973): 12. See also Karl E. Mundt, "Indian Autonomy and Indian Legal Problems," *Kansas Law Review* 15 (1967): 505-506).

3. See Fernando Cardozo and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, trans. Marjory M. Urquidi (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979); Aiden Foster-Carter, "Can We Articulate 'Articulation'?" in *The New Economic Anthropology*, ed. John Clammer (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 210-49; John Clammer, ed., *The New Economic Anthropology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978); Ernest LaClau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America," *New Left Review* 68 (1977): 19-38; Norman Long, "Structural Dependency, Modes of Production and Economic Brokerage in Peru," in *Beyond the Sociology of Development*, ed. Ivar Oxaal, Tony Barnett, and David Booth (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 253-82; Philip J. O'Brien, "A Critique of Latin American Theories of Dependency," in Oxaal et al., *Beyond the Sociology of Development*, 7-27.

4. See Thomas R. McGuire, "Federal Indian Policy: A Framework for Evaluation," *Human Organization* 49 (1990): 206-216.

5. Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (1940; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 92ff.

6. *Ibid.*, 133.

7. *Ibid.*, 91.

8. U. S. Department of the Interior, *Annual Report*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1920), 22.

9. See Sandra L. Faiman-Silva, "Choctaw at the Crossroads: Native Americans and the Multinationals in the Oklahoma Timber Region" (Ph. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1984), 178ff; Phillip Hayes Phillips, "The Ouachita Timberlands of Southeastern Oklahoma: Unextinguished Choctaw-Chickasaw Indian Title and Unconditional Corporate Real Estate Holdings" (Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1982).

10. See Phillips, "The Ouachita Timberlands."

11. Bureau of Indian Affairs, *The Choctaw Nation: Its Resource and Development Potential* (Washington, DC: U. S. Department of the Interior, 1973), 4.

12. W. N. Peach and Richard W. Poole, *Human and Material Resources of Pushmataha and McCurtain Counties, A Profile for Growth and Development* (Durant, OK: Southeastern Oklahoma State College Technological Use Studies Center, n. d.), chart 17; Joseph Jorgensen, "A Century of Political Economic Effects on American Indian Society, 1880-1980," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 6:3 (1978): 19.

13. See Don A. Dillman and Daryl Hobbs, eds., *Rural Society in the U.S.: Issues for the 1980's* (Boulder, CO: Westview Rural Studies Series, 1982), 62-63.

14. Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Choctaw Nation*, 13.

15. Tony Barnett, "The Gezira Scheme: Production of Cotton and the Reproduction of Underdevelopment," in Oxaal et al., *Beyond the Sociology of Development*, 206.

16. See Faiman-Silva, "Choctaw at the Crossroads;" idem, "Tribal Land to Private Land: A Century of Oklahoma Choctaw Timberland Alienation, from the 1880s to the 1980s," *Journal of Forest History* 32:4 (October 1988): 191-204.

17. Angie Debo, *The Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma, Report on Social and Economic Conditions* (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1951), 4–5.
18. *Ibid.*, 8.
19. See Faiman-Silva, "Tribal Land," 203.
20. Nuclear households are defined as those containing one conjugal unit whose members share income and other resources. Included in this category are divorced, widowed, or separated households. Younger nuclear are those households whose heads were forty-five years or younger; older nuclear households are those whose heads were over forty-five years. Extended households are those containing two or more conjugal units with multiple income sources.
21. Peach and Poole, *Human and Material Resources*, chart 16.
22. Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Choctaw Nation*, 30.
23. Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, *Comprehensive Plan of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma* (Durant, OK: 1980), 50.
24. Oklahoma IMPACT, *Profile: Poverty in Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City, OK: Legislative Information Action Network of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, 1981), 31.
25. *Bishinik* (Choctaw Nation, Durant, OK), May 1987, 2.
26. Oklahoma IMPACT, *Poverty in Oklahoma*.
27. Jorgensen, "Political Economic Effects," 3. See also Robert O. Coppedge and Carlton G. Davis, *Rural Poverty and the Policy Crisis* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University, 1977), ix.
28. See Glenna Colclough, "Uneven Development and Racial Composition in the Deep South: 1970–1980," *Rural Sociology* 53:1 (1988): 73–86.
29. See Kenneth L. Smith, *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1986), 197–98, 208; Students of the Multinational Corporation Group Contract, *A Study of the Weyerhaeuser Company as a Multinational Corporation* by (Olympia, WA: Evergreen State College, 1975), 48.
30. Telephone interviews, International Woodworkers of America Local 5-15, Randall Rice, 5 June 1982, Fayetteville, AR; Daryl Tharp, 25 January 1990, Fayetteville, AR.
31. A skidder is a truck used to drag logs to transport vehicles.
32. Interview, Smithville, OK, 5 June 1982.
33. Telephone interview, Fayetteville, AR, 25 January 1990.
34. Interview, Honobia, OK, 23 February 1981.
35. Julian Laite, *Industrial Development and Migrant Labor in Latin America* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981).
36. Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money, Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (1975; Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
37. The important distinction between *household* and *family* has been effectively clarified by Rayna Rapp, "Family and Class in Contemporary America: Notes Toward an Understanding of Ideology," *Science and Society* 42:3 (1978): 280. Rapp provides the basis for their uses in the current study.
38. See Carol B. Stack, *All Our Kin, Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).
39. Felix M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology, The Science of Custom* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), 271–72.
40. Rapp, "Family and Class," 280.
41. *Ibid.*, 281–82.

42. Stack, *All Our Kin*.
43. Rapp, "Family and Class," 228.
44. *Ibid.*, 294.
45. E. Bradford Burns, "The Continuity of the National Period," in *Latin America: Its Problems and Promise*, ed. Jan Knippers Black (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 61.
46. See Faiman-Silva, "Choctaw at the Crossroads," 319ff.
47. See *ibid.*; Faiman-Silva, "Multinational Corporate Development in the American Hinterland: The Case of the Oklahoma Choctaws" in *Political Economy of North American Indians*, ed. John Moore (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, forthcoming).
48. *Bishinik* May 1987, 2.
49. *Ibid.*, March 1988, 3.
50. *Talihina American* (Oklahoma), 23 July 1981; Oklahoma State Corporation Commission Certificate of Authorization, 1981.
51. *Talihina American*, 23 July 1981.
52. See Duane Champagne, "Organizational Change and Conflict: A Case Study of the Bureau of Indian Affairs," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 7:3 (1983): 3-28; Dorothy Biard and Sarah Craven, "Washington Watch: Special Report on Native American Issues," *Practicing Anthropology* 12:2 (1990): 17.
53. *Talihina American*, 11 February 1983; *McCurtain Gazette* (Idabel, OK), 15 November 1982, 28 November 1982, 9 December 1982, 13 December 1982, 10 January 1983, 14 March 1983.
54. Interview, Donald Moon, Bureau of Indian Affairs Agency superintendent, Talihina, OK, 7 June 1982.
55. *McCurtain Gazette*, 10 January 1983.
56. Rob Williams, "Reagan's Initiatives Lead to More Questions than Answers," *Indian Truth* 250 (April 1983): 4.
57. *Ibid.*: 6.
58. *Ibid.*: 15.
59. United States Administration for Native Americans, "Pathway to Self-Sufficiency, Social and Economic Development Strategies for Native American Communities," *Report*, DHHS pub. no. (OHDS) 86-10013 (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1985).
60. Dorothy Baird and Sarah Craven, "Washington Watch," 17; *Akwesasne Notes* 22:1 (Late Spring 1990): 26.
61. Art Winslow, "Speaking with Forked Tongue," *Indian Truth* 250 (April 1983): 8.
62. C. Patrick Morris, "Termination by Accountants: The Reagan Indian Policy," *Policy Studies Journal* 16 (1988): 731.
63. *Bishinik*, May 1987, 2.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*, February 1992, 1.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*, 3.
68. *Talihina American*, 21 December 1989, 1.
69. Choctaw Nation tribal news release (Durant, OK, June 1991), mimeographed.
70. *Bishinik*, November 1989, 1.
71. *Ibid.*, March 1988, 3.
72. *Ibid.*, February 1988, 3.

73. *Talihina American*, 3 January 1990, 1.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Bishinik*, May 1987, 1.
76. Williams, "Speaking with Forked Tongue," 15.
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78. Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, *The Central America Fact Book* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 221.
79. Henry Sockbeson, "Highlights of Indian Legislation in the 99th Congress," *Native American Rights Fund Legal Review* 12:1 (Winter 1987): 4.
80. See *Akwesasne Notes* (Midwinter 1989–90).
81. *Ibid.*, 4.
82. Sockbeson, "Indian Legislation," 3–5.
83. See William A. Means, "Reagan Policies Force Indians to Give up Traditional Views," *Indian Truth* 250 (April 1983): 7.
84. *Indian Affairs* 115 (Spring 1988): 6.
85. Williams, "Speaking with Forked Tongue," 19.
86. See Faiman-Silva, "Choctaw at the Crossroads," 378ff.
87. Vine Deloria, Jr., ed., *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 11–12.
88. *Akwesasne Notes* (Early Winter 1982), 7. See also E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (New York: Harper and Row, Perennial Lib. Ed., 1973); L. Ruffing, "Navajo Economic Development Subject to Economic Constraints," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 24 (April 1976): 611–21; Deloria, *American Indian Policy*.
89. Jerry Brown, *Rural Revitalization: A Challenge for Public Interest Anthropology* working paper no. 1 (Boston: Anthropology Resource Center, 1977), 8–12.
90. *Akwesasne Notes* (Spring 1981), 9–10; (Late Spring 1982), 4–6.
91. *Ibid.* (Early Winter 1982), 6–8; (Late Spring 1982), 44–46.
92. *Ibid.* (Autumn 1980), 13.
93. Sally Swenson, ed., *Native Resource Control and the Multinational Corporate Challenge: Aboriginal Rights in International Perspective* (Boston: Anthropology Resource Center, 1982), 7.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Akwesasne Notes* (Late Spring 1982), 5.