



LESSON ONE

Cherokee and Colonial Culture

INTRODUCTION

Cultural differences between the Cherokees and the American colonists impacted negotiations between the two societies, including the Cherokees' diplomatic visit to Williamsburg in 1762. Dialogue was sometimes difficult because the two cultures had differing views of land use, gender roles, and decision making. This lesson helps students understand the differences between eighteenth-century Cherokee and colonial cultures.

OBJECTIVES

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe aspects of eighteenth-century Cherokee society.
2. Describe aspects of eighteenth-century colonial society.
3. Describe some differences between Cherokee and Virginian cultures.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

This lesson meets the National Standards of Learning in the areas of historical comprehension and historical analysis and interpretation.

MATERIALS

Station A:

Cherokee Government and Law
Colonial Government and Law

Station B:

Cherokee Work and Play
Colonial Work and Play

Station C:

Cherokee Religion
Colonial Religion

Station D:

Cherokee Appearance
Colonial Appearance

Graphic Organizer: Cherokee and Colonial Culture

Primary Source Excerpt: Henry Timberlake's *Memoirs* (for Lesson Extension)

STRATEGY

1. Before class, set up four stations around the room. At each station, place the relevant materials, listed above, for students to examine in small groups.
 - A. Government and Law
 - B. Work and Play

- C. Religion
- D. Appearance

2. Facilitate a class discussion about how Americans live today. How do decisions that affect all Americans get made? How do people dress? What do they believe?
3. Distribute a copy of the Graphic Organizer: Cherokee and Colonial Culture to each student. Divide the class into four groups and have each group start at a different station, filling in the appropriate spaces on their graphic organizers for each station as they rotate.
4. After all groups have visited each station, have a class discussion about the differences between Cherokee and colonial Virginian society. Ask students to think about how these differences might have made interaction difficult between Cherokee and European-American colonists.

LESSON EXTENSION

Have students read the Primary Source Excerpt: Henry Timberlake's *Memoirs* about the Cherokees. What aspects of Cherokee life does Timberlake describe? Does he describe any similarities between colonial and Cherokee cultures?



"Tah-chee, a Cherokee chief," by Albert Newsam, published by E. C. Biddell, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 1837. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D. C.

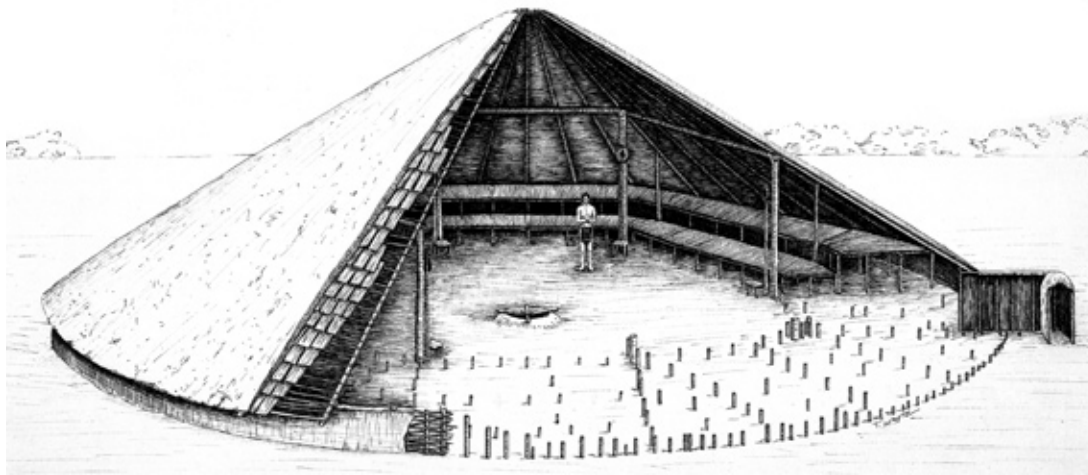
STATION A CHEROKEE GOVERNMENT AND LAW

In 1762, Lt. Henry Timberlake traveled to Cherokee country. He wrote his observations of Cherokee life in his Memoirs.

“Some days after [we arrived in Cherokee country], the headmen of each town were assembled in the town-house of Chote, the metropolis of the country, to hear the articles of peace read. . . . The town-house, in which are transacted all public business and diversions, is raised with wood, and covered over with earth, and has all the appearance of a small mountain at a little distance. It is built in the form of a sugar loaf, and large enough to contain 500 persons, but extremely dark. . . . Within it has the appearance of an ancient amphi-theater, the seats being raised one above another leaving an area in the middle, in the center of which stands the fire; the seats of the head warriors are nearest it.

“They all seemed highly satisfied with the articles. The peace-pipe was smoked.”

Henry Timberlake, *Lieut. Henry Timberlake's Memoirs, 1756–1765* (Marietta, Ga.: Continental Book Company, 1948), pp. 58–59.



CRIME	PUNISHMENT
selling Cherokee land to non-Cherokees	death
killing someone	execution (death) by the victim's clan <i>If the killer ran away, then the victim's clan would execute someone else from the killer's clan.</i>
any, even murder	suspended if the guilty person could reach a city of refuge and stay there through the next green corn ceremony (usually in August) <i>At that time, all crimes and offenses were forgiven, and everyone started anew.</i>
beating wives and/or children	<i>According to many observers in the 1700s, this crime did not occur in the Cherokee Nation.</i>

STATION A COLONIAL GOVERNMENT AND LAW

Colonial government was fairly complex. In Virginia, laws were written by a representative government, the General Assembly, but had to be approved by the royal governor and by the king before they became law. The General Assembly consisted of the Council, or upper house, and the House of Burgesses.

The Council was made up of twelve leading men who were appointed by the king to serve for life. The councillors assisted and advised the royal governor of Virginia, who was also appointed by the king.

Burgesses were elected by the people. There were two burgesses from each county, and one member each from Jamestown, Williamsburg, Norfolk, and the College of William and Mary. Though burgesses were elected, the only people who could vote were white, property-owning, Protestant men age twenty-one and older. Few colonists and no enslaved people participated in government; most were instead ruled by it.

Both the Council and the House of Burgesses met in the Capitol in Williamsburg. People accused of crimes also had their trials in the Capitol, until 1770, when Williamsburg's new courthouse was completed.



(far left) The reconstructed Capitol in Williamsburg, Virginia.

(right) Burgesses meet in the Capitol.

(bottom far left) A woman is punished with time in the pillory.

(bottom right) A man is punished with time in the pillory and ear nailing.



CRIME	PUNISHMENT
assault in sudden anger; blasphemy ; counterfeiting; idolatry ; murder; rebellion; robbery of a church; witchcraft	death by hanging
denying God; stealing grapes; striking one's mother or father	death (usually by hanging)
forgery ; manslaughter ; theft	branding with an <i>F</i> for forgery, an <i>M</i> for manslaughter, or a <i>T</i> for theft
hog theft	first offense: 25 lashes and a fine of 400 pounds of tobacco (for a Native American or mulatto , 39 lashes) second offense: time in the pillory, ear nailing third offense: death (usually by hanging)
perjury	ear nailing and whipping
baking bad bread; brawling; slander	ducking stool
arson; cheating; conjuring (magic); public drunkenness; fortune-telling; gaming; impudence; libel ; lying; slander ; threatening; wife beating	time in the pillory

DEFINITIONS

assault—a threat or attempt to inflict violence upon someone.

blasphemy—insulting or showing contempt or lack of respect for God.

ducking stool—a seat attached to a plank used in the eighteenth century to plunge an individual accused of a crime into water.

forgery—the crime of falsely making or changing a document.

idolatry—the worship of an object as if it were a god.

libel—a written or oral statement that creates a harmful impression of a person's character.

manslaughter—the killing of a human being without intent or ill will.

mulatto—an eighteenth-century term describing an individual who was of mixed racial ancestry, usually African and European.

perjury—false swearing; lying under oath or failing to do what is promised under oath.

slander—a written or oral statement of false charges that harm another's reputation.

STATION B CHEROKEE WORK AND PLAY

In 1762, Lt. Henry Timberlake traveled to Cherokee country. He wrote his observations of Cherokee life in his Memoirs.

“Nothing belonging to the dead is to be kept, but everything at his decease destroyed. . . .

“This custom was probably introduced to prevent avarice and, by preventing hereditary acquisitions, make merit the sole means of acquiring power, honour, and riches. . . . On this account the wives generally have separate property, that no inconveniency may arise from death or separation. . . .

“Their government, if I may call it government, which has neither laws or power to support it, is a mixed aristocracy and democracy, the chiefs being chose according to their merit in war, or policy at home. . . . These chiefs, or headmen, likewise compose the assemblies of the nation, into which the war-women are admitted. . . . Many of the Indian women being famous in war, as powerful in the council.”

Henry Timberlake, *Lieut. Henry Timberlake's Memoirs, 1756–1765* (Marietta, Ga.: Continental Book Company, 1948), pp. 91–93.



(far left) Cherokees used metal tools such as hoes for farming.

(left) A Cherokee-made basket.



(above) A musket acquired by trade with British Americans.

(right) A blowgun was another tool used in hunting.

(far right) Trade beads were a popular item in Cherokee villages.



CHEROKEES AT WORK

	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN
Work They Did	making war, hunting, fishing, trading with other tribes [Note: sometimes women chose to do this work, too]	growing food: corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, gourds, sweet potatoes, and other foods; gathering foods: fruits, berries, nuts, wild greens (used as food and in medicines)	helping parents with all the work they did <i>Children learned by watching and doing. They played by imitating adults, for example, shooting small blowguns or making small baskets.</i>
Things They Made	canoes, war clubs, bows and arrows, blowguns, arrowheads, other items needed for work and daily life	baskets, pottery, woven fabric, clothing, jewelry, and other items	smaller or “practice” versions of the items made by their parents



An example of Cherokee pottery.

CHEROKEES AT PLAY

GAME OR ACTIVITY	RULES OR GAME PLAY
dancing	Cherokees danced almost every night in the council house, and many dances were for fun. They imitated animals or hunting and laughed and joked. Other dances were part of serious religious ceremonies.
stickball	<p>This game was very rough and was called “the little brother of war.” Men played this game on teams, using sticks with a small net on one end to scoop a ball up from the ground and then throw it. They could not touch the ball with their hands unless it was above their waists. Players scored by putting a small ball between two goalposts. The first team to score twelve times won the game.</p> <p>Other than these rules, there were no rules! Men wrestled, fought, tackled, hit, and even choked their opponents. They also prepared for the game with rituals and ceremonies. Each side had a “conjurer” who tried to use magic to influence the outcome of the game.</p>
chunky game	<p>Boys and men played this game for fun. The object was to roll a specially carved stone and then throw one’s spear so it landed where the stone stopped rolling. A special, smooth area was cleared for this in the center of the village. The game was fun and provided exercise, but it also helped men and boys become expert shots.</p> <p>Chunky stones were carved perfectly round and smooth. They were prized possessions.</p>
stone marbles	Cherokees played a team sport with stone marbles about the size of billiard balls. The marbles had to be rolled into holes in a certain pattern on a playing field.
basket game	This game was a pastime played on winter evenings. People played in pairs or on teams, using two-sided dice made from laurel wood. Players shook the dice in a basket and scored points depending on how many light or dark sides were showing. Players needed 24 points to win.



A chunky stone.



Stickball sticks.

STATION B

COLONIAL WORK AND PLAY

COLONIAL VIRGINIANS AT WORK

Colonial Virginia was an agricultural society. That means most people worked on farms or with farm products. The most important crop grown in colonial Virginia was tobacco. Tobacco required many people to grow and harvest it. Most tobacco was grown on farms called plantations. Large plantation owners were usually very wealthy people who owned many slaves and who often owned more than one plantation or farm. They shipped the tobacco to Great Britain and traded it for many manufactured goods.

Farmers and plantation owners also grew food products, such as corn. Most farmers in eighteenth-century Virginia tried to be self-sufficient: they tried to grow or produce everything they needed on the farm. They also produced items for sale and used the money from those sales to buy necessary goods such as tools, furniture, or other items they could not make themselves.

In colonial society, men usually worked outside of the home, and women usually worked inside. Men who were farmers would work in the fields, perhaps with the help of male children, while their wives and daughters tended to cooking, cleaning, washing, making and mending clothing, caring for children, growing kitchen gardens, and caring for domestic animals such as chickens or goats.

Colonial Virginians also worked in a variety of trades. Tradespeople included blacksmiths, coopers, carpenters, wheelwrights, wigmakers, tavern keepers, and merchants.





COLONIAL VIRGINIANS AT PLAY

Colonial Virginians played a variety of indoor and outdoor games. Some indoor games included cards, chess, backgammon, dice, dominoes, draughts (or checkers), and billiards. Children played with toys such as marbles, tops, and bowling ninepins. Children of wealthy Virginians might play with dolls or toy soldiers and horses. Two popular simple board games, nine men's morris and fox and geese, were played on simple boards with marbles, checkers, stones, or seeds.

Virginians were notable among residents of other colonies for enjoying horse racing and dancing. One very popular outdoor game was quoits. Players or teams took turns tossing heavy metal rings toward a pin fixed into the ground. It was somewhat like the modern game of horseshoes. Lawn bowling and cricket, still played in Britain today, were very popular. Just as today, children played outdoor games such as handball, hopscotch, blindman's buff, hide and seek, and hoop rolling. Older children also enjoyed hunting, fishing, and horseback riding.





STATION C CHEROKEE RELIGION

CHEROKEE BELIEFS

Cherokee religion was called “duyukdv,” which means “the truth” or “the right way.” Cherokees were to respect the Creator, the natural world, people around them, and themselves. People showed their respect for the natural world and their neighbors by taking only what they needed and sharing what they had with others.

CHEROKEE CEREMONIES

TOBACCO

Cherokees, like other American Indians, used tobacco in religious ceremonies. They believed that, when they smoked a pipe with someone, their thoughts went straight to the Creator with the smoke. They believed that, once you had smoked with someone, you could speak only the truth with each other because the Creator was aware of your thoughts.

THE BLACK DRINK

Cherokees used an herbal form of caffeine to cleanse their bodies and minds before ceremonies. The “black drink” was prepared by medicine people and was served in a special dipper made from a conch shell. These shell dippers were traded from the Gulf of Mexico to the southern Appalachians.

THE GREEN CORN CEREMONY

This ceremony, usually held in August, lasted seven days. When corn planted in spring became ripe, Cherokees held this ceremony to give thanks for the corn and to start a new year. All the fires in the village were put out and relit from the one central, sacred fire. This symbolized the unity of the people. Everyone took medicine before eating the first corn of the year so they would be healthy. Cherokees danced special dances and sang special songs, and all people participated. All injuries and wrongs were forgiven, allowing everyone to start over in the new year.



A Cherokee pipe.



A shell used as a dipper.

STATION C COLONIAL RELIGION

RELIGION IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

Eighteenth-century Virginians held many different faiths, but the official religion of colonial Virginia was Anglicanism, or the Church of England, a sect of Christianity. Church services were held on Sunday mornings, and Virginians were required to attend a service at least once a month, as well as on certain holy days such as Christmas and Easter. They also attended church to mark events such as births, marriages, and deaths.

An Anglican parish marked the area ministered to by a church and its vestry. The vestry, a panel of nonclergy men, met to conduct church business, which included handling some responsibilities that fall to local government today. For example, the vestry kept a record of births and deaths in the parish, levied taxes to fund construction and repair of church buildings and to pay the minister's salary, and decided how to support some parishioners, such as orphans and the very poor.

RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

The Anglican service was (and still is) ordered by the Book of Common Prayer. Services in all Anglican parishes were the same because all followed the ceremonies laid out in the book. Services were conducted by a minister, who performed marriages, baptized infants and adults, taught the young, counseled the troubled, comforted the sick and grieving, and buried the dead.

Christianity's central belief is that Jesus Christ is the son of God who died and then rose from the dead to redeem the sins of humanity. Christian church services usually commemorate Jesus's last supper before his death and resurrection in a sacred ritual called Holy Communion, involving bread (usually flat or unleavened) and wine. Colonial Virginians received this sacrament only about three to five times a year, typically on the church's holiest days: Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday.



STATION D CHEROKEE APPEARANCE

CHEROKEE CLOTHING

During the 1700s, Cherokee people still wore clothing in the same way as their ancestors had done for several centuries before them. They started making some of the same pieces of clothing from new materials that they got from trading with Europeans. This resulted in new styles.

For several thousand years, Cherokee women had woven cloth from plant fibers and animal hair. They used the inner bark of the mulberry tree, a plant called dogbane, and hemp and the hair from dogs, rabbits, and buffalo. Cherokee women also tanned the hides of deer, elk, buffalo, groundhog, and other animals to make clothing, capes, blankets, and moccasins.

Both weaving and tanning took a lot of time. When Cherokee women were able to trade corn, baskets, or deerskins for wool, linen, or cotton cloth, they did so.

MEN'S CLOTHING

Cherokee men in the 1700s wore linen trade shirts, loincloths, leggings, moccasins, and a matchcoat or blanket. Their loincloths and leggings were made of wool trade cloth decorated with silk or ribbon, or they were made of leather decorated with porcupine quills, beads, bells, and brass or copper cones.

CHEROKEE WARRIORS

Cherokee men who fought as allies with the British received cloth, silk ribbon, and guns for their work. Those who distinguished themselves by capturing or killing many of the enemy also received silver gorgets and armbands.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

Cherokee women wore linen trade shirts, wraparound knee-length skirts, leggings, moccasins, and a matchcoat or blanket. They were expert weavers and seamstresses.

CAPES

Cherokee people, both men and women, wore capes made from the feathers of turkeys, geese, and colorful songbirds. Chiefs wore long turkey feather capes. Some women had dresses made entirely of feathers. Other women used feathers to decorate the hems of their skirts.

TATTOOS AND JEWELRY

Both men and women wore earrings and tattoos. Warriors' tattoos symbolized their ranks.



Cherokee earrings.



Cherokee man's clothing.



A silver gorget acquired through trade.



Cherokee woman's clothing.



A feather cape.

STATION D COLONIAL APPEARANCE

COLONIAL VIRGINIANS

In the eighteenth century in Virginia, a person's clothing marked his or her place in society. There were three distinct social levels in Virginia: the gentry, the middling sort, and the lower sort (which included enslaved people). Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia, was a community of merchants, tradespeople, tavern keepers, and laborers who interacted with those who served in the government.

The gentry—the uppermost level—worked with their minds rather than their hands. Gentry men and women were usually born into this level of society. The gentry made up about 2 to 5 percent of the population.

The middling sort, or middle class, did skilled work with their hands. This group included planters, artisans, and tradesmen. The middling sort comprised about 20 percent of the total population.

The remaining population, both black and white, was called the “lower sort.” This group included small tenant farmers (they did not own their land), slaves, and the poor. Enslaved people were about half of the population of Williamsburg. There were very few free blacks in the city; in 1776, there were fewer than fifteen free blacks living in Williamsburg.

COLONIAL CLOTHING

What sort of clothing a person wore depended on his or her social class. Gentry people wore expensive, fashionable clothing, often imported from Britain or France. They had many changes of clothing and wore jewelry and other ornaments, such as ruffles or feathers. The middling sort wore less expensive clothing that was easier to work in. It had fewer fancy decorations but sometimes still imitated gentry fashions. The middling sort had a few sets of clothes. The lower sort wore everyday work clothes, sometimes of plain colors and with no fancy decoration. Sometimes lower-sort clothing was very roughly made. House slaves sometimes wore used articles of clothing handed down from their gentry masters, but most enslaved people worked on farms called plantations. They wore clothes of plain, undyed, inexpensive fabric and usually did not have a change of clothes. Slaves did not legally own their clothing: since they were considered the property of other people, their clothes were considered the property of the people who owned them.



gentry



middling sort



lower sort



enslaved house servants



enslaved field servants

Graphic Organizer *Cherokee and Colonial Culture*

STATION	SUBJECT	CHEROKEE	COLONIAL VIRGINIA
A	Government and Law		
B	Work and Play		
C	Religion		
D	Appearance		

PRIMARY SOURCE EXCERPT

HENRY TIMBERLAKE'S *MEMOIRS*

Some days after [we arrived in Cherokee country], the headmen of each town were assembled in the town-house of Chote, the metropolis of the country, to hear the articles of peace read. . . . The town-house, in which are transacted all public business and diversions, is raised with wood, and covered over with earth, and has all the appearance of a small mountain at a little distance. It is built in the form of a sugar loaf, and large enough to contain 500 persons, but extremely dark. . . . Within it has the appearance of an ancient amphi-theater, the seats being raised one above another leaving an area in the middle, in the center of which stands the fire; the seats of the head warriors are nearest it.

They all seemed highly satisfied with the articles. The peace-pipe was smoked. . . . After smoking, the eatables were produced, consisting chiefly of wild meat; such as venison, bear and buffalo. . . . What contributed greatly to render this feast disgusting, was eating without knives and forks, and being obliged to grope from dish to dish in the dark. After the feast there was a dance. . . .

The country being situated between thirty-two and thirty-four degrees north latitude . . . is temperate. . . . The women alone do all the laborious tasks of agriculture, the soil requiring only a little stirring with a hoe. . . .

The Indians have now a numerous breed of horses, as also hogs, and other of our animals, but neither cows nor sheep. . . .

The Cherokees are of a middle stature, or an olive colour, tho' generally painted, and their skins stained with gun-powder, pricked into it in very pretty figures. The hair of their head is shaved . . . except a patch on the hinder part of the head, about twice the bigness of a crown-piece, which is ornamented with beads, feathers, **wampum**, stained deers hair, and such like baugles. . . . The women wear the hair of their head . . . club'd, and ornamented with ribbons of various colours. . . .

They are very hardy. . . . No people are given to more excess in eating and drinking. . . .

They seldom turn their eyes on the person they speak of, or address themselves to, and are always suspicious when people's eyes are fixed on them. . . .

As to religion, every one is at liberty to think for himself. . . . They generally concur, however, in the belief of one superior Being. . . .

They have few religious ceremonies. . . . The **green corn dance** seems to be the principal. . . . There is no kind of rites or ceremonies at marriage, courtship and all being, as I have already observed, concluded in half an hour, without any other celebration, and it is as little binding as it is ceremonious; for though many last till death, especially when there are children, it is common for a person to change three or four times a-year. . . .

. . . When [a man and a woman] part, the children go with, and are provided for, by the mother. . . .

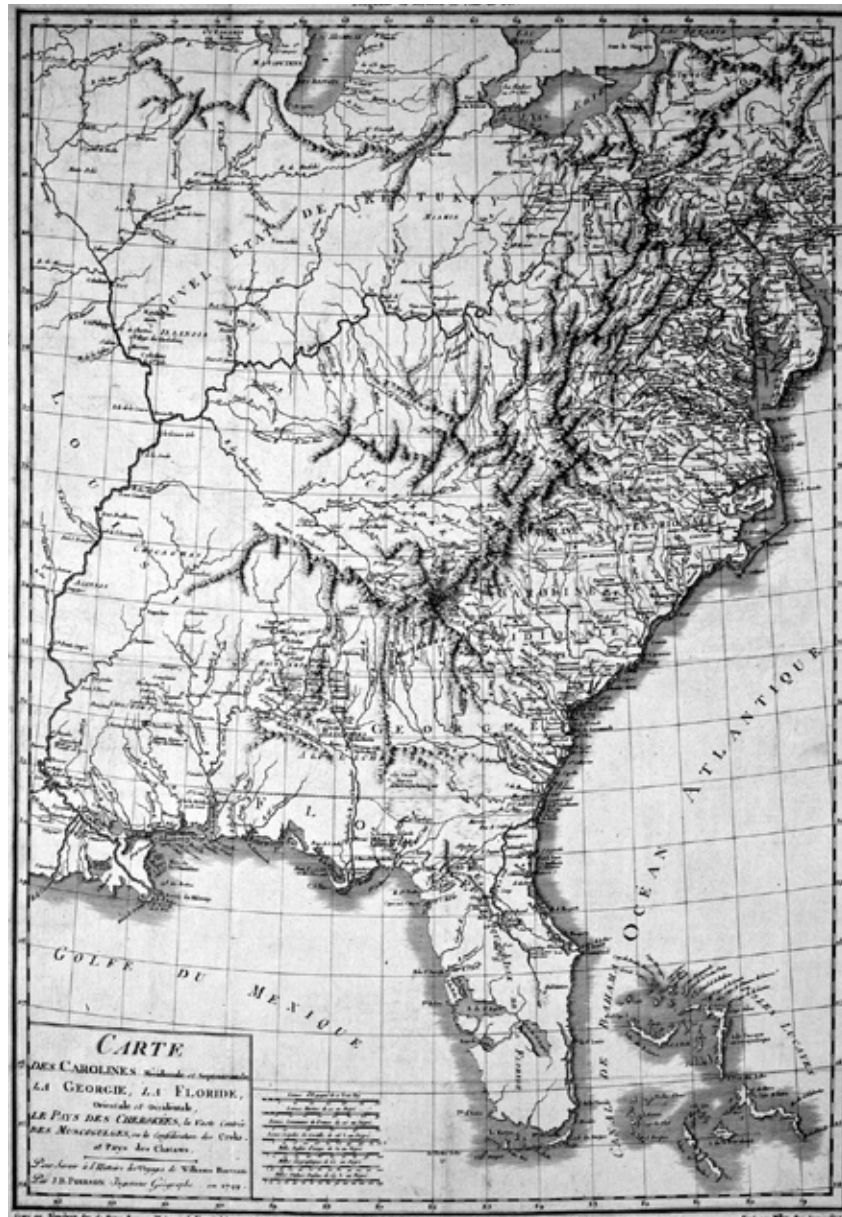
Nothing belonging to the dead is to be kept, but everything at his decease destroyed, except [those] articles, which are destined to accompany him to the other world. It is reckoned, therefore, the worst of thefts [to steal a deceased person's possessions]; and yet there is no punishment for this, or any other crime, murder excepted, which is more properly revenged than punished.

This custom was probably introduced to prevent avarice [greed] and, by preventing hereditary acquisitions, make merit the sole means of acquiring power, honour, and riches. . . . On this account the wives generally have separate property, that no inconveniency may arise from death or separation. . . .

Their government, if I may call it government, which has neither laws or power to support it, is a mixed aristocracy and democracy, the chiefs being chose according to their merit in war, or policy at home. . . . These chiefs, or headmen, likewise compose the assemblies of the nation, into which the war-women are admitted. . . . many of the Indian women being as famous in war, as powerful in the council. . . .

Their common names are given them by their parents; but this they can either change, or take another when they think proper.

Henry Timberlake, *Lieut. Henry Timberlake's Memoirs, 1756–1765* (Marietta, Ga.: Continental Book Company, 1948), pp. 58–61, 68, 72, 75–78, 80, 87–93, 95.



“Carte des Carolines Meridionale et Septentrionale, La Georgie, La Floride, . . .” J. B. Poirson, France, 1799. This French map features several British colonies as well as the territories of the Cherokee, the Choctaw, the Creek, and other native peoples. From the collections of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.