

Christian Missionary Participation in African American Slavery Within the Cherokee Nation, 1791-1839

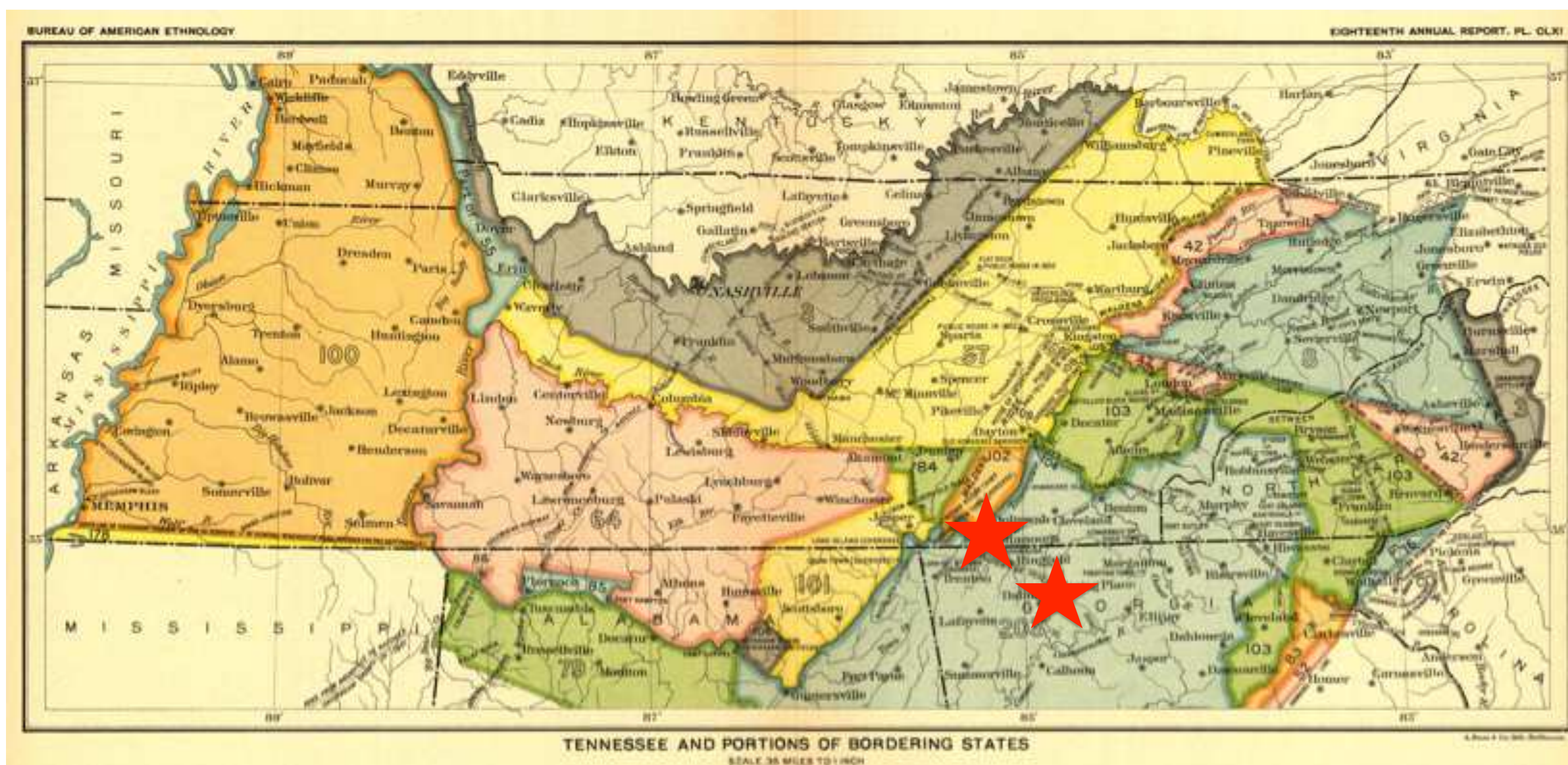
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Overview

- Focus on Moravian and Brainerd missionaries who occupied the Nation from 1799 until 1838
- Slavery in the Cherokee Nation was spurred by the federal 1791 Treaty of Holston
- Missionaries bought, sold, and loaned slaves for personal and communal use on the missions from Cherokee slaveholders
- Missionaries exploited slave labor regardless of anti-slavery ideological beliefs

Key Findings

- Missions were established on the private properties of Cherokee slaveholders who were chiefs, council members, and judges
- Cherokee financially and culturally supported missions, schools, and churches
- Cherokee provided slaves to missionaries, 20-30 at a time working in agricultural and domestic labor
- Missionaries and Cherokee also welcomed slaves to church sermons and desired their salvation
 - Slavery as a “positive good”



Impact

- Moravian records recently translated and published between 2010 and 2015, Brainerd journal published in 1998
- These records are absent in historiography
- This work contradicts contemporary historiography that argues missionaries did not use slave labor and that missionaries and Cherokee slaveholders categorically forbid slaves from attending church services
- Suggests an earlier emergence of the ideology of slavery as a “positive good,” predating John C. Calhoun’s 1837 proclamation

Explanation

- Similar experiences in Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek Nations
- Helps to explain why Cherokee society mirrored Anglo U.S. political and cultural practices and ways of life in the 1820s and 1830s
- Elite Cherokee relationships helped Christian missionaries maintain a substantial influence in the economic and political proceedings of the Nation
- Christianity, mission education, and slavery became the cultural foundation on which Cherokee fought for political and territorial sovereignty until Westward Removal through “cultural uplift”

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