

The Legacy of Pashofa: Ceremony, Society, Women, and Chickasaw Life

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What is food? To paraphrase the *Random House College Dictionary*, food is any nourishing substance eaten to sustain life, provide energy, and to promote growth.¹ But food entails much more than the basics to survival. It is also a cultural artifact. That is to say, the food a society eats, along with how and who obtains and prepares it, embodies a society's values, views, and ultimately its culture. As a society changes over time, the meanings, values, and significance that accompany the typical foods it consumes are transformed. The result is that a society's diet can be more revealing than its art or literature, a truth archeologists who sift through the middens (garbage dumps) of past cultures have long asserted.²

Certain peoples have particular foods that identify or embody their cultures. There is, for example, salmon for certain tribes of the Pacific Northwest, bison for the Lakota and other nomadic plains tribes, or poi (made from the root of the taro plant) for Polynesians of the South Pacific. But the food that most identifies the Chickasaw and embodies their culture is *pashofa*, also spelled or pronounced *pishofa*, *picofa*, *tunchie pashofa*, *ta`sh pishofa*, or *tansh-pa-shoo-phah*, depending on the historical or ethnological source consulted. Its first mention in the earliest ethnographical writings about the tribe was by the English trader James Adair in 1775.³ But certainly the Chickasaws and their ancestors ate pashofa (or a type of it) long before Adair's observations. More importantly, pashofa remains a part of the Chickasaw diet that continues to sustain not only life but also culture, provide not only energy but also identity, and promote not only growth but also a heritage for the tribe and tribal members.

¹*The Random House College Dictionary*, rev. ed., (New York: Random House, Inc., 1988), 513.

² The great transformations of societies worldwide brought about by food are discussed in Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), chapters 4-11. A recent look at today's American culture as embodied in the foods Americans consume today is Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Darker Side of the All-American Meal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001).

³ James Adair, *Adair's History of the American Indians*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (New York: Argonaut Press Ltd., 1966), 437, 447, 456. See also Adair's original text *The History of the American Indians* (London: Edwards and Charles Dilly, 1775), 416, 438. A very good discussion of James Adair, his perceptions of the Chickasaws as influenced by his beliefs that they (and Native Americans in general) were descended from ancient Hebrews, and his writings as a major source for the ethnohistory of the Indians of the Southeast United States in the 18th century can be found in Charles Hudson, "James Adair as Anthropologist," *Ethnohistory* 24, no. 4 (Autumn 1977): 311-328.

Though pashofa has remained part of the Chickasaw diet as well as part of the tribe's culture, ceremony, and identity over centuries, it has not gone unchanged. Clearly the changes in the meanings, traditions, lived experiences, and uses associated with pashofa represent patterns of Chickasaw life formed and transformed with time. These changes correspond to historical periods in the tribe's past. Therefore, as more than food, pashofa serves as a metaphor for historical transformations of subsistence practices, rituals and beliefs, and social conditions of the Chickasaws. The changes embodied in pashofa—as food and its place in Chickasaw ceremony and ritual life—clearly reflect influences of colonialism, the invasion of white culture, and acculturation. But pashofa's enduring presence throughout Chickasaw history is even more revealing because it manifests the survival of Chickasaw culture and identity through adaptation and change.

For generations Chickasaw women have been the primary makers of pashofa by gathering and blending together the ingredients that make up the dish. But the making of pashofa must also be viewed as an interrelated mix of material use, the world of Chickasaw women, and the greater Chickasaw society. Thus, the histories of Chickasaw pashofa and Chickasaw women must be gathered together because the two are inseparable. As the primary makers of pashofa, Chickasaw women have been the chief bearers of this unique cultural artifact so important to sustaining Chickasaw identity. From grandmothers and mothers to daughters the recipes, techniques, traditions, and meanings of pashofa have been passed down and preserved. But equally important is the way in which Chickasaw women have thereby proved a counter-force to the powers of colonialism, acculturation, and assimilation. From the simple ingredients of corn, water, and meat that were harvested and gathered, blended, and then transformed by fire, pashofa evoked the world in which their makers lived and moved and worked.

Most all that went into making pashofa rested within the sphere of Chickasaw women's life. The raising, harvesting, processing, and preparation of corn, which the Chickasaw call *tanchi* (*tahn' chih*) and which is pashofa's main ingredient, was governed by Chickasaw women. With corn as the major staple in the diet of the Chickasaw, what James Adair in 1775 called "their chief produce, and main dependence," and with the Chickasaw as one of the greater agriculturalists of the southeastern tribes, Chickasaw women directly controlled a significant portion of the tribe's subsistence and survival.⁴ People often assume that subsistence techniques of preliterate people (which anthropologists use to define tribes like the Chickasaw at the times of early European contact) were relatively unsophisticated economic responses to fundamental biological needs that required limited skill and less knowledge. But as anthropologists have come to understand, such people possessed remarkably detailed and complex skills and understanding of their environment. Chickasaw women were no exception. They were the keepers of the knowledge and techniques necessary for the tribe's survival and passed those essential skills and techniques through generations of women over time. Their role in Chickasaw society as the primary provider of vegetable foods also embodied the conception of the early Chickasaw that men and women were two radically different

⁴ Adair, 437; Muriel H. White, "American Indian Corn Dishes," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1958): 155-166.

forms of humanity. Consequently, the two sexes performed disparate, contrasting, but complimentary subsistence activities. Consistent with such notions, men and women often kept themselves separate from one another to a great extent, and they seem to have carried out their respective day-to-day activities apart from each other. This sexual division in Chickasaw society included child rearing and teaching. Chickasaw women had authority only over the girls, and this authority extended directly, and daily, to teaching the roles and responsibilities and passing on the knowledge, customs, beliefs, and skills of being a Chickasaw woman. Learning how to prepare pashofa was part of this closed world of Chickasaw women. Thus, pashofa can be seen as an expression of culture and identity and part of the legacy of Chickasaw women.⁵

Women picked the corn (likely from fields they owned due to their matrilineal-based society) and then processed it. With a wooden mortar and pestle they broke, or "cracked," the hard flinty pashofa corn (one of many different strains of corn identified on the basis of color, shape, size, and so on), with its pearly lustered shell or husk, into coarse pieces.⁶ The women would then use a set of three special baskets—the fanner, riddle, and container—for sifting and cleaning the ground corn. These baskets were often woven of split cane. Like making pashofa, the skills and knowledge needed to create these baskets were part of the woman's world passed down generationally.⁷ In preparing pashofa Chickasaw women might soak the shelled dry corn in a solution of ash-lye overnight, or add water and some clean wood ashes to the grain just prior to pounding. Making and using wood-ash lye were merely additional skills and knowledge of the woman's sphere.⁸

⁵Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 258-26; John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 137* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 352-353, 716-717; Arrell Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 21, 28; T. N. Campbell, "Choctaw Subsistence: Ethnographic Notes from the Lincecum Manuscript," *The Florida Anthropologist* 12, no. 1 (1959): 11; John R. Swanton, ed., "The Choctaw Indians in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century, by John Edwards," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 10, no. 3, (September 1932): 405-406.

⁶A very good description of the form and function of the mortar and pestle is given in White, 156-158; Swanton, "Choctaw Indians," 405; Adair, 417

⁷Descriptions of these three types of baskets and their specific uses are outlined in White, 157; see also Swanton, "Choctaw Indians," 406 and Adair, 416. An excellent account of basket weaving and the world of Cherokee women can be found in Sarah H. Hill, *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and their Basketry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁸White, 158-159; Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 304. This technique of processing corn with wood-ash lye has been found to reduce some of its essential amino acids, but the process also increases the amount of the amino acid lysine as well as the amount of niacin. The result is that the wood-ash lye process enhances the nutritional value of corn, and for people who depended heavily on corn as the Chickasaw this technique probably reduced the incidence of pellagra.

To make pashofa water had to be added to the corn and then fire applied to the mixture. During the tribe's early history, the duties of Chickasaw women included drawing and lugging water in clay vessels. Duty also required that they maintain the fires. In their quest for firewood women often ventured far. With larger towns the surrounding wood supply would be exhausted, and that would force women at times to travel several miles to find suitable supplies of wood. It is likely that Chickasaw women carried wood much like Natchez women, who used two strips of bearskin each about four inches wide with one band across the shoulders and the other across the forehead.⁹ Meat was the only part of pashofa that men contributed through their hunting, but preparation of the meat was still the responsibility of the women. The ingredients of corn, water, meat, and fire were combined in a simple recipe that has existed relatively unaltered for generations.¹⁰

But even with the simple pashofa recipe, changes in ingredients, preparation, and even in serving pashofa occurred over time. As the invasion of Europeans and later Americans increased, so quickened the acculturation process upon Chickasaw life. A good example of such change is the tribe's adaptation of hogs. Pork (*shukha nippi*) has been the preferred meat in pashofa for generations.¹¹ But hogs were not, of course, indigenous to America. Hogs were not like the peccary, the tusked, pig-like animal native to America, and not part of Indian subsistence until the arrival of Europeans. Before the introduction of hogs the Chickasaw apparently used other meats like venison and perhaps even bison. James Adair mentions the use of venison by the Chickasaw even after pork became the preferred meat in pashofa.¹² But European hogs flourished in the Southeastern quarters of North America, where temperate climates and an abundance of water, shade, and food could be had. No European animal, save the horse, influenced native cultures and economies and affected the environment like swine. In this capacity, hogs became effective agents of imperialism and acculturation alongside their European human counterparts.¹³ By the time De Soto spent the winter of 1540-1541 with the Chickasaws, it is likely he had around 200 pigs. And it seems plausible that soon after De Soto's stay among the Chickasaws, the pig found its way into tribal life.¹⁴ By the mid-

⁹ Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 264.

¹⁰ Various recipes for pashofa from around the 1770s to the late-twentieth century can be found in Adeline Fillmore Brown, *Chickasaw Indian Recipes* (1965), 9; Dorothy Milligan, ed., *The Indian Way: Chickasaws* (Quanah, Tex: Nortex Press, 1976), 70, 154; Adair, 416; White, 96-97, 155-160.

¹¹ Milligan, 88.

¹² Adair, 438.

¹³ The role of swine in the larger legacy of conquest and colonization can be found in Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1972), 75-79 and Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 173-176.

¹⁴ Crosby, *Columbian Exchange*, 78; Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 351.

1700s, there is no question hogs were important to Chickasaw sustenance through hunting the feral type and raising them. Adair noted changes in Chickasaw subsistence and culture from taking up raising livestock as a “great advance towards their being civilized.”¹⁵ What Adair perceived as a civilizing influence was merely cultural adaptation of the Chickasaw. The Chickasaw accepted this new meat source freely to the point that Adair commented that the Chickasaw lands “abounded with hogs.”¹⁶ The increase in pork as a staple meat source of the Chickasaw corresponded to greater transformations occurring within the tribe, as hunting became more aimed at the fur trade than sustenance. Swine became part of displacing the Chickasaws’ natural ways; they were a tool of acculturation, and their preference in pashofa reflected such change.¹⁷

The use of iron pots instead of clay pots by Chickasaw women in cooking pashofa was another case of cultural change. In the 1770s, Adair watched Chickasaw women cook using large “earthen pots” that ranged in size from two to ten gallons.¹⁸ But over time handcrafted earthen pots were replaced by metal pots. Even today cooking pashofa still calls for using large cast-iron wash pots.¹⁹ The first shift to iron pots symbolized increased trade with Europeans and changing tribal economies. More subtly, the shift to iron pots changed cooking techniques as well as length of time to cook pashofa. No longer did Chickasaw women use hot stones placed in clay vessels to boil food. Maintaining proper temperatures, tending fires, and cooking vigilance all changed and resulted in alterations in the lives of Chickasaw women. The shift to iron pots also shrank the Chickasaw woman’s world of skills and knowledge and responsibility tied to fashioning clay vessels. As trade increased and European goods became more infused in Chickasaw life and displaced traditional goods like earthen cooking utensils, so diminished integral bonds of knowledge and teaching that bound Chickasaw women together. Even more recent shifts away from hand grinding pashofa corn to buying it on the shelf pre-ground has had a similar influence.²⁰ Still, with all these changes, pashofa has remained the principal food of the Chickasaw and has sustained the Chickasaw not only physically but culturally and spiritually. As the principal producers of pashofa, Chickasaw women have remained the cultural bearers of this unique Chickasaw food. By maintaining pashofa in Chickasaw life, Chickasaw women have, over generations, exercised their guardianship over tradition and even instilled traditional values by passing the cooking of pashofa from mother to daughter. Thus, Chickasaw women have maintained more of their traditional world than Chickasaw men and have remained a stronger counter-force to colonization, Americanization, and assimilation influences.

¹⁵ Adair, 390.

¹⁶ Adair, 444.

¹⁷ Gibson, 39-40.

¹⁸ Adair, 416; Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 354.

¹⁹ Adair, 416; Milligan, 154, 156.

²⁰ Milligan, 70, 110; Oral interview conducted by author with Dixie Brewer, February 20, 2003.

But pashofa's place in Chickasaw life has been associated with far more than mere sustenance. It has also been part of the social and ceremonial life of the Chickasaw as the final stage in the once prevalent pashofa ceremony. The pashofa ceremony was the most important ceremony of the Chickasaw, what ethnologist John Swanton labeled the tribe's "principal ritual."²¹ The best way to describe the pashofa ceremony is as an extended diagnosis and healing practice steeped in spiritual overtones with the intent of providing special treatment to the seriously afflicted.²² The most in-depth discussion of the ceremony comes from John Swanton's *Beliefs and Usages of the Chickasaw*, which synthesizes a handful of accounts on the ceremony. Swanton notes that the earliest mention of the pashofa ceremony comes from Henry Schoolcraft during the mid-1800s, who wrote:

When they are sick they send for a doctor (they have several among them); after looking at the sick awhile, the family leave him and the sick alone. He then commences singing and shaking a gourd over the patient. This is done, not to cure, but to find out what is the matter, or disease; as the doctor sings several songs he watches closely the patient, and finds out which song pleased; then he determines what the disease is; he then uses herbs, roots, steaming, and conjuring; the doctor frequently recommends to have a large feast (which they call *Tonsh-pa-shoo-phahs*); if the Indian is tolerably well off, and is sick for two or three weeks, they may have two or three *Tonsh-pa-shoo-phahs*. They eat, dance and sing at a great rate at these feasts; the doctors say that it raises the spirits of the sick and weakens the evil spirit.²³

As a ritualistic healing act, the Pashofa ceremony was presided over by an Indian doctor (a shaman) called an *Aliktce*, who was chosen by the prophet of the seriously sick individual's moiety from the members of the ill person's clan or house group.²⁴ The *Aliktce*'s religious function derived from the Chickasaw belief that sickness was the result of the invasion into the sick person's body by a vengeful animal spirit. Disease

²¹ Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 777.

²² Gibson, 15; Arrell Gibson, "Chickasaw Ethnography: An Ethnohistorical Reconstruction," *Ethnohistory* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 104, 106.

²³ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Information, Reflecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States: Collected and Prepared Under Direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs*, Pt. I (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Company, 1853), 310.

²⁴ John R. Swanton, *Social and Religious Beliefs and Usages of the Chickasaw Indians* (Washington: U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology, 1928), 263; Gibson, "Chickasaw Ethnography," 106.

devised by vengeful animals was regarded as by far the greatest cause of illness.²⁵ It appears that the emergence (or expansion) of the pashofa ceremony occurred later in Chickasaw history as the tribe became more entwined in the fur trade.²⁶ The Chickasaw most likely held to a traditional relationship of mutual courtesy with their wildlife brethren with an established compact not to abuse each other. But as the fur trade expanded, so did the abuses by Indians upon the animal world. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Chickasaw Bluffs Trading House, the government factory near current day Memphis, Tennessee, surpassed all other government trading posts in trading furs. Chickasaw hunters it seems ravished the region, destroying populations of beaver, otter, raccoon, fox, wolf, bear, and elk.²⁷ The Chickasaw had good reason by their own actions to believe they had violated the terms of mutual courtesy between themselves and the animal world. At the same time, contact with Europeans also increased the likelihood of serious disease and illness. Following conventional Indian logic, the Chickasaw seem to have blamed mysterious and severe illnesses on what they believed were offended, vengeful wildlife.²⁸

It was the function of the Alikctce to know the means to determine and exorcize the illness-bearing spirit. For three or four days the sick individual remained in his home under the care of the Alikctce. During that time the Alikctce sang and shook his gourd to determine the nature of the affliction. Then he would administer certain emetics and medicines. Medicine was mixed with selected ingredients in a bowl that the Alikctce then blew into through a cane tube followed by a song of the formula. He would then blow a mouthful of the medicine through the tube onto the patient's head, and dump the dregs of the brew onto the patient's head. On the final day of treatment the pashofa ceremony proper was performed as a finale. Members of the patient's clan gathered in the patient's yard, which had been swept clean. There they would feast until evening on pashofa prepared by two women specifically appointed for that purpose. The sufferer was brought to the doorway of their dwelling, which usually faced east. The ceremony began at dusk and included gourd rattling, healing songs, and special dancing routines to deal with specific animal spirits. Participants gathered near a sacred fire tended by the doctor's assistant (*tishu*). They danced and sang to drums. Several women would participate.

²⁵ Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 340; Frank G. Speck, "Notes on Chickasaw Ethnology and Folk-Lore," *The Journal of American Folklore*, 20 (January-March, 1907): 54; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 13.

²⁶ Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 777.

²⁷ Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 95.

²⁸ For an intriguing study into this concept of souring man-animal relationships and actions of revenge see Calvin Martin *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). The list of animals believed to be the cause of disease included all the animals of the fur trade, such as the otter, beaver, deer, wolf and bear (an increase in the trade of bear oil). Other animals included the dog, red snake, skunk, hog, squirrel, eagle, owl, rattlesnake, and little people to name a few. See also Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 794.

They wore turtle-shell rattles below the knee, danced, but did not sing. The head dancer lead the group in a series of dances performed as prayers to various animals and totems with the intent of bringing relief to the afflicted. They moved in a counter-clockwise direction, in single file, stepping in unison, with their bodies leaning inward somewhat. The very first dance of the pashofa ceremony was named from the animal that was supposedly the cause of the illness. After a full night of dancing and singing, the Aliktee declared the spirit had migrated from the patient and spread among the dance subjects, too weak to afflict anyone else. As the dancers scattered at the end of the ceremony, so, it was believed, was the disease scattered, each participant taking a part of the disease with them.²⁹

The pashofa ceremony became a principal ritual of the Chickasaws just as pashofa became the tribe's most important food. Like pashofa, the ceremony also faced changes in form, function, and intensity as the weight of the removal and the wrath of missionaries and assimilationists bent on exterminating Indian culture and religion pushed their way further into Chickasaw life. Besides a potential increase in the pashofa ceremony's use due to Chickasaw perception of vengeful wildlife, it seems the increased use of the ceremony also corresponded with periods of intense anxiety and disruption of Chickasaw life during the decades preceding and following removal. Arrell Gibson describes the era before removal as one of "corrosive forces" that brought about "decay in Chickasaw natural ways and law, corruption of personal and tribal honor, and disintegration of institutions and society," all contributing to the devastation faced by the Chickasaw Nation.³⁰ The removal and post-removal era added to the turmoil, when conditions for the Chickasaw included being uprooted from their traditional homeland and cast into unfamiliar environments, enduring tribal factionalism, trying to comprehend altering roles of gender with the intrusions of western ideals and Christian missionaries, facing the erosion of tribal power, dealing with new economic situations, and confronting disease and death. This flood of disruptions certainly resulted in a climate of intense despair.³¹ The physical and psychological toll must have been staggering, and the need for healing immense.

The Chickasaws expanded pashofa's place in tribal society during the nineteenth century. Added to its function as part of physical healing for individuals, pashofa's social significance increased in what may be best described as social healing. Pashofa became increasingly a part of gatherings and festivities intended to secure some stability in Chickasaw life and culture in the face of the turmoil brought by forces from without. By the 1840s, pashofa could be found at such festivities as weddings, at moments of grief

²⁹ See Swanton, *Social and Religious*, 259-261, 263; Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States* 794, 776-777; Gibson, "Chickasaw Ethnography," 105-106; Speck, 54-56; Schoolcraft, 310.

³⁰ Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 106.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 107-258.

like funerals, and even part of crusading battles for temperance.³² As a result, Pashofa's overall use among the Chickasaw was becoming less ceremonial and more social, more public and less clannish. Its place among the Chickasaw was being transformed as the process of cultural absorption blended Euro-American and Chickasaw culture. This process would continue through the twentieth century. And while its expanded use could be viewed as part of the process of acculturation, the fitting of pashofa into these institutions was done as a means to preserve the fundamental values and culture of the tribe.

The temperance gatherings offer a good example of this mix of accommodation for cultural survival. Heavy consumption of alcohol plagued the Chickasaw so much that one missionary exclaimed, "Strong drink has long been the destroyer of this people."³³ By the time temperance efforts gained momentum among the Chickasaw, the arguments against strong drink in America were well defined. It was believed, in short, that intemperance led to suffering, neglect of families, poverty, immoral behavior, and ultimately to hell. For missionaries intent on saving the souls of Native Americans, the need to rid Indians of the corrupting affects of alcohol seemed imperative. Indeed, drunkenness was, in microcosm, the entire Indian problem.³⁴ That is to say, upon contact with the white race, Indians had traded their virtues for civilized vices. In the efforts to counter the calamities of strong drink through temperance gatherings, missionaries allowed pashofa, a Chickasaw virtue, as part of meetings. With its use at temperance gatherings, the virtue of healing remained attached to pashofa. But more importantly, the persistence of Chickasaw culture and identity continued because of making and serving pashofa. The Chickasaw women who prepared pashofa for temperance gatherings were countering the influences of colonization and acculturation in its most destructive form of liquor, even while incorporating it into a white-based institution. Their efforts were certainly more subtle than missionaries who relied upon fire and brimstone sprinkled with guilt, but far more influential in holding the Chickasaws' world together in their own way.

Though the formal and informal uses of pashofa as food broadened in Chickasaw society and culture, it remained essential to the pashofa ceremony, which remained a principal institution in Chickasaw life during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century. But even the pashofa ceremony did not escape unscathed by attacks from without or even changes from within. From the earliest accounts about the pashofa ceremony, eating and dancing were always noted as essential parts. They were also the most social portions of the ceremony when members of the sick person's clan or

³² Swanton, "The Choctaw Indians," 407.

³³ Percy L. Rainwater, "Indian Missions and Missionaries," *Journal of Mississippi History* 28 (February 1966), 36.

³⁴ Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 123-143; Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1982), 34-36.

community gathered and contributed to the healing process. But as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth century, and as the social aspects of dancing and eating pashofa broadened in Chickasaw culture, so too did the assaults upon these activities. Leading the assault upon Chickasaw ceremonial dances were the churches. Remembering such scorn for the pashofa ceremony, Mary Fillmore, a Chickasaw woman, stated, "I particularly remember that the preacher used to get really mad at my mother if she went to a stomp dance. Christians weren't supposed to go to them."³⁵ This attitude of disdain was part of a greater disapproval by missionaries and other "Friends of the Indians" against everything that perpetuated Indianness and retarded assimilation. The pashofa ceremony, its healing rituals and dances, became the focus of attacks that charged such rituals as superstitious and degrading. Part of the reason such activities became targets of assimilationists and missionaries and deemed "the strongest influences for race demoralization" was because they were no longer fully religious in intention but had become somewhat recreational and social.³⁶ This seems to be the case with a pashofa ceremony remembered by Bygimie Parker near the turn of the century. Parker tells of a pashofa ceremony for her mother that differed from earlier versions. Instead of the ceremony being held at her mother's house, she went to the doctor's house, and instead of being administered to by the doctor, she was attended to by a few older women who stayed in the room with her and gave her the medicine. And after the ceremony the Parker family paid the doctor for the medicine and for holding the pashofa dance. But more importantly, according to Bygimie Parker, "there was quite a bit of drinking going on, and some of the Indians got really drunk. Everybody—men, women, and children who were old enough—participated in the dancing and eating of pashofa."³⁷ It seems that the Parker's pashofa ceremony reflected this increased recreational character that assimilationists were clamoring about.

Ultimately, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1923, created a series of recommendations supported by a conference of missionaries that placed limits upon Indian gatherings and dances. Corresponding in time with this mandate came diminished use of the pashofa ceremony among the Chickasaw. But even after the more pro-cultural views of the federal government towards Indian culture during the John Collier years of the 1930s, the churches continued their brazen assault upon ceremonies and dances like the pashofa ceremony. According to Chickasaws interviewed during the 1960s and 1970s, the pashofa ceremony began to fade from Chickasaw life as a result of church efforts against such ceremonialism. Many interviewees noted their last remembered pashofa dance being in the 1920s or 1930s. They also note the resistance of the churches to such traditional gatherings.³⁸ As one interviewee stated:

³⁵ Milligan, 126-127.

³⁶ Dippie, 280.

³⁷ Milligan, 138.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 71, 93, 126; Dorothy Milligan, *The HOW Book of Being Indian* (Burnet, TX: Eakin Press, 1980), 42-43; Muriel H. Wright, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), 96-97.

During the late 30's the Indian churches were beginning to come out pretty hard against the dances, and I expect that is one thing that led to their being discontinued. The church is a powerful influence in the lives of most Chickasaws and Choctaws.³⁹

As the institutions of American society like Christianity increasingly encroached upon Chickasaw life and culture, it seems the pashofa ceremony, along with other parts of Chickasaw culture, declined in practice and utility.

Though the pashofa ceremony's practice and importance diminished during the twentieth century, the importance of the dish pashofa endured. Pashofa has remained the "national dish" of the Chickasaw and is often served at big meetings, important family functions, and many Chickasaw gatherings.⁴⁰ Pashofa was so much a part of the Chickasaw Day festivities held at Byng during the 1960s and 1970s that the festivals from year to year were often measured against each other "on whether the pashofa was better or not so good as the previous year."⁴¹ The Chickasaw Nation Festival held in Tishomingo and the Chickasaw Historical Society's annual meeting always included pashofa, as do many stomps.⁴² As a food today, pashofa provides more than mere physical nourishment. Its function has developed as more of a social than ceremonial part of Chickasaw life that has sustained and nourished Chickasaw culture, society, and identity for the tribe and individual tribal members. As such, the persistence of pashofa at Chickasaw gatherings seems to have embodied pashofa's legacy.

Pashofa's legacy stems from pashofa's ability to endure. Its strength to endure comes from its capacity to accommodate change and be adapted to different worlds faced by the Chickasaw (past and present), all the while remaining a constant and vital part of Chickasaw life, culture, and identity. Thus, the meanings, uses, traditions, and lived experiences linked to pashofa over time are part of its true legacy, and it acts as a metaphor of Chickasaw society overall. Another part of pashofa's heritage comes from those who sustained its place in Chickasaw life, namely Chickasaw women. It was the world of Chickasaw women where pashofa existed on a daily basis. It was also where Chickasaw women actively and creatively engaged in cultural preservation with pashofa. Thus, the worlds of Chickasaw women and pashofa have endured together over generations inseparably blended. Both have been important in sustaining the Chickasaw people. That is the legacy of pashofa.

³⁹ Milligan, *The Indian Way*, 93.

⁴⁰ Wright, 97.

⁴¹ Milligan, *The Indian Way*, 154.

⁴² "CHS Annual Meeting, October 5" *Journal of Chickasaw History* 2, no. 3 (1996): 30; "Chickasaw Stomp Dance Revival" *Journal of Chickasaw History* 2, no. 2 (1996): 32.