

Manu Katápa

Land of Catawba before and at Contact, 1540-1750

There was a time when the world was an unbroken waste of rocks, hills, and mountains, save only one small valley, which was distinguished for its luxuriance, and where reigned a perpetual summer. At that time, too, the only human being who inhabited the earth was a woman, whose knowledge was confined to this valley, and who is remembered among the Catawbas as *ꝑyá araskehe* (first woman), the mother of mankind. She lived in a cavern, and her food consisted of the honey of flowers, and the sweet berries and other fruits of the wilderness. Birds without number, and the wild streams which found a resting place in the valley, made the only music which she ever heard. Among the wild animals, which were very numerous about her home, she wandered without any danger; but the beaver and the doe were her favorite companions. In personal appearance she was eminently beautiful, and the lapse of years only had a tendency to increase the brightness of her eyes and the grace of her movements. The dress she wore was made of those bright green leaves which enfold the water lilies, and her hair was as long as the grass which fringed the waters of her native vale. She was the ruling spirit of a perennial world, for even the very flowers which bloomed about her sylvan home were never known to wither or die. In spite of her lonely condition, she knew not what it was to be lonely; but ever and anon a strange desire found its way to her heart, which impelled her to explore the wild country which surrounded her home. For many days had she resisted the temptation to become a wanderer from her charming valley, until it so happened, on a certain morning, that a scarlet butterfly made its appearance before the door of her cave, and by the hum of its wings invited her away. She obeyed the summons, and followed the butterfly far up a rocky ravine, until she came to the foot of a huge waterfall, when she was deserted by her mysterious pilot, and first became acquainted with the emotion of fear. Her passage of the ravine had been comparatively smooth; but when she endeavored,

in her consternation, to retrace her steps, she found her efforts unavailing, and fell to the ground in despair. A deep sleep then overcame her senses, from which she was not awakened until the night was far spent; and then the dampness of the dew had fallen upon her soft limbs, and for the first time in her life did she feel the pang of a bodily pain. Forlorn and desolate indeed was her condition, and she felt that some great event was about to happen, when, as she uncovered her face and turned it to the sky, she beheld, bending over her prostrate form, and clothed in a cloud-like robe, the image of a being somewhat resembling herself, only that he was more stoutly made, and of a much fiercer aspect. Her first emotion at this strange discovery was that of terror; but as the mysterious being looked upon her in kindness, and raised her lovingly from the ground, she confided in his protection, and listened to his words until the break of day.

He told her that he was a native of the far off sky, *ye wápit utkanire*, and that he had discovered her in her forlorn condition while traveling from the evening to the morning star. He told her also that he had never before seen a being so soft and beautifully formed as she. In coming to her rescue, he had broken a command of the Great Spirit, or the Master of Life, and, as he was afraid to return to the sky, he desired to spend his days in her society upon earth. With joy did she accept this proposal; and, as the sun rose above the distant mountains, the twain returned in safety to the luxuriant vale, where, as man and woman, for many moons, they lived and loved in perfect tranquility and joy.

In the process of time the woman became a mother; from which time the happiness of the twain became more intense, but they at the same time endured more troubles than they had ever known before. The man was unhappy because he had offended the Master of Life, and the mother was anxious about the comfort and happiness of her newly-born child. Many and devout were the prayers they offered to the Great Spirit for his guidance and protection, for they felt that from them were to be descended a race of beings more numerous than the stars of heaven. The Great Spirit had compassion on these lone inhabitants of the earth; and, in answer to their prayers, he caused a mighty wind to pass over the world, making the mountains crowd closely together, and rendering the world more useful and beautiful by the prairies and valleys and rivers which now cover it, from the rising to the setting sun. The Master of Life also told his children that he would give them the earth and all that it contained as their inheritance; but that they should never enjoy their

food without labor, should be annually exposed to a season of bitter cold, and that their existence should be limited by that period of time when their heads should become white as the plumage of the swan. And so endeth the words of the Catawbas.¹

Origin stories are about the beginning of the world and provide knowledge and glimpses of a people's social order. Every society has a creation story that tells of its original ancestor, where its people originated, and how they interacted with everything in their world. When narrating the stories, Piedmont Indian storytellers and their descendants breathed life into their history and customs as they transmitted compelling oral histories to teach and entertain. *Ureri utseré* (lit. one who tells the truth) is translated into English as "meaning storyteller" or "keeper of history," the teller of an authentic narrative that Catawbas believe. *Ičiganii* (children) of all ages sat around *ipi?* (fire) as older storytellers, women and men, recounted the stories in the privacy of their homes. They made the recitation more exciting and appealing by including *námure*, *ibaré*, and *tusake?hkinseré* (singing, dancing, and drumming). Storytellers whispered the narrative when telling about a secretive or cautious event, only for their voices to reach a crescendo as the anticipation of an incident grew. The performances of storytellers engaged children for hours. The stories taught the ways of life, provided children with a moral compass, and equipped them to recognize dangers close to home, "to develop the mind, to make children think, to teach them the ways of [Catawba] life."² Storytellers used the stories to warn children of captive-taking, teach them to be aware of their surroundings, express Catawba warriors' bravery in battle, and communicate Catawba women's and children's heroism in escaping captivity.³

The "Origin of the Catawba Indians" is an account that conveys an understanding of the beginning of the Catawba people through the union of First Woman and a sky god. Grandparents, parents, and other relatives have passed this story to young Catawbas for hundreds of years, and each time, the story is told, retold, and repackaged to fit contemporary situations. Unpacking the Catawba origin story allows scholars to reconstruct women's world and catch a glimpse of how Piedmont Indian people and their descendants linked women to the land through their agricultural labor and reproduction.⁴ The account explains the link between First Woman and the land, her spiritual connection to the earth, and the land's natural resources. Elders recite the story of First Woman and the sky god to children, providing them with the traditional knowledge of the people who became the Catawba Nation.

The story begins in the very distant past, *utke duukuka*, when a scarlet butterfly appeared to First Woman. The butterfly's *sikā* (red color) was symbolic of power, and *dapanene i sikā* (butterfly red) served as a sign that First Woman would face transformation, like the *čuičuparu musawa kure* (lit. it is good with many legs and whiskers; caterpillar). The story also tells of the land "belonging" to First Woman at least five times. The land was her home. She emerged from *mānu kepare* (lit. earth hole to be; her cave) or the Under World, a place that linked Catawban-speaking women to the fertility of the land, its bounty, and the creation of the nation.⁵ Piedmont Indians and their descendants recognized women as givers and supporters of life. In their communities, women's reproduction was vital to developing a Native identity, and their agricultural labor was essential to the survival of the people. Over time, the Piedmont Indians created kinship networks with one another, and as the coalescence process repeated itself, they became "Catawba." The origin story opens the door to understanding women's roles in creating a Catawba identity through reproduction, childbirth, and motherhood.

The narrative helps us understand how colonialism affected Catawba women's world, what they did within their territory, how they subsisted off the land's natural resources, and what measures they took to care for their families. Before the 1700s, the Piedmont region of what became South Carolina had an abundance of wild game, herbs, berries, and nuts that Catawbas' ancestors harvested for subsistence purposes. Geographically, Catawba territory included mountains, hills, boulders, valleys, streams, and amazingly fast-moving rivers.⁶ Tall trees of various types filled the forest, and open fields of grass dotted the landscape. Indeed, the land and waterways offered Piedmont Indians all they needed to survive. Catawba ancestors understood that *manu* gave them life in a specific geographic place near *iswā huktugere*, a waterfall located in a valley. The exact site of the waterfall is unknown. However, it is conceivable that the falls in the story were located on the north fork of the Catawba River, near Linville, North Carolina. The people of Joara (Xuala), thought to be a Catawban-speaking group, occupied the region in the sixteenth century, making their homes along the upper Catawba River at the foothills of the mountains.⁷

Catawbas, like myself, remember hearing the story of First Woman as young children. The narrative, told by elders, appealed to everyone. The story that I heard was less romanticized but was significant because it imparted an understanding of my people's origin. Catawba children probably recognized, on a child's level, the significance of First Woman as the mother of all Catawbas when hearing the pride in the elders' voices. Sitting around a fire on a cold day during *wayačičure* (winter), Piedmont

Indian children heard how a relationship developed between an earth mother and a sky god. The story, which implicitly emphasizes themes of kinship, land, and reproduction, told Catawbas, young and old, where they came from and to whom they belonged.

Charles Lanman, a nineteenth-century explorer, published the Catawba narrative in 1856. The story intertwines Catawba creation and cosmological beliefs with the biblical story of the book of Genesis (a Christian beginning). Eight years earlier, in 1848, Lanman traveled to Cherokee, North Carolina, where he met the Catawba wife of a Cherokee blacksmith and gunmaker, Sa-lo-la.⁸ Whether the Catawba woman told the story, blending Christianity with a Catawba system of spirituality, is unclear. However, religious inclusivism was prevalent among Catawba people as early as the 1750s and as late as 1848, and thus, it was natural to blend what benefited them spiritually. Although the acceptance of some Christian tenets seems to indicate a loss of customs, the continued use of Catawba spiritual beliefs combined with the tradition of storytelling upholds the concept of continuity. The First Woman story grounded the Piedmont Indians as people from an ancestral land surrounded by *sak, agwa, iswq, yača ra* (mountains, valleys, rivers, and branches). The account validated and continues to support their uninterrupted occupation of the geographic region of the Carolina Piedmont. The creation story provided them with a beginning, a shared history, and a tie to the land, significant factors for people who experienced extreme changes to their world during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

Catawba history keepers followed strict rules when narrating stories that originated from historical accounts. They refused to tell stories after dark because doing so invited “the annoyance from snakes,” a creature of the Under World that symbolized danger and evil. Catawbas and their ancestors believed that “should a snake hear a person relating tales [after dark] it will lie in wait in the path to bite him or her.” Never inclined to invite evil into their world, many Catawba storytellers continue to follow these rules. For Catawba ancestors, the narratives developed children’s minds “through experiences recounted of others concerning human beings and animals.”⁹ Stories like the Catawba origin story connected the young to their past while preparing them for the present and the future and training them to teach the next generation.

Although the Catawba origin story set the stage for the Catawba people’s beginning, the narrative also explained the natural world in which they lived. The territory in which Catawbas’ ancestors lived tied women to various natural resources that ensured their families’ survival. The Piedmont region, which became known as Catawba territory by the mid-1700s, lay

between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Atlantic Coastal Plains and is part of the Southeastern Mixed Forests ecoregion. Before European arrival, the Southeastern Mixed Forests ecoregion was rich in natural resources. The ecosystem stretches in an arc along the Appalachian/Blue Ridge Mountains from northeastern New Jersey to southeastern Mississippi. The climate within this ecoregion is subject to warm, humid summers, and winters in which temperatures rarely drop below freezing.

In this shared physical climate grew stands of pine, various oak and hickory trees, American beech, tulip poplar, white ash, black maple, sugar maple, river birch, sweetgum, and basswood trees. Understory trees included sassafras, green hawthorn, pawpaw, buckeye, and the flowering dogwood. Shrubs in the Piedmont ecoregion consisted of the yaupon, blueberry, mapleleaf viburnum, and huckleberry. In addition to the diversity of flora, the Piedmont region featured various amphibians, fish, reptiles, insects, and mammals.¹⁰ The critical takeaway here is that the environment provided everything Piedmont Indians needed to survive, a factor that quickly began to change post-European arrival.

Life in Catawba Territory

Between the 1500s and the early 1700s, Piedmont Indian territory encompassed land in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (figures 1 and 2). A diversity of autonomous, Catawban-speaking Native communities occupied the area. The Indigenous people who lived in the vast region of the Carolina Piedmont included the Ushery (Esaw/Iswą/Nasaw/Katahba), Wisacky (Weesock/Waxhaw), Quatari (Watary/Wateree), Sapon (Saponi/Sapony), Shackory (Shakori), Joara (Xuala/Sara/Charra/Charraw/Cheraw), Akenatzy (Occaneechi), Sitteree (Sugeree/Sugaree), Eno, and Yettkin (Yadkin) Indians. From 1540 to 1674, Spanish and British mentioned the Piedmont Indian towns listed above, and these groups later joined, temporarily or permanently, the Iswą (Catawba).¹¹ Piedmont Indian territory stretched southeast along the Catawba River from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Wateree River.¹² The territory extended to the south fork of the Yadkin River near the Sara Indians' land to the northeast. The eastern and western boundaries ended near the Pee Dee River and the Broad River, respectively. The Broad River, often referred to as the Eswa Huppeday or, more correctly, *iswą hida* (river line), served as a boundary between Catawba and Cherokee territory.¹³

The Catawba River played a crucial role in the lives of Piedmont Indians and their descendants. The Indigenous people in the region referred to the river as the lifeblood of their territory, with tributary waterways

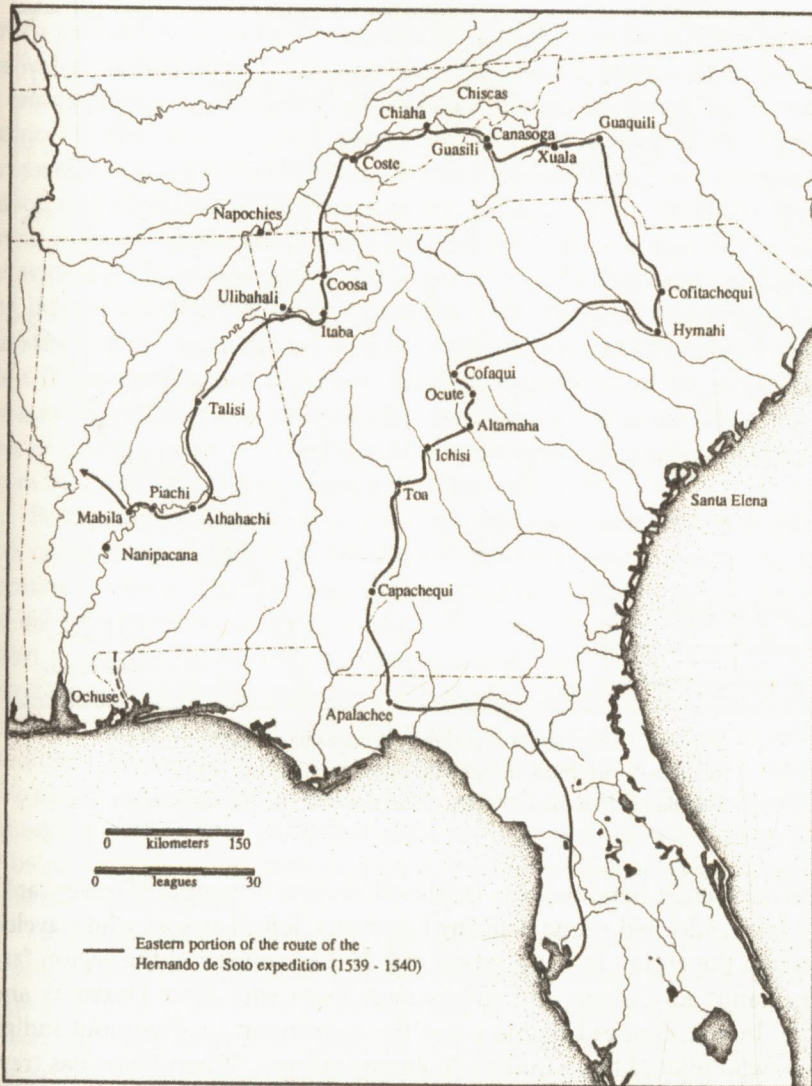


Figure 1. Regional authority of Catawba ancestors as illustrated in Hernando de Soto's route through the Carolinas, 1540. Based on map by Charles Hudson.

feeding into the river basin. The water routes provided them with transportation, food, and a place for spiritual cleansing. *Namáya* (dugout/canoe) was a practical way to travel for men and women alike. Dugouts could reach up to twenty to thirty feet in length and two to three feet in width, and they could carry as many as eight to eighteen men or women. During Soto's expedition, the Lady of Cofitachequi met him after crossing the

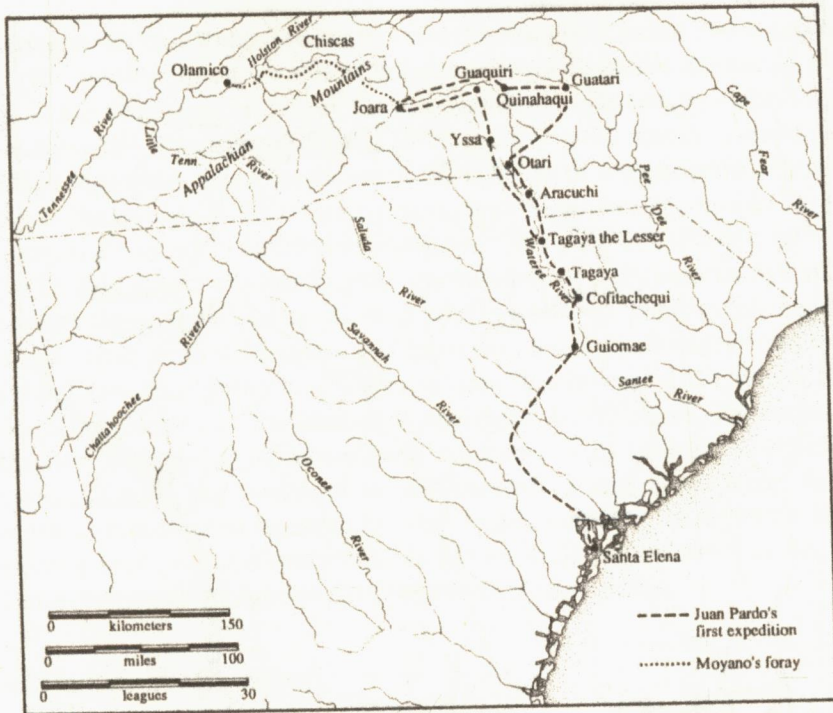


Figure 2. Shift of regional authority of Catawba ancestors as shown on Juan Pardo's route through the Carolinas, 1566–68. Also shown is Hernando Moyano's 1567 route. Based on map by Charles Hudson.

river with eight handmaidens (enslaved women or people of lower rank) in a large, adorned canoe befitting her status. John Lawson, who traveled through the region in 1701, noted that Native women of the region “are very handy in Canoes, and will manage them with great Dexterity and Skill.” In war, canoes became a stealthy instrument for Piedmont Indian men, who piloted them quickly to enemy villages. When Catawbas traveled by foot between waterways, it was common to hide a canoe along the banks for future use. At other times, men used canoes to fish and carry trade goods, such as skins and meat.¹⁴ Despite the usefulness of the dug-out, traveling by foot remained the most common type of transportation.

As givers of life, women had a significant spiritual connection to the river. In the Catawba language, the words for woman and water are nearly the same, *ꝑꝑá* and *ꝑꝑ*, respectively.¹⁵ Like the amniotic fluid crucial to an unborn baby's development and survival, water has life-giving forces that ensured Catawba ancestors' survival. Indeed, a woman's menstrual cycle, known as “moon time” or the “shining time” among some older Catawbas,

was a period when her body cleansed itself to prepare for a new life, just as water washed away impurities during purifying ceremonies. During a woman's shining time, the community's people bestowed power and respect on her as a life-giver. Some scholars have described the Native woman's cycle as a period when men feared the pollution from a woman's blood and forced her to live in a separate menstrual hut.¹⁶ Whether Piedmont Indian women followed this practice is unclear because of the lack of evidence. However, turning this argument on its head and approaching it from a Native perspective provides a different but meaningful understanding of the Piedmont Indian world and women's esteemed position. It was equally crucial to keep men, who were takers of life, away from women to ensure population stability. Because men took life when hunting or going to war, the isolation of a menstrual hut protected women from the pollution of death during their shining time.

Furthermore, Catawba ancestors regarded water as an essential spiritual component of their lives. Mothers and fathers "went to water" to determine the sex and health of an unborn child. They dipped *tyhere* (lit. little baby; newborn children) into the river to ensure purity and long life. Most Piedmont Indian men and women practiced "going to water" for purification and fertility purposes. *Yekwe wjtitáhowe* (lit. Indian the one medicine makes; healers) collected water in clay cooking pots to make medicinal infusions. The practitioners used the mixture to blow medicine as a curative to restore health. The healer inhaled the liquid curative through a twenty-four- to forty-eight-inch-long cane tube to imbue the infusion with his or her personal power. Finally, the healer blew the medicine over the patient.¹⁷

Piedmont Indian women and their descendants used river water and local springs to cook foodstuff and make curatives. Women of specific villages and households often came together at the waterways, where they talked and laughed as they collected *yā* from one of the many different watercourses, whether it be the *iswā* (river), *yānteru* (creek), *yāči* (spring), or *yāča* (branch). They shared medicinal recipes, and they mixed water with herbs and roots to prepare medications for treating illnesses and aches. Mothers created a liquid wash from the red oak's bark to treat children who had a rash from poison oak or ivy. Women stripped the tree bark, boiled it in water, and used the liquid as a wash to ease the itching. However, they only harvested the bark between March and April, which meant they kept a dry supply of bark on hand for the remainder of the year. The women used precise medicinal recipes because of the danger of poisoning or otherwise harming their family members or patients. Various herbal teas cured stomach ailments, rheumatic pain, back pain, and

dysentery. Women used “the whole plant, flowers, stems and roots” of the golden ragwort to make “a tea given to women to check pains of childbirth, to hasten the birth of a child, and also for female troubles in general.”¹⁸ Piedmont Indians, like other southeastern Indians, boiled yaupon leaves to make “Indian tea” or “black drink” for ceremonial and curative reasons (figure 3).¹⁹

For hundreds of years, Catawban-speaking people had built their towns south of the Yadkin River and along the Catawba and Wateree Rivers. They remained in the territory across the centuries, although they moved their towns from time to time.²⁰ Migration was necessary for several reasons. Women had to move fields to prevent soil erosion and exhaustion. Similarly, when disease and warfare threatened Piedmont Indian people, they moved their towns for quarantine and safety purposes to different places along the river.²¹ Mobility was essential to the survival of Piedmont Indians and their descendants as natural resources required a period of regrowth.²²

Relocating villages was a well-thought-out decision for both Piedmont Indian women and men. With the help of men, women constructed towns



Figure 3. Example of a Timucua ceremony that included black drink. Engraving by Jacques le Moyne, 1564.

near the waterways to make life easier for themselves. The ancestors of Catawba Indians chose the locations of their towns strategically based on the natural resources available, specifically canebrakes that grew along the river bottoms. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, river cane was an essential resource among southeastern Native people. Skilled basket weavers used river cane and reed in a variety of different ways in the household. These two natural resources had different natural colors that appeared as women wove oversize decorative mat bedding and burial coverings. Women spent many hours making *wasáp* (cane baskets) of many sizes and shapes. They used woven containers to harvest crops, berries, nuts, and clay.²³ Men and women used river cane to create hair accessories and earrings, while children squealed with excitement as they threw pieces of green cane into fires, creating an explosion similar to that of fireworks. Meanwhile, Piedmont Indian hunters made cane spears to catch fish and *puusuu?* (blowguns) to hunt small game, such as rabbits, squirrels, and birds.²⁴ Piedmont Indian people also created arrow shafts and flutes of cane.

Cane was also used for building structures among Piedmont Indians. The ancestors of Catawba Indians cleared dense cane growths to get building materials and prepare new agricultural land.²⁵ Between the sixteenth and the early eighteenth centuries, Piedmont Indians used a mixture of cane, reed, oak, mud, and grass to construct homes. Catawban-speaking people who occupied Joara in 1000–1567 CE built square homes with rounded corners. Piedmont Indians often made a public or council house in a circular form.²⁶ At Saratown, a site along the Dan River occupied by Sara Indians at distinct temporal phases between 1450 and 1710 CE, the Indians constructed circular houses.²⁷ Most of these architectural structures required cane, reed, or oak for construction purposes. The so-called Gentleman of Elvas, an unidentified man who traveled with Hernando de Soto's expedition in 1540, noted that Indians farther into the northern interior of the Southeast used river cane to build residences. The houses, he wrote, "are roofed with cane after the fashion of tiles."²⁸ The use of river cane for housing provided protection and insulation from the weather.²⁹

Subsistence practices and ways of living off the land facilitated the coalescence of diverse Piedmont Indians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, when preparing the alluvial soil for *yapsę?iswá tak piire* (lit. good bottom land down at the river; fields), Piedmont Indians used fire as a method to control the vigorously growing canebrakes.³⁰ Men managed the land with controlled burns to clear future fields for planting crops and to thin the forest underbrush for hunting.³¹ Men and women girdled or cut the bark of large trees with stone or metal axes, a

practice that caused trees to die. Once the trees decayed, the men built fire around their roots to clear the land. In the early 1700s, European travelers identified these cleared spaces as “an old Indian field” or “Fields of clear’d Ground.”³² In these fields, women cultivated their staple crops: corn, beans, and squash. The vegetable troika dominated southeastern Indians’ foodways beginning around 1000 CE, with corn being a significant part of their diet. Piedmont Indian women made *kusimeyu* (corn soup) and *kustq* (cornmeal), and they also roasted *tuma?* (acorns).³³

Piedmont Indian women roasted an enormous quantity of *tuma?* before their families came to rely heavily on maize as an essential food. From 900 to 1540 CE, women living in the lower Catawba River Valley joined together at a temporary camp known today as Ashe Ferry, one of many sites where women collected and roasted acorns in the late fall to early winter.³⁴ At these processing sites, women built rock-oven low-burn fires to parch acorns. The dry roasting process prevented germination and insect larvae development, a practice that allowed women to store the acorns in underground pits.³⁵ Women ground the nutmeat of unstored acorns with “long great Pestils in a narrow wooden Mortar,” then used the pulsed meal to thicken venison broth and other soups. In fact, acorn pulse was the perfect additive when boiling pork because it gave the meat a sweet flavor.³⁶

In time, early Piedmont Indians’ economy depended on the cultivation of maize. They grew two or three different corn types, including flint and flour varieties, each harvested at a specific time of the season. The habitual physical activities related to maize production during the Mississippian period reveal gendered divisions of labor. Women were typically responsible for the manual labor associated with agriculture. The types of repetitive movements involved in activities linked with maize growing cultures resulted in the strengthening and thickening of the arm’s long bones. This shift in bone strength and density was more significant in women because they were responsible for most manual labor. Other archaeological evidence supports stress-related degeneration in the shoulders caused by repetitive movements, such as hoeing or grinding corn. Indeed, the evidence “points to a significant shift in women’s activities coincident with the intensification of farming in the Southeast.”³⁷

The Piedmont Indians, primarily women, practiced both community and household crop production. Catawbas’ ancestors and their neighbors cultivated and harvested a large quantity of maize, storing the surplus in household granaries. For example, even amid a shortfall in maize harvesting due to disease or drought, the Cofitachequi people had over one thousand pounds of parched maize stored in the town barbacoa or granary when Hernando de Soto’s expedition reached the chiefdom in

1540.³⁸ Although one thousand pounds sounds like a large quantity of corn, the people at Cofitachequi did not produce amounts beyond their need. Maize cultivation required many acres of land, and each village had one or more granaries "in which the products from its designated plot [of land] were stored."³⁹

Because of the need to preserve foodstuff during winter, women considered storage spaces a necessity. They harvested hickory nuts and acorns from late summer to early fall, then stored their collection in large pits near their houses.⁴⁰ In addition to storage pits, women constructed granaries called *kússuuksunti* (corn house with door), which were nearly identical to their homes except that they were elevated seven feet off the ground with the support of eight posts. They filled the storehouses' latticework, inside and out, with *iintú* (clay), which prevented vermin from entering and destroying food and other goods. According to the early eighteenth-century account of John Lawson, each corncrib had a door no larger than "a slender Man" or, more likely, a small woman. Women filled the crib with corn, skins, and other goods. Once the women filled a storehouse with corn, they sealed the door airtight with clay to ensure the products could withstand the weather.⁴¹ The granaries, like the houses, stayed amazingly cool in summer temperatures, which prevented food spoilage.

Post-1540, Piedmont Indians incorporated several European plants into their food practices, specifically peaches, watermelons, and cowpeas. Women cultivated, harvested, and stewed large quantities of peaches from their orchards, particularly when preparing a feast. They stewed peaches in boiling water to create a thickened peach jelly, which they spread onto "Loves [i.e., loaves] like Barley-Cakes." Women also barbequed peaches and mixed the delicious fruit into cornmeal, making a moist peach-flavored bread comparable to peach cobbler. Women were always careful to use every part of the fruit, which included reserving peach pits for replanting and for treating ailments such as swelling and bruising.⁴²

Catawbas' ancestral kinswomen spent a considerable amount of time preparing food for storage and preservation. They kept large stores of "Indian Peas . . . Beans, Oyl, Thinkapin [chinquapin] Nuts, Corn, barbacu'd Peaches, and Peach-Bread." Piedmont Indians consumed quantities of small, red peas, a legume that women "boil'd with their Meat." They also mixed red peas "with Bears Fat, which Food makes them [Indians] break Wind backwards, which the Men frequently do, and laugh heartily at it, it being accounted no ill Manners amongst the Indians: Yet the Women are more modest, than to follow that ill Custom."⁴³

Piedmont Indians lived in a large, fertile ecosystem that provided them with every necessity for survival. The region was as "fertile and pleasant,

as any in the World” and provided a rich “Soil, no Place abounding more in Flesh and Fowl, both wild and tame.”⁴⁴ Catawbas’ ancestral relatives hunted large and small game, *kučín* (fowl), and *yéi* (fish), while women collected *wanekú trii aré* (nuts and fruits), wild vegetables and herbs, and firewood. Although Piedmont Indians cleared specific places along the river, the forested areas included *yébye* (oak), *wanekú* (hickory), and *ičii-wę?* (pine) *yebyere* (trees), with some of the older trees reaching upward of sixty feet, the equivalent of five or six stories.⁴⁵ Thriving *mánu sará* (grasslands) scattered the land, and *wąsawą* (canebrakes) grew thickly along the edges of the *yéki* (waterways).⁴⁶

Piedmont Indian women and men managed the land well, but the region was not a pristine, untouched landscape. Catawban-speaking men used low-level fires to clear forests for hunting as another means of providing food for their families. The low-level, controlled fires served two purposes. During the winter season, when the leaves had fallen to the ground, men created a circle of fire that pushed wild game toward the center, where hunters could quickly shoot and kill the animals. With the forest floor cleared, hunters were able to track deer and other wild animals quicker. Second, the fires fostered plant growth. Heat-tolerant vegetation grew back promptly after the fires, adding to the rich, green grasslands found near forests, which attracted animals. In the woods, the domain of men, the new growth lured *namé* (bear), *wiidebúye* (deer), *widé* (cow and buffalo), and *watkałrúsuré* (wild turkey), which made hunting easier for the men.⁴⁷

Piedmont Indians’ economy depended, in part, on the animals that lived off the land. In 1701, explorer John Lawson noted that the Tutelo Indians living near what became the North Carolina and Virginia boundary line had “Plenty of Buffalos, Elks, and Bears, with other sort of Deer.”⁴⁸ According to Lawson’s journal, the historical southeastern buffalo roamed as far north as Cape Fear, North Carolina, and south into Georgia.⁴⁹ Although archaeological evidence supporting buffalo in the Piedmont Indian territory is scant, many early Europeans documented seeing the “wild oxen” near the mountains of South Carolina.⁵⁰ Other evidence supports the existence of buffalo. In the 1580s, English artist John White depicted a Native archer in “Indian in Body Paint,” which shows the hunter wearing what appears to be a long buffalo tail to secure his basket quiver.⁵¹ Nearly 150 years later, in 1728, William Byrd II of Virginia observed bison along the Roanoke and Hycó Rivers in North Carolina, describing the animal’s size as equal to that of an ox. The similarity, however, ended there. The bison that Byrd sighted had thick, short legs and a broad “bunch” above its shoulders. Byrd noted that the animal had long, shaggy hair that was

soft enough to be spun into thread and a thick hide perfect for tanning. The buffalo was "seldom seen so far North as 40° of Latitude [New York], delighting much in Canes and Reeds, which grow generally more Southerly."⁵² Hunting and killing buffalo, however, added to women's daily work.

Piedmont Indian women spent a large part of their days preparing deerskin and buffalo hide coats and blankets. One can imagine these women socializing in small family groups as they skinned and tanned the hides while watching children play nearby. Although the work was laborious, they probably talked about their children, gossiped about neighbors, discussed concerns about crops, and voiced opinions about the village's business. Sometimes the task of skinning and tanning took place beyond the villages, when women traveled with Catawba hunters, usually a father, husband, or brother. The women took charge of the encampment, while the hunters protected the temporary hunting station. In this setting, women cooked and collected firewood, but their primary responsibility included prepping animal skins. The manual labor that women placed in skinning and tanning hides was time consuming and strenuous. After cutting the skin from a buffalo or deer's body, the women removed any remaining flesh from the hide's surface with a sharp awl or thumbnail scraper. Before European arrival, the scraping tools included deer bone, antlers, or stone; women adopted sharp metal edges after European contact. After cleaning the hide, they left the skin to dry in the sun. Once the skin had dried, the women punched holes around the skin's outer edges in preparation for a final tanning process.⁵³

Women followed several additional steps to make deerskins comfortable for wearing as clothing or as moccasins. After the initial treatments of skinning, washing, scraping, soaking, and drying, women soaked the skins once more, this time in a mixture of pulverized deer brains and water. This mix made the skin exceptionally soft. After removing the skins from the liquid, the women pounded the surfaces with a large stone to make them butter soft. Finally, using the punched holes along the edges, they stretched each skin on a frame and dried the hide above a low fire.⁵⁴ The tanning process took days for women to complete, after which they cut and sewed garments, or the men sold the processed skins.

In addition to hunting wild game, Catawba ancestors fished the river and creeks near their towns to provide their families with additional protein.⁵⁵ Piedmont Indians ate various fish, reptiles, and amphibians, including bass, perch, catfish, sturgeon, cooter turtles, and frogs.⁵⁶ Catawba men and women desired snakeskins, which they used as an adornment and as a curative. Catawba oral history tells that wrapping the snakeskin around one's forehead cured a headache. Catawban-speaking healers

removed and kept snake fangs to cure lameness or illness. For example, John Lawson mentioned that the Piedmont Natives used scarification to treat all distempers. "Their chief Instruments" for scraping one's skin "is the Teeth of Rattle-Snakes, which they poison withal. They take them out of the Snake's Head, and suck out the Poison with their Mouths, (and so keep them for use) and spit out the Venom." During Lawson's expedition into the Piedmont region, an Esaw (Catawba) man treated a lame traveler among Lawson's party in this way. The Esaw man created a scratcher that looked like a comb made from an animal's horn, with "15 Teeth of Rattle-Snakes" set an equal distance apart in a split reed. "With these he scratch'd the place where the Lameness chiefly lay, till the Blood came, bathing it, both before and after Incision, with warm Water, spurted out of his Mouth." The Esaw man, who was likely a traditional healer, performed a common practice known as blowing medicine. The sacred ritual imbued the ill person with the healer's power. After the scarification treatment, the Esaw man applied *witj kústaxapi* or *gustupeh* (sassafras root paste) to the affected area. The paste worked as a blood purifier and healed the traveler within three days.⁵⁷

In addition to catching and killing snakes, Piedmont Indian men and women fished in the river and nearby creeks (figure 4). To catch fish or *yéi*, men and women worked together, constructing weirs: shallow V-shaped walls of stone or cane that created a lagoon of sorts in the waterways. These weirs made *yiičq?* (fish catching) easier as the fish swam downstream. Catawbas' ancestors, who lived along the upper and lower Catawba River, harvested fish whenever needed.⁵⁸ Other ways of catching fish included crushing the bark of black walnut trees and throwing the pulverized matter into still water, which stunned or "doped" the fish. Piedmont Indians also used large fish baskets, bush netting, and bow and arrows when fishing. Men and women constructed fish baskets of white oak splints that could bring in up to fifteen fish depending on the size of the fish and the basket. Weavers left the basket open on each end, turning the splints inward, like fingers laced together. They tied the basket to a tree, placing a heavy stone inside the basket to sink it to the river bottom. Fish were unable to escape once they swam past the in-turned splints of the basket.⁵⁹ Catawba basket makers have revitalized the fish basket or trap in recent years, and museums display the basket as a work of art.

Other animals, like the turtle, were both revered and consumed by Piedmont Indians. Catawba ancestors valued turtles as central characters in their world's beginning. According to one Catawba story passed down through generations, *we?aradre* (once, long ago), *kaya* (turtle) was responsible for all of *yq* (water) in the world. The turtle sat over a single

spring, guarding the water. In one story, *dapeyamuyę* (the fox) played the trickster who begged and begged the turtle for water. The fox told the turtle he was thirsty, so thirsty that he might die. The turtle, shifting to protect his spot, refused to give the fox any water. The sly fox watched as the turtle moved the next time. *Dapeyamuyę* craftily scraped a small stream under *kaya* shell that allowed the water to run out. The little stream grew into a creek, a river, a lake, and then an ocean. For Piedmont Indians and their descendants, the story explains why water flows through Catawba territory today and how their world developed.⁶⁰ Storytellers explained to children that the moral of the narrative is that they are better people when they share with others.

Distance of the Towns in the Cuttahbaw Nation

from Sucah to Noostee Town	3 mile
from Noostee to Weyapee & Nassaw	3/4 of a mile
from Sucah to Weyanne	7 mile
from Weyanne to Charraw Town	1 1/4 mile



**Cuttahbaw Nation
men fit for warr 204
In ye year 1756**

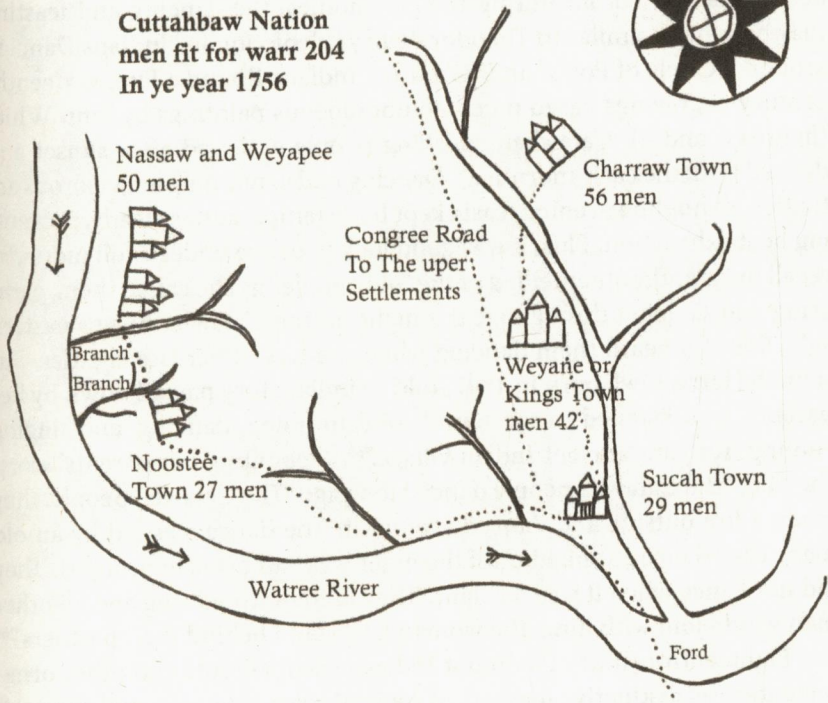


Figure 4. Catawba Nation map of "men fit for warr," by John Evans, 1756. Redrawn by author. Courtesy of the National Records of Scotland, GD45/2/104.

In addition to sharing the story of the turtle as the creator of the world, Catawba's ancestors caught and cooked turtle as a delicious protein supplement in times when meat was scarce. The river turtle was a favorite delicacy among Piedmont Indians and their descendants. Men captured large turtles by hand, knocked them in the head with a thick tree limb, and then cleaned the meat from inside the shell. An average size turtle, once cleaned, could provide three to four pounds of meat. Women boiled the meat until tender, enhancing the flavor with native herbs and vegetables. Turtle stew remained a delicacy made by Catawbans well into the mid-twentieth century. My mother and aunts have told stories of how their father walked the short distance to the river, caught a turtle, killed it on the spot, and then carried it home to cook. For a large family of ten, turtle meat provided enough food for everyone during a time of need. Catawbans and their ancestors used the shell to embellish ceremonial attire, as did many eastern Natives.

Early eighteenth-century Catawbans and their ancestors wore turtle rattles during feasts and ceremonies. Most notably, women wore rattles during ceremonial gatherings. Although it is impossible to know the exact rituals carried out during the ceremonies, the dancing and feasting may have been similar to Theodor de Bry's depiction in "Indians Dancing around a Circle of Posts" and "Group of Indians Round a Fire," sixteenth-century engravings based on contemporaneous paintings by John White (figures 5 and 6). Catawban-speaking people gathered after sunset and danced until the early morning.⁶¹ Dancing and drumming are vigorous activities, so holding evening feasts kept body temperatures steady, preventing heat exhaustion. Plus, it was good luck to dance under a full moon.⁶² I recall my grandmother telling of the "old people," as she called them, gathering and dancing throughout the night on the Catawba River's eastern side. She still heard them dancing when she was in her late eighties. Susannah Harris Owl, born in 1847, told a similar story passed down by her parents, who listened to the sounds of drumming, dancing, and singing coming from an "ancient Indian village."⁶³ Recounting her parents' story, she said, "the Catawba people danced long ago. The Catawba people, they made a fire outside and danced around it. The dance was led by an old man. They danced at night until the night was half over (mid-night). They did not dance when it was daylight. The old man would sing and all other men would join with him. The woman [*sic*] stand behind their partners."⁶⁴

Eighteenth-century Piedmont Indians used haircuts and other ornamentation as distinctive markers of societal roles, relations, and gender.⁶⁵ As a young girl, Sally probably wore her hair like many Indian girls of the Carolinas—cut short at the forehead and long in the back.⁶⁶ Her mother

and other married women wore their hair long, pulled back “like a Horses Tail” and wrapped with a string of wampum beads or a strip of leather. As trade increased with the English, the women added brightly colored ribbons to their hair. Catawbas forced enslaved Indian women to cut their hair short to distinguish them from Catawba women and to signify their sexual availability.⁶⁷ Mourning played a part in how Catawba women wore their hair. Some women shaved off their hair when a relative died, while other women wore their hair long, disheveled, and dirty.⁶⁸ Whether these contrasting actions had to do with age or social status is unknown. Perhaps women of a higher social rank kept their hair to avoid others from classifying them as or comparing them to captives. On the other hand, a Catawba woman might have kept her hair because the deceased person was not of her direct lineage.

Catawba men also distinguished their status with hairstyles. Catawba hunters and warriors, who traditionally relied on the bow and arrow when

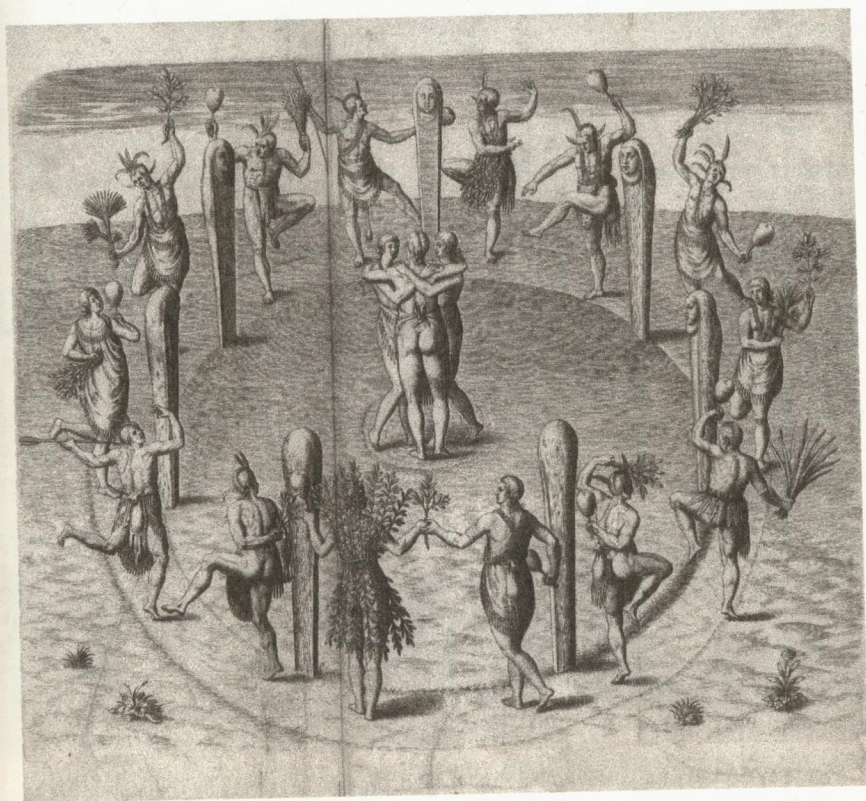


Figure 5. “Indians Dancing around a Circle of Posts,” coastal Virginia. Engraving by Theodor de Bry, 1590. Original watercolor by John White, 1585. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.



Figure 6. "Group of Indians Round a Fire," coastal Virginia. Engraving by Theodor de Bry, 1590. Original watercolor by John White, 1585. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

hunting and going to war, typically cut or shaved their hair close to the scalp on one side of their head to prevent their hair from getting entangled in the sinew or bowstring.⁶⁹ Other Catawba men wore a scalp lock, as is visible in a 1771 sketch of the warrior known as Captain Redhead. Warriors and hunters created this hairstyle by plucking or burning the hair from their scalp while leaving a small patch of long hair on the top of their heads.⁷⁰

In addition to adopting specific haircuts, warriors believed that bear grease, which was applied by women, gave them special protective powers and kept insects away. They enhanced their look and emphasized their martial capacity by adding red pigment extracted from *taktuwia* (red root; puccoon plant) to their hair, signifying success and strength.⁷¹ Perhaps Captain Redhead gained the name “Redhead” because he used red pigment in his hair. Some Catawba women colored their hair with red coloring.⁷² The use of red dye in their hair was a continuation of customs practiced by their ancestors, who applied the color mixed with bear grease to prevent “lousy” hair.⁷³ In the 1800s, Jenny Redhead, a relative of Captain Redhead, was the only Catawba that used the red dye, possibly for adornment or as a method to maintain visible lineal distinctions as her people merged into the Catawba Nation.

In addition to using hairstyles and natural dyes to mark their Catawba identity, Sally’s people used metals, feathers, and tattoos to distinguish themselves from other Native people. Visually proclaiming their Catawba identity, men and women wore *duksenii* (earring) or “great Bobs in their Ears” and, on occasion, *wátkatu hičeru* (feather of eagle) in holes in their earlobes. Catawban-speaking women valued feather ornaments, especially iridescent peacock feathers.⁷⁴ Catawba women and men also donned impressive necklaces made of wampum and glass beads. Tattoo markings distinguished successful and experienced fighters. Some of the Catawban-speaking people’s Indigenous neighbors had facial tattoos that probably set them apart from other tribal groups or clans. Catawba oral tradition tells of the warriors having black snakes tattooed on their backs to symbolize their skills in martial combat. They also cut and restyled European metals, such as copper and silver acquired from traders, into smaller pieces used for nose rings and bangles or other ornamentation.⁷⁵ The introduction of these new metal goods fit perfectly into the continuity of long-established Catawba practices, serving as a new way of establishing a recognizable Catawba identity.

Catawbas’ bodily ornamentation became even more striking during times of conflict. When Catawba men went to war, they typically wore “Feathers, Wings, Rings, Copper” and wampum, goods often acquired during trade with Indians and non-Indians.⁷⁶ They painted “their Faces

all over red, and commonly make a Circle of Black about one Eye, and another Circle of White about the other." They acquired many of the items like copper and wampum from other Native people. Still, the ritual use of the items, old and new, fit with the ceremonial practices of their Piedmont Indian ancestors.⁷⁷

The southeastern Indian trade networks or pathways connected to western and northeastern North American trade paths. These routes linked Piedmont Indians to the worlds of other Native and non-Native people, as shown in an extant Catawba deerskin map circa 1721–24. Piedmont Indian women traded with other Indians, particularly with other women. Newly arrived European travelers rarely saw or documented these transactions because Catawban-speaking people excluded the outsiders from women's spaces. Piedmont women participated in the economy by trading food, baskets, pottery, and, on occasion, processed deerskins. Meanwhile, Piedmont men took the lead as participants in the colonial trade system because colonial European traders and officials viewed women as intellectually inferior to men.⁷⁸ Although colonial traders ignored the influence of Catawban-speaking women, they benefited economically from women's demand for goods, as indicated by the types of trade items sent to the Catawba towns in later years. A large portion of the goods transported from Charlestown to the Catawba towns in the backcountry included European textiles, thread, scissors, needles, pots, earrings, and ivory combs, items that Piedmont people often refashioned to meet their needs.⁷⁹ Although both women and men used many of these items, women typically made clothing like shirts, cloaks, and skirts using the textiles, thread, and needles acquired in colonial trade. Muskets, ammunition, flints, knives, and hatchets were in high demand by Piedmont Indian men.⁸⁰

From the mid-1700s forward, Catawbas used clothing as a distinguishing marker of their identity. As a child, Sally went naked according to custom. When she reached puberty, she donned the clothes of adult women, who wrapped cloth blankets of European fabric around their waist.⁸¹ With European cloth and other sewing materials being more available, Catawba women and men began to adopt European clothing because it was economical and easy to acquire as gifts from traders or colonial leaders. When meeting with colonial officials in the latter half of the eighteenth century, many Catawbas adopted the clothing customs of their white neighbors, which included linen shirts, breeches, stockings, hats, and shoes. The men wore ruffled shirts and suits made of cotton.⁸² Outsiders quickly recognized certain warriors and leaders as Catawba because of the green coats they wore well into the late 1790s, items they acquired during the American Revolution.⁸³ However, when hunting, meeting with other Indigenous

diplomats, or staying within the towns, men dressed comfortably in their clouts, leggings, and cloaks. Catawba women, meanwhile, began dressing in homespun English dresses or shifts that they obtained through trade.⁸⁴

Catawbas' mix of the colonial style of dress with customary Catawba adornments, such as earrings and nose bangles, worked to their benefit by revealing their Catawba identity, one distinct from white and Black populations, as well as other Indians living in the region. Nearly all Catawbas, for example, wore "silver nose-rings . . . and some of them had little silver hearts hanging from the rings."⁸⁵ Six nose bangles were recovered at the town where Sally lived from 1790 to 1820, supporting Catawbas' preference of nose rings.⁸⁶ Catawbas used silver and brass to embellish their clothing. They received these trade goods from other Indians, colonial officials, or Virginia traders.⁸⁷ Catawba headmen, for example, customarily wore silver gorgets that they received from colonial officials to distinguish themselves in rank and status from other Indians when visiting Charlestown.⁸⁸ Their particular blending of Catawba and European attire helped keep Catawbas visible as a distinct people.

One of the most important ceremonial gatherings of Catawban-speaking people was the Green Corn Ceremony. Piedmont Indians and their descendants celebrated the Green Corn Ceremony in the fall with the corn dance, known as *kustatcera himunáre* (corn roasting the ear dance), or *kustu'k haba'riwe* (corn silk dance). Men dancers wore "a traditional foot-rattle" made of a turtle shell tied between the ball of the foot and the ankle. Women dancers wore clusters of turtle shells below the knees. Catawban-speaking people called both styles *kaséséhare* (turtle dance box). Men called the dance and carried gourd rattles filled with dried gourd seed or dried corn kernels. They typically drilled small holes in the gourds, openings that allowed seeds to dry and produced a louder noise.⁸⁹ John Lawson witnessed such a ceremony during his travels in 1701. He wrote that men made music from a drum "dress'd Deer's Skin, tied hard upon an Earthen Porridge-Pot." The men entered the statehouse and began the celebratory dance, "dress'd up with Feathers, their Faces being covered with Vizards [masks] made of Gourds." Around their ankles and knees "were hung Bells of several sorts, having Wooden Falchions in their Hands, (war club)." Lawson provided an excellent visual of the men's ceremonial attire, which included gourd masks and war clubs. The bells that the men and women wore indicate that European trade had already infiltrated the Piedmont communities. The men finished with two or three leaps toward the end of the dance, then left the statehouse. At this point in the celebration, many women dancers entered the room and lined up from the tallest to the shortest. "They made a circular Dance, like a Ring,

representing the Shape of the Fire they danced about: Many of these had great Horse-Bells about their Legs, and small Hawk's Bells about their Necks. They had Musicians, who were two Old Men, one of whom beat a Drum, while the other rattled with a Gourd, that had Corn in it."⁹⁰

Holding the Green Corn Ceremony required detailed preparation after harvesting the corn. The central theme of the sacred ceremony was the fertility of the earth and women. The ceremony was one event connected to Piedmont Indians' belief system of First Woman.⁹¹ Women and men contributed their labor to the ceremony. Prepping for such a feast required the men to contribute wild game such as fowl. Birds harvested by the men included the passenger pigeon. As late as 1701, this species of pigeon was "so numerous in these Parts that you might see many Millions in a Flock; they sometimes split off the Limbs of stout Oaks, and other Trees, upon which they roost o' Nights."⁹² Once the pigeons were harvested, women roasted them, which provided the women with "more than 100 Gallons of Pigeons Oil, or Fat" that they stored in large clay pots near their doorways. Their reason for storing the drippings near their doors might have been that they had little space in the home or that the renderings emitted a foul odor and attracted flies. Women used the fat as flavoring when cooking beans and spread it on bread, much like butter.⁹³

Other fowl occupied value in their spiritual traditions. Pileated woodpeckers, red-winged blackbirds, doves, robins, and the yellowhammer are prominent in Catawba oral tradition as helpers or as characters used to teach children how a bird received its coloring. For example, long ago, the pileated woodpecker looked like all other birds. A young girl then placed her red hair ribbon around the bird's head, turning all the woodpeckers' heads red.⁹⁴ Piedmont Indians also believed in the sacredness of birds through their connection to the Upper World. Bird feathers had purifying qualities that helped rid the world of spiritual and physical pollution.⁹⁵ Women used the feathers of turkey, geese, and hawks to create a type of broom used to cleanse inner and outer living spaces of any kind of contamination. Catawba women continued the practice into the twentieth century but switched to using manna grass brooms to purify the entrance into their homes.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, Piedmont Indian men used feathers in diplomatic settings. Headmen often carried a standard or staff with turkey feathers attached as a sign of peace when involved in diplomatic talks.⁹⁷ The turkey symbolized wisdom, the wisdom of knowing what path one should take for the best outcome, and bestowed blessings to those nearby. In the summer of 1751, while wisely completing the ritual of peace with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Catawba King Hagler carried a standard of turkey

feathers into the council in Albany, New York. When Hagler and several *ye miigrá?hare* (Catawba headmen) approached the Haudenosaunee council, they sang “a song of peace, their ensigns, or colored feathers, borne horizontally,” an indication of harmony and goodwill, not a sign of submission. The singing stopped, and all of the headmen present smoked the calumet. The Catawba diplomats left the council and returned to their shelter, where they fastened their gourd rattles, calumet, and feathers to a tent pole for safekeeping.⁹⁸ Stealing was not a concern because each item was imbued, through prayer, with strong spiritual power that could turn bad, attacking the thief or the Haudenosaunee villages.⁹⁹

Not only the flora, fowl, and fauna were crucial to the lives of the Piedmont Indians. Clay was an essential natural resource used in their daily lives. Catawba ancestors found veins of clay deposited deep in the earth near the Catawba River. Clay deposits are composed of fine-grained rock or soil that has a plastic texture. The elastic consistency comes from a natural mixture of water, minerals, and organic material, resulting in hardening when dried or fired.¹⁰⁰ Men typically did the most challenging part of gathering clay, digging a hole of six to eight feet in depth for the cleanest deposit of clay. Women collected the dry clay in baskets, gourds, or mulberry textiles. They carried their collection back to their homes,

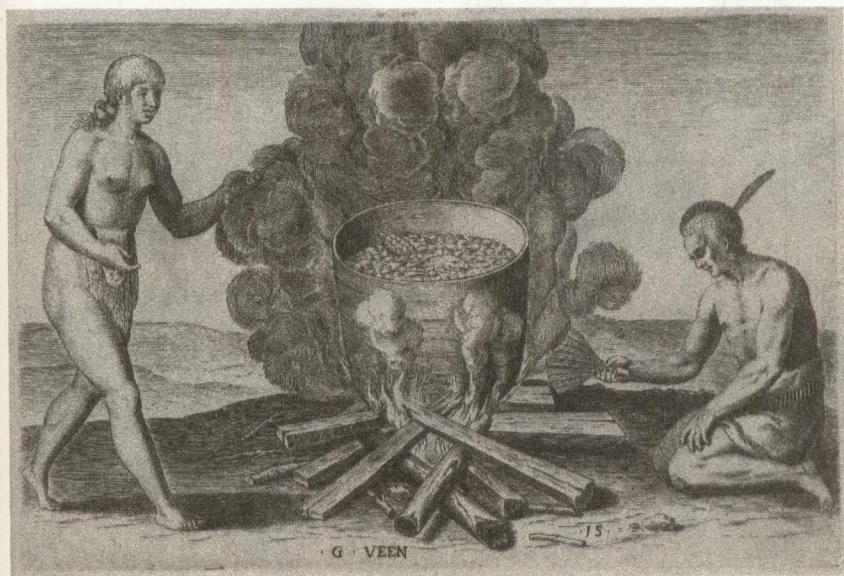


Figure 7. Example of pottery before 1760. “Cooking in a Pot.” Engraving by Theodor de Bry, 1590. Based on a watercolor by John White, circa 1585–86. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

where they pounded the clay into a powdery substance. After women pulverized the clay in this way, they removed organic material, such as roots and nutshells.¹⁰¹

The mixture of clay with minuscule materials like sand enhanced vessel functionality by protecting the containers from thermal shock during firing and other direct-heat uses (figure 7). Piedmont Indian women produced various types of vessels during the early contact period, including *cazuela* (cooking pots or bowls) and straight-sided, open-mouthed jars used to store foods. They made large and small round containers and

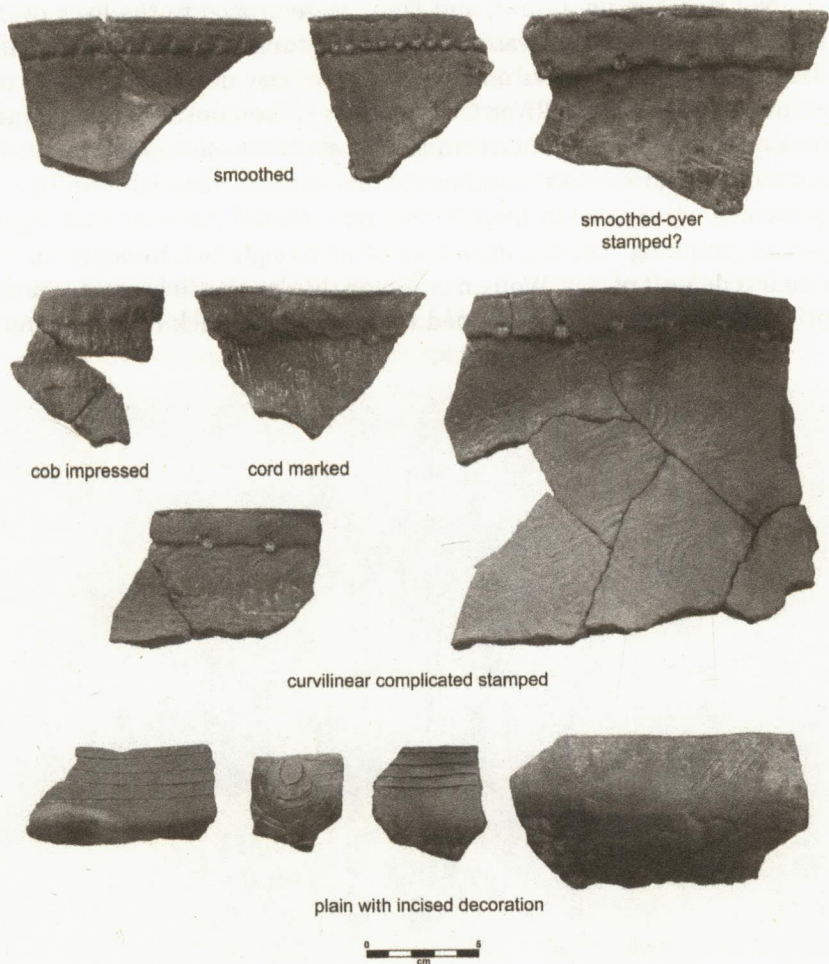


Figure 8. Exterior treatments of Catawba pottery, pre-1760. Courtesy of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

pots with collared rims. When cooking, they covered the jars tightly with deerskin to retain heat. The women applied surface treatments to the exterior of containers for decorative purposes that must have distinguished their family's pottery from that of another family, clan, or community. The different designs show distinct communities of people coming together in one place. Most of the exterior treatments included markings made with paddle stamps or cord-wrapped paddles. Other decorations included burnishing (rubbing), cob marking, impressing with fabric or net, and notching and incising (figures 8 and 9).¹⁰²

The significance of this chapter is to demonstrate Catawban-speaking people's gendered world. Equally important, the chapter indicates that early Piedmont Indians had access to an immense array of natural resources, a factor that changed after European arrival.¹⁰³ With European contact, the Piedmont Indian polities began to collapse. During the shattering of their world, survivors reorganized their communities socially, politically, and culturally in the new geopolitical landscape.¹⁰⁴

Amid the change happening in their world, Catawba ancestors shared their knowledge of the land and their practices and traditions with a younger generation. Young girls mastered the use of natural resources

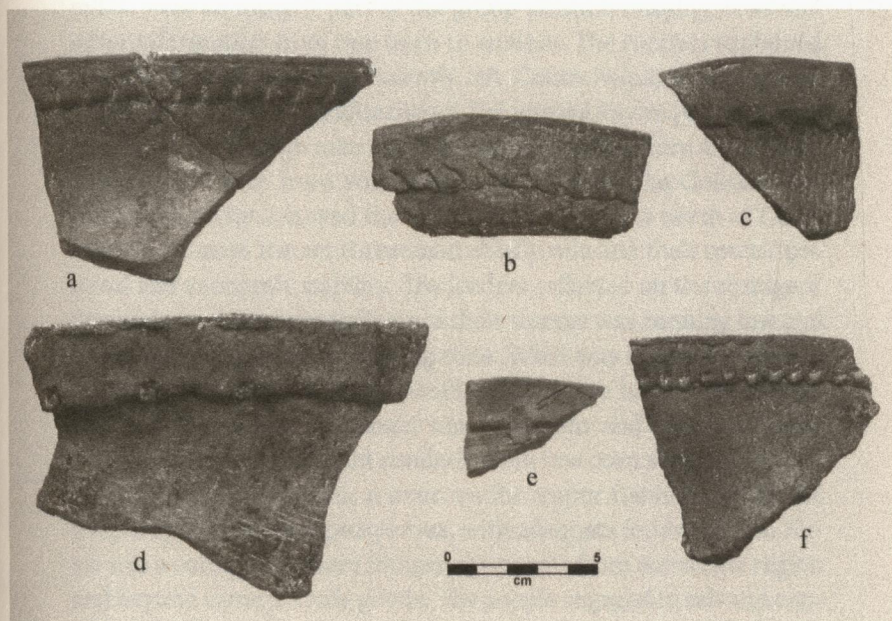


Figure 9. Catawba pottery rim treatments, pre-1760. Courtesy of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

near their towns. They became skilled in managing the household and taking care of the young, old, and infirm, while they learned to manage the land by cultivating gardens, gathering firewood, food, and herbs, and collecting water and clay. As girls matured to women, the cycle of knowledge continued to the next generation. Although Piedmont Indians confronted and adapted to catastrophic change with European intrusion, the transformation they experienced did not equate to the loss of being Catawba. Women, who carried the lifeblood of their communities, continued doing things as they had in the past, albeit differently. For southern Piedmont Indians, who merged to form a united Catawba Nation by the mid-1700s, the women were central to creating a shared sense of belonging through kinship ties. After all, it was First Woman who gave birth to *Ye Iswq*, and her female descendants provided the kinship connection to becoming Katába.