

CAPTIVES OF THE DARK AND BLOODY GROUND:  
IDENTITY, RACE, AND POWER IN THE CONTESTED AMERICAN SOUTH

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## **ABSTRACT**

Christina Snyder, “Captives of the Dark and Bloody Ground: Identity, Race, and Power in the Contested American South”  
(Under the direction of Michael Green and Theda Perdue)

In this dissertation, I use the lens of captivity to explore how Native Southerners defined themselves and the other. Before they encountered one another in the colonial era, the peoples of Africa, Europe, and North America considered enslavement a legitimate fate for captured enemy peoples, though their attitudes about the status and roles of captives differed. In the South during the colonial and early national periods, violent conflict often erupted as Indian nations labored to maintain their territorial integrity and political autonomy, Euro-Americans desired to control Indian land and African labor, and Africans sought freedom. During such episodes, Native groups took enemies—white, black, and Indian—as captives. Victors then subjected their captives to a variety of fates: they ritually killed some to satisfy the demands of clan vengeance; they adopted others to replace deceased family members; they made chattel slaves out of the remainder. Throughout the colonial period, Native Southerners largely determined a captive’s fate based on his or her sex and age. By the late eighteenth century, however, race became a captive’s most salient characteristic, and African-American captives were overwhelmingly targeted in warfare and then sold or held in transgenerational bondage. This study, in part, explores why that shift toward racialization occurred, and how it reflected Native Southerners’ changing sense of identity. More broadly, “Captives of the Dark and Bloody Ground” addresses the

construction of race and racism in America and contributes to a growing body of scholarship on the diversity of enslavement in North America. This dissertation traces the dynamic institution of captivity from the precolonial past, when Native chiefdoms competed for regional power, through the conclusion of the Second Seminole War in 1842, which marks the final captive-taking episode in the contested American South. It draws upon a wide variety of English- and Spanish-language sources including legal documents, personal and official correspondence, journals, ethnographies, and the archaeological record.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii	
ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix	
Chapters		
Introduction.....	1	
PART I: THE EARLY SOUTH: BODIES FOR POWER, BODIES FOR SALE.....		18
I.    Human Prestige Goods: The Captives of Chiefs.....	18	
II.   The Chickasaws and the Indian Slave Trade.....	53	
PART II: THE NATIVE SOUTH: CRYING BLOOD.....		87
III.  Death.....	87	
IV.  Adoption.....	113	
V.   Slavery.....	136	
PART III: THE MAKING OF THE PLANTATION SOUTH: CAPTIVITY AND RACE.....		157
VI.   Violent Intimacy: Warfare on the Southern Frontier.....	157	
VII.  Race in Creek Country.....	191	
VIII. A People Apart: Seminoles and their African American Tributaries....	219	
IX.   Allies in War: The Fight for the Seminole Homeland.....	238	
Conclusion.....	281	
References.....	285	

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Figure

1.	Guillame Delisle's 1718 map.....	9
2.	Warriors planting arrows.....	24
3.	Attack on an enemy village.....	36
4.	Chief Satouriona's ceremonial preparation for battle.....	38
5.	Joseph Brown.....	160
6.	Bowlegs' towns.....	255



## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ASP:IA</i>	<i>American State Papers, Class II: Indian Affairs.</i> 2 vols. Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832.
<i>DRIA</i>	<i>Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, Colonial Records of South Carolina Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21, 1750-August 7, 1754.</i> Columbia: South Carolina Archives Dept., 1958.
EFP	East Florida Papers. Microfilm copy at PKY.
FHS	Filson Historical Society. Louisville, Kentucky.
GA	Georgia Archives, Morrow.
HRB	Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. University of Georgia Libraries, Athens.
JRP	James Robertson Papers, TSLA.
LC	Joseph Byrne Lockey Collection of Documents Related to the History of Florida, PKY.
MDAH	Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.
<i>MPA:FD</i>	<i>Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion.</i> Vols. 1-3 edited by Dunbar Rowland and A.G. Sanders. Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, 1927-32. Vols. 4-5 edited by Dunbar Rowland, A.G. Sanders, Patricia Galloway. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984.
PC	Papeles procedentes de Cuba. Microfilm copy at PKY.
PKY	P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History. Department of Special & Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville.
SCDAH	South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.
SCHS	South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

SHC Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, The  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

TSLA Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville.

## INTRODUCTION

In the early nineteenth century, Mrs. William Boyles managed a wayside tavern in Monroe County, Alabama. Among her frequent customers was William Weatherford. Locally regarded as a Southern gentleman, Weatherford owned three hundred slaves, managed a large plantation, and bred horses. One day, as Weatherford dined in Mrs. Boyles' tavern, four strangers entered and sat at Weatherford's table. As they ate, these-out-of-towners struck up a conversation: They "wanted to know where that bloody-handed savage, Billy Weatherford, lived."<sup>1</sup>

When the strangers looked at William Weatherford they thought they saw a white Southern planter—according to a descendant he "was fair, with light brown hair and mild black eyes"—but Weatherford had a more complicated past.<sup>2</sup> Although his father, Charles Weatherford, had been a wealthy Anglo-American trader, Weatherford's mother Sehay was a Creek Indian. Because the Creeks reckoned descent through the maternal line, they counted William as one of them. As a member of a prestigious Creek family, William enjoyed a comfortable youth. During the summer of 1813, however, the Creek Nation erupted in war. Militants called "Redsticks" vowed to fight the expansion of the United States and to purge polluting elements of American culture from their own

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter from Charles Weatherford to authors, October 17, 1890, in H.S. Halbert and T.H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814*, ed. Frank L. Owsley, Jr. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1969), 175-76. Quotation on 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

society. When approached by Redstick leaders, Weatherford agreed to join them. Reportedly, Weatherford had his misgivings but decided that “they were his people—he was raised with them, and he would share their fate.” A talented equestrian and natural athlete, Weatherford became renowned in battle. His war name, Red Eagle, had powerful connotations in Creek culture: Creeks associated red with blood and war; they believed that eagles were martial birds and that they belonged to the spiritually charged Upper World. If stories of his wartime exploits are even partly true, Red Eagle lived up to his name. In Weatherford’s most famous feat, when pursued by American forces during the Battle of the Holy Ground, he mounted his horse and charged off a high bluff into the river twenty feet below. He was also among those Redsticks who stormed Fort Mims and massacred its American and rival Creek inhabitants, an episode which doubtlessly prompted the strangers at the tavern—and scores of other white Southerners—to call Weatherford a “bloody-handed savage.”<sup>3</sup>

Following the Redsticks’ catastrophic loss at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in March 1814, William Weatherford surrendered to General Andrew Jackson. After the war, Weatherford established a plantation in southern Alabama near where Fort Mims once stood. The four visitors to the tavern knew this, and they expressed an eagerness to meet Weatherford “assuring Mrs. Boyles they would kill the red-skinned, bloody-handed savage on site.” Seeing no one in the tavern who fit that description, the men concluded

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<sup>3</sup> Benjamin W. Griffith, Jr., *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 3-4, 77-78, 129-131, 252-54. Quotation from Thomas S. Woodward, *Woodward’s Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians, Contained in Letters to Friends in Georgia and Alabama* (Tuscaloosa and Birmingham: Alabama Book Store and Birmingham Book Exchange, 1939), 96.

For color symbolism, see Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 126. For the symbolic meaning of eagles, see John R. Swanton, *Creek Religion and Medicine* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 513; George E. Lankford, “World on a String: Some Cosmological Components of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex,” in *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South*, eds. Richard Townsend and Robert Sharp (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 212-213.

that they would have to look elsewhere. Imagine their surprise, then, when their eating companion volunteered, “Some of you gentlemen expressed a wish while at dinner to meet Billy Weatherford. Gentlemen, I am Billy Weatherford, at your service!” Eventually, one man sheepishly stepped forward and introduced himself, but the others “quailed under the glance of the Red Eagle’s eye.” According to Mrs. Boyles, “she never saw men more frightened than were the three belligerently disposed gentlemen.”<sup>4</sup>

The story of Billy Weatherford and these four strangers, related by the tavern-keeper to Weatherford’s grandson, hints at the South’s hidden Indian history. To the strangers, Weatherford appeared the quintessential Southern planter. Presuming that the Indian whom they sought must possess “red” skin and a savage disposition, the strangers never suspected that the gentleman with brown hair and mild eyes was once the Redstick leader called Red Eagle. The strangers could not fathom that Weatherford could be an Indian and a planter, a warrior and slaveholder. Yet, Weatherford answered all those descriptions. The themes that the tavern-keeper’s tale highlights—race, slavery, and war—are at the core of both the Southern past and the Southern Indian past, demonstrating the deep, but often ignored, connections between those two histories.

### *Race and Slavery*

Race relations have always been at the core of Southern history. Historians agree that race is a social construct, malleable through time and space, yet why race emerged as the most salient marker of identity remains buried deep in the Southern past. When historians of the American South look for the roots of racism, they usually focus on English planters and their European ancestors. In his classic *White Over Black*, Winthrop

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<sup>4</sup> Weatherford to authors, October 17, 1890, Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, 176.

Jordan argued that as early as the sixteenth century, English men and women had an aversion to African “blackness,” as a marker of inferiority. While blackness was but one of a host of traits that made the African other inferior, New World slavery and economic necessity worked in tandem to produce racism. Jordan’s thesis has aged well; other historians also have found the origins of racism in Europe prior to the colonial era.<sup>5</sup>

In another classic work, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, Edmund Morgan argued that white Virginians seized upon racism as a tool which they used to exploit African labor and secure white brotherhood under the banner of republicanism. In a more recent work informed by gendered analysis, Kathleen Brown argued that Virginia men drew upon the “naturalness” of the Aristotelian Chain of Being to subordinate their dependents, who included white women and children as well as enslaved Africans. Building on Jordan’s work, Edmund Morgan and Kathleen Brown find the origin of Southern racial identities in colonial Virginia. They agree that the genesis of slavery in Virginia was piecemeal and that European indentured servants and enslaved Africans had similar experiences. Both point to Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676 as a pivotal event in American history, which taught elites the necessity of uniting with fellow Europeans against Africans in order to preserve their positions. In short, elite planters were willing to extend “whiteness” as well as political power to fellow Europeans in exchange for their cooperation in protecting the institution of African slavery. Both authors

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<sup>5</sup> Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1968). For more recent studies, see Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, “Before Othello: Elizabethan Representations of Sub-Saharan Africans,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997), 19-44; James H. Sweet, “The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997), 143-166. Sweet offers a succinct definition of racism as “a reduction of the sociocultural to the somatic” (145).

acknowledge that Virginia was born on the Anglo/Indian frontier, a cultural as well as political boundary, but they assume that only Europeans had the power to construct race.<sup>6</sup>

Historians like Morgan and Brown have demonstrated that colonial-era bondage, diverse and contested, was a far cry from the nineteenth-century plantation slavery that dominates the American imagination. In his synthesis, Ira Berlin explored the wide range of enslavement in early North America, where bondspeople labored in workshops in the urban North, alongside their masters on small Virginia tobacco farms, and with other African Americans South Carolina rice plantations.<sup>7</sup> In the words of one historian, slavery in early America was marked by “fluidity and ambiguity.”<sup>8</sup> Recently, scholars focusing on the Southwestern borderlands have urged historians to further expand their notions of American slavery. James Brooks explored captivity as a practice shared by both colonizers and Native peoples and as a continuum of experiences ranging from eventual adoption to transgenerational servitude.<sup>9</sup> Demonstrating the complexity of bondage in North American borderlands, Juliana Barr urged historians to move beyond “identifications of North American slavery as primarily an African American experience and of North American captivity as primarily a white experience.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975); Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Brett Rushforth, “‘A Little Flesh We Offer You’: The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, No. 4 (2003), 806.

<sup>9</sup> James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Juliana Barr, “From Captives to Slaves: Commodifying Indian Women in the Borderlands,” *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (2005), 19-20.

My work on captivity offers a new approach to the study of race and slavery in the American South. This dissertation pushes beyond the eastern seaboard, beyond Virginia and the Lowcountry, and into the Southern interior, a more fluid region where Indians lived in autonomous nations and Africans sometimes attained freedom. In the interior South, Anglo Americans lacked the ability to force identity upon the other. There, culturally diverse peoples of Indian, African, and European ancestry negotiated for power and place through intimate contact with one another. In this work, I use captivity as a lens to examine issues of identity and race over several centuries, from the precolonial past, when Native chiefdoms competed for regional power, through the conclusion of the Second Seminole War in 1842, which marks the final captive-taking episode in the contested American South. The broad chronological scope of this dissertation allows me to engage in a wide range of historical debates: Why the early colonial trade in Indian slaves developed; how and why Native Southerners began to hold African Americans in transgenerational bondage; how disparate nations of Native peoples came to embrace a collective identity as Indians.<sup>11</sup>

Captivity in the Native South, like that in the Southwest, represented a broad continuum of experiences; as such, assigning labels to its victims is difficult. For the purposes of this study, a “captive” is broadly defined as a forcibly detained “other.” Captives usually arrived in Native communities as prisoners of war, more rarely as

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<sup>11</sup> Relevant works include Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (New York: Norton, 1981); Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979); Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Power, Property and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1992); Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).



property by purchase. Still others came voluntarily: Because those without kin ties had no status, runaway slaves seeking refuge also became captives. Within Native Southern communities, captives endured fates ranging from torture to adoption to enslavement. A slave was a particular sort of captive, defined here as one whose labor served to enrich a captor socially or materially. Unlike in the Anglo-American South, slavery and race did not develop in tandem among Southern Indians. Deeply rooted in Native Southern history, slavery was already present when the first Europeans and Africans arrived in the sixteenth century. During the colonial era, slaves in Indian communities included peoples of Native, European, and African descent. Not until the late eighteenth century did Southern Indians begin to graft ideas about race onto their preexisting practice of slavery.

### *The Native South*

I define the South as the region bounded by the Mississippi River to the west, by the Atlantic Ocean to the east, by the Gulf Coast to the south, and by the Cumberland River to the north. Within North America, the South is a distinctive region. A warm climate and fertile soil produced a long growing season and a plethora of indigenous edible plants such as squash, sunflowers, goosefoot, and marsh elder. Additionally, the region supported a rich array of animal life including deer, bear, small game, and fish. Finally, extensive river systems made the region a relatively easy one to traverse.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Although I draw upon the work of anthropologists on the Southeastern culture area, I prefer to call the region “the South” in order to make an explicit connection between the region’s Native past and the antebellum or “Old South.”

John Reed Swanton pioneered scholarship on Southeastern Indians, and he defined the region based on geography and culture. Although dated, his work remains influential. For his definition of the Southeastern culture area, see *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1946), 1-11. Charles Hudson’s *The Southeastern Indians* (Nashville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976) is still the most complete synthesis on Native Southern culture. This discussion draws upon his introduction, p. 3-33. See also Alan Galloway’s description of the region in *The*

Drawing upon the land's bounty, Native Southerners shaped their environment, crafting a unique regional culture. Southern Indians discovered that their climate was warm enough and moist enough to support tropical cultigens, like corn and beans, in addition to their indigenous plant foods. By the eleventh century, corn became a staple, used to support Native Southern populations that were larger and more sedentary than ever before. Simultaneously, a new cultural tradition, called "Mississippian" by archaeologists, flourished throughout most of region. The Mississippian era brought greater political centralization, institutionalized social inequity, more warfare, and a distinctive form of Southern iconography, which legitimized and supported these revolutionary changes in lifestyle.<sup>13</sup> Native Southerners also created a regional trail system, using both water and land routes to exchange goods and information across the region.<sup>14</sup> To facilitate hunting and create fields, Natives regularly burned forests, which had the additional benefit of clearing undergrowth.<sup>15</sup> By the time that Europeans and

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*Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 1-19. As Gally argued, the environment shaped both Natives and newcomers because "it presents to its human inhabitants the realm of the possible," p. 7. Although my definition of the region is influenced by these authors, this study is a bit more geographically restricted, bound to the west by the Mississippi River rather than the arid plains of central Texas.

<sup>13</sup> John F. Scarry, "The Late Prehistoric Southeast," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, eds. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 17-35; Adam King and Maureen S. Meyers, "Exploring the Edges of the Mississippian World," *Southeastern Archaeology* 21 (2002): 113-16; Charles M. Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 11-30; Robert F. Townsend uses Native oral tradition to reconstruct elements of Mississippian culture in "American Landscapes, Seen and Unseen," in *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South*, eds. Richard Townsend and Robert Sharp (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 15-35.

<sup>14</sup> Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Land and Water Communication Systems of the Southeastern Indians," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, eds. Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 27-42.

<sup>15</sup> Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 276-77, 313-16.

Africans arrived in the sixteenth century, they landed not in a pristine world, but one profoundly shaped by Native actors for the past ten thousand years.



Figure 1. Detail from Guillaume Delisle's 1718 map, "Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississippi." Courtesy of Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library / University of Georgia Libraries.

One of the great challenges in writing this history is in naming the South's Native people. This story traces ideas about identity, which shifted over the course of time, as political and ethnic affiliations changed. The pre-colonial South was home to dozens of politically independent chiefdoms. Because these chiefdoms were often unstable and short-lived, many disappeared before the European invasion, but some chiefdoms survived into the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> During the colonial era, loosely-confederated

<sup>16</sup> Archaeologists have demonstrated that chiefdoms in the region frequently rose and fell; they speculate that such instability resulted from a variety of factors, including climate change, resource exhaustion, and warfare. See David G. Anderson, David W. Stahle, and Malcolm K. Cleaveland, "Paleoclimate and the Potential Food Reserves of Mississippian Societies: A Case Study from the Savannah River Valley," *American Antiquity* 60, no. 2 (April 1995), 258-286; David G. Anderson, *The Savannah River Chiefdoms:*

Native nations emerged as successors to most of the chiefdoms. The great organizing principle of these nations was kinship, both real and fictive. Because the largest of these nations have survived to the present, their names—the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles—are more recognizable to modern audiences. By the late eighteenth century, Native peoples developed a racial consciousness as Indians. Highlighting their shared identity, Native leaders used the term “Southern Nations” to refer collectively to the region’s major Indian nations.<sup>17</sup> In this study, I write about “Native Southerners,” a group of people of varying political affiliations who nonetheless shared historical experiences as well as a similar culture dating back to the Mississippian era.

### *Power*

As historian Gregory Dowd Evans has argued, Native Americans understood power as “the ability of an individual to influence other people and other beings.”<sup>18</sup>

Sources of power were numerous. To obtain it, Native Southerners often looked to

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*Political Change in the Late Prehistoric Southeast* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994); David J. Hally, “Platform-Mound Construction and the Instability of Mississippian Chiefdoms,” in *Political Structure and Change in the Prehistoric Southeastern United States*, ed. John F. Scarry (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), 92-127.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Speech of John Watts, William Blount to Henry Knox, November 8, 1792, William Blount Letters, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Talk of Mad Dog [Efau Hadjo] to James Burgess and the Seminoles, August 2, 1798, Greenslade Papers, Box 1, PKY; Talk of the Choctaw Kings, Headmen, and Warriors to Mad Dog, White Lieutenant, Nine Hadjo and Apoyl of the Hickory Ground and all their elder brothers the Creeks in general, June 10, 1795, James Robertson Papers, Reel 801, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville. Because many non-Seminole leaders considered the Seminoles part of the Creek Nation, they often spoke of “Four Nations” rather than five. Paul Kelton used the term “Four Nations” in “Avoiding the Smallpox Spirits: Colonial Epidemics and Southeastern Indian Survival,” *Ethnohistory* 51, no. 1 (2004), 46-71. See n. 5, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 3.

outsiders. As one scholar of Native history noted, “connections conferred power, and isolation could bring disaster.”<sup>19</sup> A nation seeking to augment its numbers might incorporate a smaller, weaker group. In the eighteenth century, for example, the Creek Nation absorbed several peoples “in order,” according to an observer, “to strengthen themselves against hostile attempts.”<sup>20</sup> A nation might also forge alliances with other Natives or Europeans. Through ceremony, allies became fictive kin who abided by the ethic of reciprocity. These relationships required maintenance, and gifts served to “brighten, strengthen, and lengthen” the “Chain of Friendship,” as one eighteenth-century English friend of the Catawbas well understood.<sup>21</sup> Thus, alliances provided economic benefits. One of Native Southerners’ most successful strategies for acquiring power was through play-off diplomacy. As the French, Spanish, and English competed for control of the colonial South, Native nations often secured alliances with two or more European empires, which afforded them more material rewards and greater political autonomy.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 8.

<sup>20</sup> James Adair, *History of the American Indians*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 273.

<sup>21</sup> Governor James Glen to the Catawba King, n.d., *Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21-August 7, 1754*, ed. William L. McDowell (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), 73-74.

<sup>22</sup> Many historians have explored how Native Americans used relationships with outsiders to acquire and maintain power. In Daniel K. Richter’s *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), he explored how the Iroquois employed diverse strategies, including captive torture and adoption, alliance, and play-off diplomacy, to address colonial-era challenges. Richard White’s *The Middle Ground: Indians Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) chronicled how Algonquian peoples struggling to retain their autonomy compelled Europeans into alliances through ceremony. Gary Anderson demonstrated how the Dakotas used fictive kinship to incorporate traders into their society. Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1812* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

Power also came from harnessing spiritual forces present in the mundane—animals, plants, and geographic features—and in the esoteric. Sacred stories told of remote times when people could understand the language of animals and change from animal form to human form. In historic times, Native Southerners believed that modern animals were only shadowy reflections of their former, more perfect selves, and that most people had lost the ability to communicate with them.<sup>23</sup> Some individuals, however, had more spiritual power than others. In the words of one Creek man, “Formerly men and animals talked to one another and later they lost the ability to do so, but the great medicine men had the gift.”<sup>24</sup>

To acquire spiritual power, supplicants first had to understand its nature. Native Southerners believed in a three-part universe, duality, and color symbolism.<sup>25</sup> Each of the three worlds, the Upper World, the Lower World, and This World, had a distinctive nature. The Upper World was a place of perfect order and harmony. It was the home of legendary birds, especially raptors, as well as the Sun, Moon, and Thunderers—all spiritually potent beings. In opposition, chaos ruled the Lower World, populated by reptiles, amphibians, and fish. Legendary monsters, including the Great Serpent and the Underwater Panther, prowled the Lower World. Striking a balance between the Upper and Lower, This World was the home of human beings, plants, and animals. The Upper and Lower realms, however, were not inaccessible; human beings could travel to the other worlds through portals, and otherworldly monsters might pass through those same

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<sup>23</sup> Richard F. Townsend, “American Landscapes, Seen and Unseen,” in *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand*, 21-26.

<sup>24</sup> John R. Swanton, *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 74. Swanton heard the cited story, “The Language of Animals,” from an unnamed Creek informant.

<sup>25</sup> Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 13-26.

gates to plague This World's inhabitants.<sup>26</sup> Among Native Southerners, dualism was a powerful conceptual tool that defined the Upper World against the Lower, and, in This World, the opposite nature of kinship and enmity, animals and plants, men and women. Though groups disagreed on the exact attributes of each, Native Southerners attached meaning to the cardinal directions. Most significantly, Native Southerners identified the East with the life-giving Sun; in opposition, West was the direction of darkness and death.<sup>27</sup>

Through ritual and ceremony, those with the requisite knowledge could gain access to powerful sacred forces, which they might then use to control events and beings.<sup>28</sup> Among Southern Indians, spiritual power legitimized social and political power, enabling select individuals to speak in councils, lead war parties, and maintain cosmic and worldly order.

As enemy outsiders devoid of kin ties, captives became tractable sources from which to extract power. Southern Indians believed that the unjust death of a loved one unbalanced the Three Worlds, resulting in chaos and misfortune in This World. One whose death remained unavenged could not enter the Pathway of Souls leading to the afterlife, and so he remained behind to haunt the living. Only the death of the responsible enemy restored cosmic harmony. The killing of enemies, however, did more than restore

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<sup>26</sup> Charles M. Hudson pioneered this research in *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 123-32. Taking cues from Hudson, other archaeologists and anthropologists have used a multidisciplinary approach that blends ethnographic accounts, Native oral history, and material culture to study Southeastern cosmology. See essays in *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand*, especially George E. Lankford's "World on a String: Some Cosmological Components of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex," 207-17; F. Kent Reilly's "People of Earth, People of Sky: Visualizing the Sacred in Native American Art of the Mississippian Period," 125-37.

<sup>27</sup> Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 132; Reilly, "People of Earth, People of Sky," 127.

<sup>28</sup> Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 3.

order; through a captives' torture, captors divined and captured the spiritual strength of their enemies.<sup>29</sup> Captives also conferred worldly sorts of power. By adopting captives, a group augmented its population. Through the incorporation of outsiders, a community acquired new skills and knowledge as well as a potential culture brokers. Masters who enslaved captives gained wealth and prestige. Finally, the ransom or sale of captives paid handsomely. Over the centuries, Native Southerners faced a host of assaults—chiefly warfare, disease, conquistadors, colonization, American expansion—which threatened their power. In an effort to maintain their strength and abilities, they employed captives as versatile tools.

### *Warfare and Captivity*

Warfare reveals much about identity because it forces peoples to define themselves and the other during crucial historical moments. In their study of tribal warfare, anthropologists Robert Ferguson and Neil Whitehead noted, “war crystallizes oppositions: it separates peoples into clearly identifiable groups.”<sup>30</sup> In the Native South, kin and allies maintained peace. As one historian noted, “Those who agreed with one another that they were related, that they should not kill one another, and that they could properly join together for defense, ceremony, love, and so on, defined themselves to a

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<sup>29</sup> For beliefs regarding death and cosmic order, see John Pope, *A Tour through the Southern and Western Territories of the United States of America* (1792; reprint, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1979), 63-64; Frank G. Speck, *Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians*, edited by Jason Baird Jackson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 97; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 189; Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 50; Lankford, “World on a String,” 207.

<sup>30</sup> R. Brian Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead, eds., “The Violent Edge of Empire” in *War in the Tribal Zone* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1999), 14.



certain extent against other peoples.”<sup>31</sup> Those not bound by real or fictive kin ties were enemies, and enemies waged war. In a speech to a Euro-American land speculator, the warrior Dragging Canoe described how disputes over the South’s “fair land” rendered the ground “dark and bloody.”<sup>32</sup> Throughout Southern history, even in pre-Columbian times, enemies darkened and bloodied the ground.

From the pre-Columbian era to the end of the Second Seminole War, Native Southerners adapted their wartime strategies, technologies, and targets to meet changing needs, but one constant remained: captive-taking.<sup>33</sup> Before they encountered one another in the colonial era, Native Southerners, like the peoples of pre-colonial Europe and Africa, considered enslavement a legitimate fate for captured enemies. As pre-Columbian Native chiefdoms waged war for control of regional resources, they took captives, exploiting these conquered enemies to enhance the power and prestige of ruling lineages. Following the European invasion of the American South, during the colonial and early national periods, violent conflict often erupted as Indian nations labored to maintain their territorial integrity and political autonomy, Euro-Americans desired to control Indian land and African labor, and Africans sought freedom. During such episodes, Native groups took enemies—white, black, and Indian—as captives.

Throughout most of this history, Native Southerners maintained a broad captivity spectrum. Captors used enemies to benefit, at various times, themselves, their communities, or their nation. Over the course of centuries, Native Southerners’ modes of

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<sup>31</sup> Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> John Brown, *Old Frontiers: The Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West, 1838* (Kingsport, TN: Southern Publishers, 1938), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Wayne E. Lee explored the dynamic nature of Native Southern warfare in “Fortify, Fight, or Flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defensive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation,” *The Journal of Military History* 68, no. 3 (2004), 713-770.

self-understanding shifted from focusing more on local factors like chiefly affiliation or kinship to a broader racial consciousness as Indians. As Native Southerners shifted their construction of identity, so too did they change their ideas about captivity. By the late eighteenth century, Native Southerners targeted African American captives above all others and subjected them to a more narrow range of fates. I explore how the institution of captivity became racialized and why.

This dissertation is organized into three parts. The first focuses on “The Early South,” the pre-Columbian era of chiefdoms through the conclusion of the Yamasee War in 1717. Chapter 1, “Human Prestige Goods: The Captives of Chiefs,” employs early historical and archaeological evidence to understand the nature of warfare and captivity before Europeans had significant influence in the region. In this era, chiefs used captives in a variety of ways in order to augment their own power. The second chapter explores the Indian slave trade through the experiences of the Chickasaws, who were among the most successful slavers. Using captured enemies as commodities and as a means of population replacement, the Chickasaws managed to bolster their power in a tumultuous era. Part II, “Crying Blood,” covers the period between the collapse of the Indian slave trade in 1717 and the rise of racial slavery in Indian communities. Split into three chapters, “Death,” “Adoption,” and “Slavery,” Part II explores how Native Southerners used these disparate captive treatments to maintain order within their communities. Finally, Part III, “The Making of the Plantation South,” considers the increasing importance of race in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Covering the wars over the Southern frontier and the rise of nativism, Chapter 6 explores why Indians came to embrace a collective identity as “red people” and how this change affected their

captivity practices. Chapter 7 follows this story into Creek country, demonstrating how residents of that nation narrowed their captivity spectrum and targeted African Americans as preeminent captives. The last two chapters focus on the Seminoles who, with African-American allies, created a unique society and fought to defend it. The Seminole case dramatizes the cultural chasm that, by the nineteenth century, separated them from other Native Southerners.

## Part I. The Early South: Bodies for Power, Bodies for Sale

### CHAPTER 1

#### Human Prestige Goods: The Captives of Chiefs

In 1528, a young Andalusian nobleman named Juan Ortiz traveled to La Florida with conquistador Panfilo de Narváez, who was attempting to create the American South's first European colony. After landing in La Florida, Narváez ordered Ortiz to return to Havana with some of the expedition's ships. Those who remained with Narváez endured a hurricane, fierce resistance from Native peoples, and starvation. Spanish authorities in Cuba eventually grew worried about the expedition, and Narváez's wife sent Juan Ortiz and some twenty other soldiers to search for her husband. When the men reached the coast of La Florida, near modern Tampa Bay, they saw a letter sticking atop a split cane. Thinking Narváez had placed it there, Ortiz and a few companions went ashore to fetch it. The letter, however, was a trap set by Chief Ozita, who sought revenge against the Spaniards; months earlier, Narváez had thrown Ozita's mother to ravenous mastiffs and cut off the chief's nose for refusing to cooperate. Ozita's warriors seized Juan Ortiz and his companions as the other frightened

Spaniards sailed away. Ortiz, the nobleman from Seville, was forced to accept his new status as the slave of an elite from the New World.<sup>1</sup>

As one of the first Europeans to experience sustained contact with Southern Indians, Juan Ortiz became enveloped in an entirely Native world. European diseases had not ravaged the continent, and Hernando de Soto and his army had yet to unleash a whirlwind of destruction across the American South. Warfare was not born with Soto's arrival, however, but deep within the region's Native past. Conflict between competing groups reached back hundreds, even thousands of years. Early Spanish explorers noted widespread captivity among Native Southerners, suggesting that the capture of enemy peoples, like warfare, was an ancient institution in the region. Ortiz's saga is instructive because it provides a rare glimpse into the broad captivity continuum maintained by Native Southerners on the eve of the colonial period. Following his capture, the Spaniard found himself at the bottom of a hierarchical society. Ortiz endured various forms of captivity, but his detention always served to enhance the power of chiefs like Ozita, the lords of the early American South.

### *The World of Chiefdoms*

At the time of Juan Ortiz's arrival, the South was a land of chiefdoms. Most of these chiefdoms shared what archaeologists have dubbed "Mississippian culture," a pattern of distinct, widespread traits.<sup>2</sup> Because archaeologists deal with physical remains of past

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<sup>1</sup> Elvas, trans. James Alexander Robertson, "The Account by a Gentleman from Elvas," in *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539-43*, 2 vols., eds. Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight Jr., Edward C. Moore (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), I, 60; Garcilasso de la Vega, "La Florida by the Inca," trans. Charmion Shelby, in *De Soto Chronicles*, II, 106, 119.

<sup>2</sup> Archaeologists Adam King and Maureen S. Meyers have described the Mississippian world as "that geographic area—which may in fact be discontinuous—over which Mississippian social groups were distributed and constituted the most common form of social organization." King and Meyers, "Exploring the Edges of the Mississippian World," *Southeastern Archaeology* 21 (2002), 113-14. In this chapter, I discuss

cultures, they first identified Mississippians on the basis of shared material items, including shell-tempered ceramics, ceremonial goods, and monumental architecture, especially flat-topped earthen mounds. Mississippian art and architecture, which can be found throughout the American South and Midwest, reached its apogee at sites such as Cahokia in Illinois, Etowah in Georgia, Moundville in Alabama, and Spiro in Oklahoma.

After decades of research, scholars have concluded that Mississippian material traits were symptomatic of a less-tangible, region-wide economic, social, political, and spiritual culture. Before roughly A.D. 1000, Native Southerners had subsisted broadly upon gathered plants, nuts, and fruits, cultivated squash and starchy seeds, as well as fish, deer, and other game. They lived in relatively egalitarian tribal societies, wherein leaders probably earned their positions by achievement rather than ascription. Around A.D. 1000, however, they began to rely upon maize agriculture. Dependence upon this crop led to population growth and greater sedentism. Concurrently, Native Southerners organized themselves into chiefdoms—hierarchically structured, regional polities. Highly centralized, chiefdoms vested great power in a single individual, usually a man, whose rank was ascribed at birth. Surplus crops produced through maize agriculture supported a class of elites, including chiefs and their families, who maintained control over communal granaries. In addition to this economic and social transformation, a shared ideology, including belief in a three-tiered cosmos and

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chiefdoms in central and southern Florida, which lie on the edge of the Mississippian world, sharing some—but not all—of the characteristic markers of that culture. Cherokee-speakers of the southern Appalachians also experienced the Mississippian transformation to a lesser extent than their piedmont-dwelling neighbors. Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 194. Despite these differences, it seems that chiefdoms throughout the region practiced captivity.

rituals aimed at world renewal and purity, connected the Native Southeast and legitimized chiefly rule.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mississippian culture was first defined by archaeologists on the basis on shared material traits, such as ceramics, mound construction, and ceremonial goods. Since then, archaeologists have stressed Mississippian political organization (chiefdoms) as well as a broadly shared ideology that connected the Native Southeast and legitimized chiefly rule. Elman R. Service, *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective* (New York: Random House, 1971); John F. Scarry, "The Late Prehistoric Southeast," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, eds. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 17-35; Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 11-30; Richard F. Townsend uses Native oral tradition to reconstruct elements of Mississippian culture in "American Landscapes, Seen and Unseen," in *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand*, 15-35.

Early historical documents are also useful for understanding the Mississippian past. Spanish interest in the American South—what they called *La Florida*—began in the early sixteenth century. Several explorers, including Juan Ponce de Leon (1521), Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón (1526), and the previously mentioned Panfilo de Narváez campaign (1528), attempted to colonize coastal portions of the region. The most significant expedition, however, was undoubtedly that of Hernando de Soto and his army, who pillaged their way across the interior of the South from 1539-1543 in search of precious metals. Members of the expedition produced three accounts, while a fourth emerged from interviews with survivors. Rodrigo Rangel, Luys Hernandez de Biedma, and a man known simply as the Gentleman from Elvas were all members of the expedition. Rangel was de Soto's secretary, and he presumably took notes throughout the expedition. Unfortunately, his original account was lost. The surviving account is from Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdéz, the royal historian of the Indies, and is based upon Rangel's written account as well as interviews. Luys Hernandez de Biedma was the royal factor, and his is a short chronicle of events. Elvas drew upon his own memory of events, and probably other written sources relevant to the expedition, to prepare his account. The final major source for the expedition is from Garcilasso de la Vega, a Peruvian man of Spanish and Inca descent, who was not a member of the expedition. Garcilasso's account must be used with caution, for his ambitions for literary fame drove him to exaggerate and romanticize events. His "La Florida by the Inca," however, is still useful because his sources included interviews with members of the expedition including Gonzalo Silvestre and Alonso de Carmona as well as non-extant written sources. For a discussion of the de Soto sources, see Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 441-455. Patricia Galloway problematizes the use of these sources in "The Incestuous de Soto Narratives," in *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery in the Southeast,"* ed. Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 11-44. Rodrigo Rangel, "Account of the Northern Conquest and Discovery of Hernando de Soto by Rodrigo Rangel," trans. John E. Worth, in *De Soto Chronicles*; Luys Hernandez de Biedma, "Relation of the Island of Florida by Luys Hernandez de Biedma," trans. John E. Worth, in *De Soto Chronicles*; Elvas, "The Account by a Gentleman from Elvas,"; Garcilasso de la Vega, "La Florida by the Inca."

In 1564, Rene de Laudonniere attempted and failed to found a Huguenot colony near the St. John's River, but his letters and a resident artist's illustrations of Native Southern life survived the expedition. Rene Laudonniere, *Three Voyages*, trans. Charles E. Bennett (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001); Charles E. Bennett, ed. and trans., *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline: History and Documents* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001).

The de Soto and Laudonniere documents provide the most complete historical chronicle of Native Southern chiefdoms before Old World diseases and the Indian slave trade transformed them. See John E. Worth, "Late Spanish Military Expeditions in the Interior Southeast," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, eds. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 105.

A final set of key documents are those produced by French missionaries, explorers, and settlers of early-eighteenth-century Louisiana. The Natchez, a culturally conservative nation of the lower Mississippi Valley, retained a tradition of theocratic rule into the eighteenth century, and thus provided the French chroniclers with a glimpse into the region's Mississippian history. Archaeologist Jeffrey Brain has noted that although many groups of the lower Mississippi Valley experienced dramatic population loss and dislocation during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Natchez successfully maintained their sociopolitical

When Juan Ortiz landed in La Florida, he met people he called *indios* or Indians, but this term was unknown to the land's Native peoples, who instead referred to themselves as Ozitas, Apalachees, Cofitachequis, Chicasas, Coosas, Pacahas, Ocutes—as members of the dozens of chiefdoms that dotted the American South. During the Soto expedition, the Spanish army regularly captured Native people and attempted to force them into serving as guides or informants. During one such episode, the Spaniards' interpreter asked a man where he was from, whereupon he answered proudly that he was from the chiefdom of Apalachee “like one who gave to understand that he took offense from whoever might think that he was of another people but Apalachee.”<sup>4</sup> Rather than give his clan or village, this warrior unhesitatingly identified with his chiefdom.

Corporeal differences reinforced political differences. Some Southeastern groups used cranial modification to distinguish themselves from other people. When infants from these groups lay on their cradle boards, families placed wooden boards covered with deerskin upon their foreheads, making the cranial vault rounded and long.<sup>5</sup> The Catawbas, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Natchez, who retained the practice into the eighteenth century, believed that cranial modification enhanced beauty. Groups that did not share this practice called the others “flatheads.”<sup>6</sup> Hairstyles were also distinctive among Southeastern people.

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structure and remained in their traditional homeland. Jeffrey P. Brain, “Late Prehistoric Settlement Patterning in the Yazoo Basin and Natchez Bluffs Regions of the Lower Mississippi Valley,” in *Mississippian Settlement Patterns*, ed. Bruce D. Smith (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 331-368.

<sup>4</sup> Rodrigo Rangel, “Account of the Northern Conquest,” I, 267.

<sup>5</sup> In the early twentieth century, anthropologist Frank Speck interviewed Ca'bitci, a Chickasaw man, who explained cranial modification: “Soon after birth, and every night for six months, a wooden block thickly padded with deerskin was placed upon the infant's frontal bone and bound in place. . . . Deformation of this sort was believed to develop the most admirable qualities, and was a sign of high social rank.” Frank G. Speck, “Notes on Chickasaw Ethnology and Folklore,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 20 (1907), 50-58.

<sup>6</sup> John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 540; Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 71



Warriors self-consciously styled themselves with the emblems of their people; of particular importance were their scalplocks, hair from the crowns of their heads decorated in a distinctive style with feathers, ochre, or jewelry. A warrior's hairstyle reflected not personal taste, but political affiliation.<sup>7</sup> In 1564, the South's first French settlers noticed that Native Floridians declared war by going to the outskirts of enemy villages, and planting arrows topped with their own scalplocks in order to assert their identity as the aggressors (see figure 2). Clothing, jewelry, paint, and tattooing also served as ethnic markers. Some chiefdoms had particular connections with the spirit world, and inhabitants adorned themselves with symbols that connected them to that sacred power. At Moundville, for example, both elites and commoners wore jewelry depicting the eye-in-hand (or ogee), serpents, and feline water beings—all of which symbolize the Underworld. Because Moundville served as a regional necropolis in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, inhabitants may have believed themselves especially close to the Underworld and its guardian, the Great Serpent. Conversely, Etowah's inhabitants consistently adorned themselves with images of raptors, inhabitants of the Upper World, which suggests that they shared a special relationship with

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<sup>7</sup> For centuries, warriors' hairstyles were important markers of identity. In the seventeenth century, Savannahs took English trader Gabriel Arthur prisoner. The Savannahs' first clue that Arthur was not a member of any neighboring Indian groups was the strange cut of his hair. Letter of Abraham Wood, August 22, 1674, in *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540-1800*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, TN: The Watauga Press, 1928), 36. In the early eighteenth century, a German observer noted, "Each nation has its own manner of cutting its hair, thereby they can distinguish one from the other. In battle they cut the upper part of the head hair from those they have conquered in order to see from what nation and tribe they are." Kristian Hvidt, ed., *Von Reck's Voyage: Drawings and Journal of Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1990), 40. In the mid-eighteenth century, as Mohawk warriors preyed upon Cherokee villages, "an old beloved man discovered them from the top of an adjoining hill, and knew them to be enemies, but the cut of their hair, light trim for running, and their postures." Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 379.

that realm. The human body is a remarkably adaptable canvas, and Native Southerners modified their appearances to reflect ethnic and political differences.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 2. Warriors planting arrows topped with pieces of their own hair outside an enemy village. Despite de Bry's tendency to idealize masculine bodies, historical evidence confirms warriors' emphasis on wearing distinctive hairstyles and leaving their mark on war sites.<sup>9</sup> Theodor de Bry engraving after an original drawing by Jacques LeMoyne de Morgues. Theodor de Bry, *Brevis narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae provi[n]cia Gallis acciderunt*, 1591, Vol. II, Plate 33. Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Native Southern chiefdoms were ranked societies. Atop the social and political order were chiefs, who reigned by virtue of their birth into the highest-ranking lineage. Chiefs were

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<sup>8</sup> John R. Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), 57, 118; Vincas P. Steponaitis and Vernon J. Knight, Jr., "Moundville Art in Historical and Social Context," in *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand*, 180; Lankford, "World on a String," 217.

<sup>9</sup> For warriors' leaving their mark in enemy territory, see *ibid.*, 184.

the ultimate connection to power, honor, security, even the sacred.<sup>10</sup> The chief's family members as well as his political and religious officers (who may have been relatives) also enjoyed high rank and its concomitant privileges. Beneath them, most inhabitants of chiefdoms lived as commoners; they owed chiefs a portion of their annual harvest, occasional labor, and, in the case of men, military service. At the very bottom of society were slaves—captives taken in warfare and retained by or given to chiefs as prestige goods. These captured enemies lived a precarious existence as tools of chiefly ambition.

Chiefs such as Ozita drew their power primarily from close association with the sacred. French planter Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz observed that the Natchez chief, or Great Sun, “is at the same time chief priest and sovereign of the nation.” The Great Sun, like other Native Southern chiefs, claimed descent from the Sun, a celestial deity of great importance for these agricultural people. Each morning the Great Sun arose early to honor his brother as he rose from the east, all the while saluting him and offering him tobacco. To symbolize his relationship with sacred birds of the Upper World, the Natchez Great Sun wore a crown of feathers.<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere in the Southeast, chiefs donned costumes that connected them with the Upper and Lower Worlds, and wore symbols indicating their mastery of supernatural power. As anthropologist Charles Hudson has explained, “the chief's person was sacred, and in rituals he represented the sacred.” Through esoteric knowledge, chiefs

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<sup>10</sup> Cameron B. Wesson, “Prestige Goods, Symbolic Capital, and Social Power in the Protohistoric Southeast,” in *Between Contacts and Colonies: Archaeological Perspectives on the Protohistoric Southeast*, eds. Cameron B. Wesson and Mark A. Rees (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Wesson, “Chiefly power and food storage in southeastern North America” *World Archaeology*. 31 (1999), 145-164; David H. Dye, “Art, Ritual, and Chiefly Warfare in the Mississippian World,” in *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand*.

<sup>11</sup> Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, ed. and trans. Joseph G. Tregle, Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 352; John R. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 102-7.

kept the three worlds in balance, ensuring their people agricultural success and protection from potential dangers in This World and beyond.<sup>12</sup>

Sacred power gave chiefs the authority to rule. Chiefly economies depended upon staple foods and prestige goods, and chiefs retained power by controlling both. According to French chroniclers, the Natchez were obliged to give their chief “the best of their harvest, and of their hunting and fishing.” Corn was by far the most important Mississippian staple, and subjects probably gave some percentage of their crop to a communal granary, which the chief then controlled as he saw fit.<sup>13</sup> Chiefs used their stores to feed visiting dignitaries or allies.<sup>14</sup> Centralized control over communal granaries also was practical, for it allowed chiefs to redistribute stores during times of famine. Prestige goods were also an essential component of Mississippian political economy. These were rare, exotic items available only to chiefs through trade with other chiefdoms. Because chiefs controlled the trade in prestige goods, common people lacked access to them. This restricted access, however, was not what made prestige goods valuable; rather, they symbolized otherworldly power which chiefs possessed. These items included shell jewelry and finely crafted ceramics etched with images from the Upper and Lower Worlds, ornamental weapons made of rare stone, the skins of symbolically potent animals (sometimes those of rare albino deer or buffalo), and mineral paints of ceremonial significance. Prestige goods also included captured enemies. Chiefs

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<sup>12</sup> Steponaitis and Knight, “Moundville Art,” 180; Susan C. Power, *Early Art of the Southeastern Indians: Feathered Serpents and Winged Beings* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 140; Lewis H. Larson, Jr., “The Etowah Site,” *The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis: The Cottonlandia Conference*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 139-41; Dye, “Art, Ritual, and Chiefly Warfare,” 196-98; Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, Charlevoix quotation on 102; Le Page du Pratz, *History of Louisiana*, 338-340.

<sup>14</sup> Marvin T. Smith and David J. Hally, “Chiefly Behavior: Evidence from Sixteenth Century Spanish Accounts,” *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association*, vol. 3 (1992), 99-109.

displayed these goods, especially in ritual and ceremony, to emphasize their mastery of spiritual power, and their ability to harness and control the supernatural in order to ensure the chiefdom's success in agriculture, diplomacy, and war.<sup>15</sup> Although chiefs controlled distribution of prestige goods, they did not hoard them. Instead, chiefs rewarded subordinates, including important warriors, religious figures, and members of their families.

To a degree, a chief also controlled the labor of his subjects. The Natchez Great Sun contracted his men as laborers to the French and received their wages. As Father Mathurin le Petit observed, "These people blindly obey the least wish of their great Chief. They look upon him as absolute master, not only of their property but also of their lives, and not one of them would dare to refuse him his head, if he should demand it; for whatever labors he commands them to execute, they are forbidden to exact any wages."<sup>16</sup> During the Soto expedition, chiefs routinely provided the conquistador with porters—sometimes hundreds of them at a time.<sup>17</sup> Archaeologists Marvin Smith and David Hally have speculated that to have provided so many burden-bearers for the Spanish, chiefs had the power to draw laborers from subordinate towns.<sup>18</sup>

The archaeological record provides ample evidence for social hierarchy in Native chiefdoms. Cahokia, just across the Mississippi River from modern-day St. Louis, was the

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<sup>15</sup> David Dye, "Feasting with the Enemy: Mississippian Warfare and Prestige-Goods Circulation," in *Native American Interactions: Multiscalar Analyses and Interpretations in the Eastern Woodlands*, eds. Michael S. Nassaney and Kenneth E. Sassaman (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 304.

<sup>16</sup> Mathurin le Petit to Père d'Avaugour, 12 July 1730, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France: 1610-1791*, LXVIII (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1900), 131.

<sup>17</sup> Le Petit in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 103; Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 164-65, 227, 232, 245.

<sup>18</sup> Smith and Hally, "Chiefly Behavior," 103.

largest pre-Columbian city north of Mexico with a population in the low tens of thousands. The city once boasted over 120 mounds, the largest of which, Monks' Mound, had a base the size of twelve football fields. Archaeological evidence indicates that elites and commoners had differential access to prestige goods, housing, food, and even the spirit world. Nowhere is this difference more apparent than at Mound 72, a mortuary mound south of Monks' Mound that has yielded the remains of 272 individuals. Mound 72, which Cahokians used between 1050 and 1150 A.D., contained several different burial episodes, but had a clear overall pattern: a few richly adorned, elite individuals were accompanied into the afterlife by scores of ritually executed people of low status. Containing grave goods commonly associated with Mississippian chiefs, the elite burials had a decidedly martial theme. One elite man lay atop 20,000 shell beads arranged in the form of a raptor, probably a falcon or eagle, birds closely associated with the sacred power of the Upper World. Among the most spectacular goods were projectile points—arrowheads—of exquisite craftsmanship and constructed from raw materials from throughout the region and as far away as Wisconsin. To complete the elite man's burial, Cahokians ceremonially executed fifty-three women between the ages of 20-25 and buried them alongside him. Another burial in Mound 72 yielded the remains of four men, whose heads and hands had been severed.<sup>19</sup>

The retainers of Mound 72 were almost certainly captives, enemies obtained through war or trade whose deaths were engineered to enhance the prestige of Cahokia's ruling class. Through analysis of retainers' dental and skeletal remains, physical anthropologists have found trace elements which indicate that many of the executed women came from outside the

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<sup>19</sup> George R. Milner, *The Cahokian Chiefdom: The Archaeology of a Mississippian Society* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 83-4, 136, 160-61; Thomas E. Emerson, *Cahokia and the Archaeology of Power* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 228; Melvin L. Fowler, Jerome Rose, Barbara Vander Leest, and Steven R. Ahler, *The Mound 72 Area: Dedicated and Sacred Space in Early Cahokia*. Illinois State Museum, Reports of Investigations, no. 54 (1999).

region. Additionally, the women's bodies exhibited signs of severe nutritional stress, suggesting that their diet consisted almost entirely of corn. Cahokian elites, by contrast, enjoyed a far more nutrient-rich diet. Other studies of Mississippian sites, including those of Cahokia and the surrounding area, indicate that even commoners maintained fairly good health and nutrition.<sup>20</sup> The malnourished state of these foreign women's bodies betrays their status as society's most marginal members.

Moundville, a spectacular Mississippian site along the Black Warrior River in modern Alabama, also provides clear archaeological evidence for social rank. This impressive site covers 185 acres and includes 29 earthen mounds. Archaeologist Vernon James Knight has described the Moundville site as a sociogram—a monument “deliberately arranged in such a manner as to evoke and reinforce key social distinctions.” The site's focal point is the plaza, which is surrounded on its four sides by a total of fifteen mounds that alternate between large and small. Knight suggests that each of Moundville's dominant kin groups controlled a pair of mounds, using the small one as a burial mound for elites and the other as a residence for highest-ranking members. Assuming that mound size correlates to lineage power, kin groups were ranked relative to one another. The ruling lineage—that of Moundville's chief—probably occupied the site's largest mound, Mound B, placed prominently on the north central axis of the plaza. Moundville was also an important ceremonial center, and elites

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<sup>20</sup> Stanley H. Ambrose, Jane Buikstra, and Harold W. Krueger, “Status and gender differences in diet at Mound 72, Cahokia, revealed by isotopic analysis of bone,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 22, no. 3 (2003): 217-226; Mary Lucas Powell, *Status and Health in Prehistory: A Case Study of the Moundville Chiefdom* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 197; Mary Lucas Powell, “Ranked Status and Health in the Mississippian Chiefdom at Moundville,” in *What Mean These Bones?*, ed. Powell, Patricia Bridges, and Anne Marie Mires (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 22-51. Alan H. Goodman and George J. Armelagos, however, did find that elite resource consumption negatively affected commoners' health in their case study. See “Death and Disease at Dr. Dickinson's Mounds,” *Natural History* 94 (1985), 12-18.

doubtlessly used public space, such as the plaza and its flanking mounds, to reinforce and legitimize social hierarchy.<sup>21</sup>

Over the past one hundred years of research, archaeologists have uncovered over 3,000 burials at Moundville. In their study of archaeological implications of social rank, Christopher Peebles and Susan Kus examined these burials, dividing them into three categories: elites, commoners, and “non-persons.” Like those of Cahokia, Moundville elite burials contained a rich array of trade and ceremonial goods including copper axes, pearl and shell beads, copper gorgets and ear spools, and mineral paints. Perhaps more significant than the grave goods are the location of the burials; the plaza’s mounds contain the most elaborate burials, while others of high-rank were interred in cemeteries flanking the mounds. Commoners’ burials occurred at a greater distance from the plaza, and they typically contained a few shell or ceramic goods or none at all. According to Peeble and Kus, the final type of burial is that of “non-persons”: “whole skeletons or isolated skeletal parts—usually skulls—that [were] used as ritual artifacts.” These human remains usually accompanied elite burials in the mounds flanking the plaza. The fact that many of these remains were either disarticulated skulls or decapitated bodies strongly suggests that these people were ritually executed to accompany an elite burial. Furthermore, the placement of these “non-persons” alongside burials with martial iconographic themes indicates that these corporal fragments belonged to captured enemies.<sup>22</sup> Even in the absence of written records, the physical remains of Southern chiefdoms betray a strictly ranked hierarchy; privileged elites dominated a large

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<sup>21</sup> Vernon James Knight Jr., “Moundville as a Diagrammatic Ceremonial Center,” in *Archaeology of the Moundville Chiefdom*, eds. Vernon James Knight, Jr. and Vincas P. Steponaitis (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 44-62; quotation on 60.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher S. Peebles and Susan M. Kus, “Some Archaeological Correlates of Ranked Societies,” *American Antiquity* 42, no. 3 (1977), 421-448; quotation on 439.



body of commoners and ruled absolutely over a small group of slaves—people of the lowest rank who lacked even the right to live.

The Natchez of the lower Mississippi Valley provide a historic-era example of rigid social rank. Into the early eighteenth century, they maintained five classes, which were, in descending order, Suns, Nobles, Honored Men, commoners, and slaves. Sumptuary rules set the Suns, the ruling class, apart from the rest of society. In the early eighteenth century, Father Charlevoix, a Jesuit missionary, described the deference other Natchez showed the Suns:

Their subjects, and even the chiefs of their villages, never come into their presence without saluting them thrice, and raising a cry, or rather a sort of howling. They do the same thing when they withdraw, and always retire going backwards. When they meet them they are obliged to stop, range themselves in order on the road, and howl in the manner above mentioned till they are passed. . . . In fine, no one, not even their nearest relations, and those who compose their nobility, when they have the honour to eat with them, have a right to drink out of the same cup, or put their hands in the same dish.<sup>23</sup>

In his diary, another Jesuit, Paul du Ru, expressed doubt that Native Americans were sophisticated enough to maintain a ranked society. His first meeting the Great Sun, however, banished such illusions: “The chief’s manner impresses me; he has the air of an ancient emperor, a long face, sharp eyes, and imperious aquiline nose, a chestnut complexion, and manners somewhat Spanish. . . . The respect with which the other Savages approach and serve him is astonishing.”<sup>24</sup> Like the ancient Cahokians, the Natchez, too, executed people of low rank that they might accompany Suns into the afterlife. Upon the death of a Sun, the

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<sup>23</sup> P.F.X. Charlevoix, 25 December 1721, *Journal of a Voyage to North America*, trans. Louise Phelps Kellogg (London: Dodsley, 1761), 261.

<sup>24</sup> Paul du Ru, 12 March 1700, *Journal of Paul du Ru, February 1 to May 8, 1700*, trans. Ruth Lapham Butler (Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1934), 34.

Natchez ritually strangled the deceased's slaves during funerary ceremonies.<sup>25</sup> In the world of chiefdoms, captives ranked at the very bottom of a stratified social order; many found themselves slaves for life—and sometimes longer.

### *Warfare*

As anthropologist Robert Carneiro noted, warfare is endemic in chiefly societies.<sup>26</sup> Archaeological evidence confirms that warfare between Native Southern groups reached back to at least 3000 B.C., but the dawn of the Mississippian era and its chiefly competition brought unprecedented violence to the region. Archaeologist David Dye argued, “The heavily fortified towns constructed across the Southeast and Midwest—with their palisaded walls, bastions, and dry moats—and the emphasis on heroic combat in Mississippian art and ritual bear mute witness to the stark reality of this conflict.”<sup>27</sup> Southeastern bodies also bore the marks of this age of violent warfare. Mississippian people, especially men, suffered death from traumatic injuries at far higher rates than did their ancestors. At Koger's Island, a Mississippian mortuary site in Alabama, physical anthropologists concluded that traumatic violence resulted in the death of over one-third of adult men and nearly one-quarter of adult women. Compared to peoples living in the same area during the Archaic era (circa 7000-1000 B.C.), Mississippians were three times more likely to die violently. Several other

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<sup>25</sup> From the Luxembourg Memoir, in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 100. Free people were also executed to accompany Natchez elites into the afterlife. When Spaniard Juan Lopez de Velasco visited the Calusa in the late sixteenth century, he noted “When the cacique [chief] himself, or the cacique dies, every servant of his or hers, as the case may be, is put to death.” Quoted in John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 389.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Carneiro, “The Chiefdom as Precursor of the State,” in *The Transition to Statehood in the New World*, ed. G. Jones and R. Kautz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 39-79.

<sup>27</sup> Maria O. Smith, “Scalping in the Archaic Period: Evidence from the Western Tennessee Valley” *Southeastern Archaeology* 14 (1995), 60-68; Dye, “Art, Ritual, and Chiefly Warfare,” 193.

individuals at Koger had healed fractures, including one woman who had survived a violent blow to the face only to later perish of other traumatic wounds, including a scalped cranium. While Koger Island is probably an extreme case, it is also emblematic of the escalating level of violence wrought by emerging chiefdoms.<sup>28</sup>

In the South, chiefs engaged in hegemonic warfare, in which they competed not for territory, but control over neighboring resources and labor in order to finance their staple and prestige goods economies. In the 1560s, Chief Potavou explained to visiting Frenchmen why he began a war against the nearby chiefdom of Outina: “[H]e feared that Outina and his companions would take the hard stone [chert] from his lands to arm their arrows and that they would not be able to get any at a closer place.”<sup>29</sup> At that time, chert was a valuable stone used to make arrow points and, perhaps more importantly, ornamental weapons carried by elites. Potavou was willing to launch a preemptive strike against Outina in order to preserve his access to such an essential resource. Into the early eighteenth century, the culturally conservative Natchez declared war on neighbors who poached their game.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to popular belief, Native groups maintained a clear sense of their own territories.<sup>31</sup> As agriculturalists with relatively dense populations, each Native group fought to maintain its right to rich soil, game, salt, and minerals. If conquered by a more powerful chiefdom, a

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<sup>28</sup> Patricia S. Bridges, Keith P. Jacobi, Mary Lucas Powell, “Warfare-Related Trauma in the Late Prehistory of Alabama,” in *Bioarchaeological Studies of Life in the Age of Agriculture: A View from the Southeast*, ed. Patricia M. Lambert (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 44-58. As Bridges, Jacobi, and Powell note, the rate of violent death at Koger was higher than other outlying sites. See also Dye, “Warfare in the Protohistoric Southeast,” 128.

<sup>29</sup> Laudonniere, *Three Voyages*, 77.

<sup>30</sup> DuPratz in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 127.

<sup>31</sup> Nancy Shoemaker explored Indians’ understand of territorial sovereignty in *A Strange Likeness*, 15-28.

group might be forced to become tributaries, giving the best of their land's products to a foreign chief.

Warfare often came in the form of quick, deadly assaults on enemy chiefdoms and ranged in scale from small ambushes to mass invasions.<sup>32</sup> One Soto chronicler described smaller scale warfare as “surprise attacks on the fisheries, hunting grounds, cultivated fields, and roads, wherever they could find their adversaries off guard.”<sup>33</sup> The Apalachees, who resided near modern Tallahassee, Florida, proved to be particularly adept at this sort of warfare; they harried the invading Spaniards throughout the winter of 1539-1540. During the winter, the Spaniards occupied Anhayca, the chiefdom's principal town. Apparently, the strategy of the Apalachee chief, Capafi, was constant irritation rather than direct confrontation. Warriors sometimes attacked in small groups at night, and they twice set Anhayca on fire. Whenever the Spaniards strayed from the village to hunt or collect firewood, Apalachees assaulted them. According to soldier Alonso de Carmona, Apalachees succeeded in killing twenty members of the expedition in this way.<sup>34</sup>

Chiefdoms also fought large-scale battles and conducted siege warfare. Villages were often heavily fortified, surrounded by tall, wooden palisades punctuated by watchtowers. At the fortified village of Mabila in present-day central Alabama, Chief Tascaluza hatched a plot to destroy Soto and his army. Luring de Soto and key members of his retinue into the town with a promise to give them additional slaves, Tascaluza then closed the gates, trapping the expedition's leaders inside and leaving the Spanish army outside. From within the town,

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<sup>32</sup> Karl T. Steinen, “Ambushes, Raids, and Palisades: Mississippian Warfare in the Interior Southeast,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 11 (1992), 132-39.

<sup>33</sup> Garcilasso, “La Florida by the Inca,” II, 439.

<sup>34</sup> Garcilasso quoted a passage from Alonso de Carmona in “La Florida by the Inca,” II, 252; Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 138-42.

roughly five thousand warriors emerged from their hiding places and attacked de Soto and his men; from the palisade's bastions, archers shot at the exposed army. In preparation for the battle, warriors had burned houses and cleared trees to give them a clear view of their enemies. Had the Spaniards not breached the palisade wall with their steel axes, Tascaluza and his people would have succeeded in their goal (later stated by survivors) to kill or enslave all the Spaniards and the captive Indians in their service.<sup>35</sup>

Chiefdoms also fought pitched battles in open fields. During an inter-chiefdom conflict in northern Florida, Frenchmen observed organized Native troops marching in formation against one another. The French also noted that during sieges, attacking warriors lighted arrows topped with pitch-doused moss and rained fire upon enemy villages (see figure 3). Because warriors traveled lightly, without stores of ammunition and food, they did not remain in the field for long periods of time. Rather, they sought to maximize enemy casualties in a relatively short amount of time. Chiefs intended these short strikes to frighten and demoralize enemy peoples. In fact, victorious forces seem to have routinely destroyed enemy temples. These temples held the bones of the chief's ancestors as well as prestige goods and sacred art; destruction of these most precious objects symbolized complete domination over an enemy people.

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<sup>35</sup> Biedma, "Relation of the Island of Florida," I, 232-36; Elvas, "Account by a Gentleman from Elvas," I, 99-104; Rangel, "Account of the Northern Conquest," I, 292-94; Garcilasso, "La Florida by the Inca," II, 352-53.



Figure 3. Native warriors shot fire-tipped arrows into enemy villages, igniting thatched roofs. Note the wooden palisade surrounding the village. Theodor de Bry engraving after an original drawing by Jacques LeMoyne de Morgues. Theodor de Bry, *Brevis narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae provi[n]cia Gallis acciderunt*, 1591, Vol. II, Plate 31. Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Once enemies accepted defeat, they entered into a tributary relationship with the victorious chief, giving him a share of their resources. In 1560, warriors from the Coosa chiefdom set out against the recalcitrant Napochies. Twenty years earlier, the Soto entrada encountered the Coosa chiefdom at its height; over 200 miles long, the chiefdom stretched from Chiaha in eastern Tennessee to Talisi in central Alabama, controlling between seven and ten subordinate chiefdoms. Perhaps due to epidemic disease, Coosa's control over its subordinates had weakened, and some now refused to pay the chief tribute. The Napochies, who lived to the Northwest, had cut ties with their former overlords by killing a number of Coosas. When Major Sergeant Mateo del Sauz arrived in 1560 as part of the Tristan de Luna

expedition, the chief of Coosa enlisted the captain as well as twenty-five Spanish cavalry and an equal number of infantrymen to punish the Napochies. On the way to Napochie, the Coosa warriors marched in an equal-arms cross formation as directed by their war captains. Upon reaching the Napochie village, the Coosas and Spaniards found it deserted, but finally caught up to the warriors, who had barricaded themselves in a fortified village across the Tennessee River. Initially, the Napochies ridiculed the Coosas, but when a Spaniard fired his gun and killed a Napochie, they were surprised and intimidated. Perhaps believing the shooting a bad omen, the Napochies surrendered. They agreed to resume their tribute to Coosa in the form of game, fruits, and nuts, paid three times annually.<sup>36</sup>

The world of chiefdoms was a dangerous one, and non-elites submitted to chiefly authority, at least in part, because they needed protection. Chiefdoms maintained a hierarchical settlement pattern, wherein outlying villages and farmsteads flanked the chief's central town.<sup>37</sup> The chief negotiated peace between neighboring towns and commanded a coalition of warriors to fight outside threats. Physical evidence painfully bears out this dangerous reality. Small and medium-sized towns Mississippian settlements in what is today Alabama had much greater rates of mortality than palisaded chiefs' towns such as Moundville. About ten percent of those at outlying sites suffered violent death due to scalping, cranial fractures, severed limbs, and imbedded arrows; they were sometimes interred in mass graves. In contrast, researchers found no evidence of death due to violent trauma at Moundville, though two individuals had survived earlier scalplings. Although living under the shadow of theocratic chiefs may have been oppressive at times, this evidence

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<sup>36</sup> Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 217; Charles M. Hudson, "A Spanish-Coosa Alliance in Sixteenth-Century North Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 62 (1988), 599-626.

<sup>37</sup> Hally, "Platform-Mound Construction and the Instability of Mississippian Chiefdoms," 97-102.

suggests that such chiefs controlled real military power that enabled them to protect their people and inflict damage on weaker neighbors.<sup>38</sup>

Displaying their spiritual power, chiefs used ritual to control warfare. In 1564, Frenchman Rene Laudonniere witnessed Chief Satouriona's preparations for war against his enemy, Chief Thimogona. Laudonniere reported that Satouriona walked down to the St. Johns River, where subordinate chiefs brought him water. "This being done, he looked up to heaven and began to discuss many things by gestures, showing a great heat in his emotions



Figure 4. Chief Satouriona's ceremonial preparation for battle. Note the drops of water, signifying the blood of Satourina's enemies. This drawing also richly illustrates the costume of Mississippian warriors. Satourina's elaborate tattooing signifies his high rank. His feathered crown invokes his connection to the Upper World. Also note the war clubs and animal skins of other warriors. Theodor de Bry engraving after an original drawing by Jacques LeMoyne de Morgues. Theodor de Bry, *Brevis narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae provi[n]cia Gallis acciderunt*, 1591, Vol. II, Plate 11. Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>38</sup> Bridges, Jacobi, and Powell, "Warfare-Related Trauma," 40-44; David H. Dye, "Warfare in the Protohistoric Southeast, 1500-1700, in *Between Contacts and Colonies*, 128.



and shaking his head first one way and then another. Then with a wrath such as I have never seen before, he turned his face toward the direction of his enemies to threaten them with death. He also looked toward the sun, praying for glorious victory over his enemies.”

Demonstrating his control over cosmic forces, Satouriona threw drops of water, a substance from the Lower World, into a fire, an earthly representation of the sun. Claiming power over life and death, the chief explained that he would scatter the blood of his enemies.

Through ritual, Satouriona invoked his intimate connection with the spirit world, then promised to use that sacred power to defeat the chiefdom’s enemies.<sup>39</sup>

### *Captivity*

Much as chiefs controlled the preparations and execution of war, they also laid claim to its spoils. Through capture and domination of enemy people, a chief demonstrated his mastery of the outside world—not only of neighboring chiefdoms, but also the sacred power of the Upper and Lower Worlds that had provided the requisite knowledge for victory. Chief Satouriona attributed his warriors’ success against Thimogona to the efficacy of his ritual. Satouriona hung the enemies’ scalps outside his house “thus showing by this spectacle the triumph of the victory he had achieved.” The chief also controlled Thimogona captives; he chose the first thirteen for himself, then divided the rest among his subordinate chiefs.<sup>40</sup>

Chiefs controlled war captives and used them in a variety of ways to aggrandize their power. First, chiefs exploited captives as prestige goods to augment their own symbolic

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<sup>39</sup> Rene Laudonniere, *Three Voyages*, trans. Charles E. Bennett (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 83.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

capital. Just as Mississippian chiefs attempted to direct the flow of precious stones, shells, and medals, so too did they try to control foreign people in their territory. Because captives were vanquished enemies from the outside world, chiefs used them to demonstrate their mastery over external forces. Chiefs might ritually kill captives, retain them as servants, or give them away to supporters. By manipulating captives as living symbols of domination, chiefs enhanced their own power.<sup>41</sup> Chiefs also retained captives as laborers, who performed practical domestic and agrarian tasks. On occasion, chiefs might have extended kin ties to lucky captives, perhaps to those with valuable skills or elites from other chiefdoms. The experiences of Juan Ortiz, whose saga began this chapter, illustrate chiefly goals and prerogatives in dealing with conquered enemies.

By killing Chief Ozita's mother and maiming the chief, Narvaéz and his expedition insulted the chiefdom's ruling family, and perhaps revealed to commoners the vulnerability of Ozita's semi-divine lineage. Such an assault demanded retribution. The chief's warriors brought the prisoners from the Narvaéz expedition directly to him, for only Ozita could mete out punishment to these offenders. Accordingly, Ozita announced that the Spaniards would soon be ritually killed one by one in his village plaza. Ozita fulfilled his promise until only Ortiz remained.<sup>42</sup> Ozita ordered that Ortiz be placed atop a grill made of cane poles. After the flames had roasted half of the Spaniard's flesh, Ozita relented and decided to allow Ortiz to live, perhaps persuaded by his daughter that "it would be more to his honor to hold him captive."<sup>43</sup> Having purged his sorrow and exacted revenge on Ortiz's companions, Ozita

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<sup>41</sup> Wesson, "Prestige Goods, Symbolic Capital, and Social Power"; Wesson, "Chiefly Power and Food Storage," 145-164.

<sup>42</sup> Garcilasso, "La Florida by the Inca," II, 103.

<sup>43</sup> Because it seems that Garcilasso romanticized his account of Ortiz's torture, I rely on Elvas here. Elvas, "The Account by a Gentleman from Elvas," I, 60.

decided that Ortiz, now degraded and physically impaired, would serve as a living symbol of Ozita's power. According to one chronicler, Ozita sometimes forced Ortiz to run back and forth across the town plaza, as villagers ridiculed and shot arrows at him.<sup>44</sup> By ritually killing Ortiz's companions and displaying absolute control over the captured Spaniard's life, Ozita reasserted his own power, demonstrating to villagers that he retained the authority to rule.

Chiefs used the capture and control of enemy peoples to intimidate neighboring groups and broadcast martial feats throughout the region. Pedro Menéndez de Aviles, founder of St. Augustine, ransomed dozens of shipwrecked Spaniards from chiefs in Southern Florida and the Keys. He reported that these chiefs "consider [captive-holding] a great glory and victory for them and the other caciques [chiefs] of the interior may hold a high opinion of them and they may triumph, saying that they live on the seashore and are the masters of the Christians and hold them as slaves."<sup>45</sup> Because they lived in a more marginal environment where agriculture was not sustainable, chiefs of southern Florida had traditionally commanded fewer resources and less power than their counterparts further north. However, these chiefs felt empowered by controlling the Spaniards—the "Christians"—who washed upon their shores.

Beyond exploiting captives' symbolic value, chiefs also used conquered enemies in practical ways. Ortiz became a public servant available to households in the community. Ozita forced Ortiz to carry firewood and water to all the villagers.<sup>46</sup> Among later

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<sup>44</sup> Garcilasso, "La Florida by the Inca," II, 103.

<sup>45</sup> Pedro Menéndez de Aviles to the King of Spain, 1572, trans. J.T. Conner, in *New American World: A Documentary History of North American to 1612*, eds. David B. Quinn, Alison M. Quinn, and Susan Hillier, 5 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), II, 588-89.

<sup>46</sup> Garcilasso, "La Florida by the Inca," II, 103, 117.

Southeastern Indians, gathering wood and fetching water was the task of women and children. Mid-eighteenth-century Choctaw warriors, for example, “consider[ed] that that [task] would dishonor them.”<sup>47</sup> By forcing Ortiz to perform tasks inappropriate for his sex and age, Ozita probably wished to emasculate Ortiz and reinforce his degraded status as a non-warrior. In addition to his service to village households, Ortiz became a guardian of the town’s charnel house. Widespread throughout the Native South, charnel houses held the decaying bodies of deceased elite men, women, and children, whose bones were thereafter placed inside special chests stored in sacred temples. Ortiz had to remain awake every night to protect the bodies from scavenging animals. One night, as Ortiz dozed, a wolf entered the temple and dragged off the body of an elite boy. Waking with start, Ortiz pursued the wolf into the dark forest. Somehow the Spaniard managed to strike the wolf with a spear and recover the boy’s body. Thereafter, Ozita relented a bit in his harsh treatment of Ortiz. After Ortiz’s extraordinary feat, Ozita may have feared that the Spaniard possessed spiritual power of his own.<sup>48</sup>

Elsewhere in the sixteenth-century Southeast, chiefs used captives as commodities—trade goods of value. Because captives were conquered enemies devoid of kin ties or political stature, Southeastern chiefs were not bound to respect them as full human beings. Thus, they could employ captives’ bodies to enhance their own economic or political fortunes. On

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<sup>47</sup> Excerpt from an anonymous French writer, circa 1755, in Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 139. Chickasaw men also never performed such tasks. Thomas Nairne reported in 1708, “It’s reckoned beneath a man to touch a howe or bring a little wood to the fire.” Thomas Nairne, *Nairne’s Muskhogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River*, ed. Alexander Moore (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1988), 48. In his captivity on the coast of modern-day Texas, Cabeza de Vaca also carried wood and water. Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, *The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca*, trans. Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 105, n. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Elvas, “The Account by a Gentleman from Elvas,” I, 62; Garcilasso, “La Florida by the Inca,” II, 104-6. Although Garcilasso claims that the wolf was a panther (then called a “lion”), Hudson asserts that panthers are not scavengers, and upholds Elvas’ account. Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 81, 492 n. 53.

several occasions during the Soto expedition, chiefs willingly gave the Spaniards women to serve as sex slaves and laborers. Misconstruing this practice, the Spaniards believed that these chiefs readily gifted their own women, even their relatives, and deduced that Native Southern societies placed little value on women. However, when Soto and his men attempted to take women by force, chiefdoms responded violently. Because Southeastern Indians lived in matrilineal societies heavily dependent on female-controlled agricultural production, they esteemed women as creators and sustainers of life. Thus, chiefs surely did not offer up kin or female subjects; rather, they most likely gave the Spaniards women who were *already enslaved*—war captives from previous campaigns against enemies. Early Spanish accounts report that chiefs eager to make alliances invariably offered gifts as a way to initiate peaceful diplomacy. Along with valuable animal skins, jewelry, ornamental weapons, and minerals, generous chiefs offered their would-be allies captive women.<sup>49</sup> As historian Brett Rushforth has noted, a gift of captives was a powerful overture of peace, signifying “the opposite of warfare, the giving rather than the taking of life.”<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, chiefs probably granted captives to valued subordinates in return for loyalty or favors. During the Soto expedition, Chief Tasculuza persuaded his own people as well as those from several neighboring chiefdoms to join him in a plot to lure the leaders of the Soto expedition inside the palisaded village at Mabila and then destroy them. Tasculuza’s plan backfired after Soto’s army managed to breach the palisade and slaughter the Native warriors inside. From Native survivors of the Battle of Mabila, the Spaniards learned that the great chief had promised his collaborators war spoils—the Spanish and the Indians they had

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<sup>49</sup> The expedition received women at Talisi, Itaba, Ulibahali, and Toasi. David Dye, “Feasting with the Enemy,” 290-91; Smith and Hally, “Chiefly Behavior,” 104-105; Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 303, 310.

<sup>50</sup> Rushforth, “A Little Flesh We Offer You,” 785.

enslaved earlier in the expedition would serve the victors. By using captives to reward subordinates and forge alliances, chiefs converted conquered people into political capital.

Chiefs also chose to retain their captives as domestic slaves or agricultural laborers. Some captives acted as personal servants. When the de Soto expedition captured the Lady of Cofitachequi, a female chief who resided near modern Camden in South Carolina, she brought several “slave women” who attended her and carried her possessions.<sup>51</sup> In the sixteenth century, Spanish chroniclers reported that Calusa chiefs of Southern Florida commanded a number of captives, many of whom were shipwrecked Spaniards. Thirteen-year-old Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, born in Cartagena, was on his way to be educated in Spain when his ship sank near Calusa country around 1550. Although the Calusa chief, called “Carlos” by the Spanish, killed many of Fontaneda’s companions, the chief preserved Fontaneda, perhaps because of his youth. Fontaneda learned the Calusa language as well as three other Native Floridian tongues. The young linguist became very useful to Chief Carlos, who had grown frustrated with Spanish captives who could not understand his commands. He retained Fontaneda as a translator, and the Spaniard remained among the Calusas until he was ransomed at the age of thirty.<sup>52</sup>

In Cofitachequi’s chiefdom and in another near the Mississippi River, Soto and his Spaniards saw maimed war captives engaged in agricultural labor, cultivating the fields of their masters. To prevent escape, captors sometimes severed their captives’ Achilles tendons

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<sup>51</sup> Elvas, “The Account by a Gentleman from Elvas,” I, 86.

<sup>52</sup> Memorial of Hernando Escalante Fontaneda, circa 1575, trans. Buckingham Smith, in *New American World*, V, 7-14. Fontaneda’s memoir does not reveal the details of his rescue, but Pedro Menéndez de Aviles ransomed many Calusa captives. Pedro Menéndez de Aviles to the King of Spain, 1572, trans. J.T. Conner, in *New American World*, Vol. II: 588-89; Lopez de Velasco, from the Brooks Manuscript, in Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians*, 389. Like the Cahokians and the Natchez, the Calusas ritually killed retainers to accompany chiefs into the afterlife.

or cut off their toes, practices that continued into the eighteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca learned that captive life among hunter-gatherers required almost unbearably difficult labor. Like Ortiz, Cabeza de Vaca was a member of the Narvaéz expedition who survived a decade of captivity. After a hurricane destroyed their ships, Cabeza de Vaca and some companions constructed rafts and attempted to sail to Veracruz. Predictably, their attempt was not successful, and they washed ashore on the Gulf coast of modern Texas, nearly dead from thirst, hunger, and exposure. There, Cabeza de Vaca became the servant of a local family:

[A]mong many other tasks, I had to dig the roots to eat out from under the water and among the rushes where they grew in the ground. And because of this, my fingers were so worn that when a reed touched them it caused them to bleed, and the reeds cut me in many places because many of them were broken, and I had to enter into the thick of them with the [few] clothes I have said I was wearing.<sup>54</sup>

Hard work combined with physical abuse made for arduous labor in even simple economies. Even in the absence of a profit-oriented economy, enslavement was physically demanding and personally degrading.

After several years of harsh captivity under Ozita, Juan Ortiz was fortunate enough to gain a new master who made his life far more bearable. Mococho, a neighboring chief, made war upon Ozita and succeeded in destroying his enemy's principal town. The war forced Ozita and his subordinates to flee to a tributary village. Taking advantage of the upheaval, Juan Ortiz presented himself to Mococho. Throughout history, enslaved people chose to seek better circumstances during wartime, which created both chaos and opportunity. Luckily for

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<sup>53</sup> Garcilasso, "La Florida by the Inca," II, 312, 400, 439. John Lawson also noted the practice among early-eighteenth-century Carolina Natives. John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, ed. Hugh Talmadge Lefleur (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 59, 208.

<sup>54</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, *Narrative*, 96.

Ortiz, Mocozo welcomed him, but stipulated that Ortiz must never run away to another chief. Mocozo even adopted Ortiz as a kinsman and “he treated him like a well-beloved brother.”<sup>55</sup> Prior to his adoption, Ortiz’s existence had been precarious, dependent on the whims of an angry and vengeful master. After becoming kin to Mocozo, however, Ortiz became a member of a prestigious clan, which guaranteed him the right to live and protected him from physical abuse or degrading labor. Although free, Ortiz had to remain within the bounds of Mocozo’s realm because the chief could only guarantee the Spaniard’s safety therein. Elsewhere, Ortiz had no kin ties to protect him, and warriors from rival chiefdoms, especially Ozita, could easily enslave or kill him.<sup>56</sup>

In adopting Ortiz, Mocozo employed a far different strategy to enhance his power than did Ozita. Unlike Ozita, Mocozo probably did not endure personal tragedy at the hands of the Narvaéz expedition, but he had doubtlessly heard of the Spaniards’ arrival so near his homeland. Like most chiefs, Mocozo did not regard Spaniards as godlike beings from another world; rather, Mocozo understood them as fellow human beings who seemed to possess considerable military might and potentially dangerous powers of destruction. While Ozita chose to confirm his spiritual power and political dominance by humiliating Ortiz, Mocozo sought to tame the foreigner through incorporation. Employing the Spaniard as an informant and advisor, Mocozo probably hoped to use Ortiz’s knowledge to understand Spanish motivations and ambitions in peninsular Florida. For several decades, shipwrecked Spaniards had washed up on the shores, and aspiring conquerors had traversed swamps and

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<sup>55</sup> I have followed Elvas’ account of Mocozo’s victory over the Ozita chiefdom, which seems the most plausible account of how Ortiz escaped captivity under Ozita. “The Account by a Gentleman of Elvas,” I, 62. Quotation from Garcilasso, “La Florida by the Inca,” II, 109.

<sup>56</sup> Garcilasso, “La Florida by the Inca,” II, 117.



dense forests in search of precious medals. Mococho suspected Ortiz would not be the last Spaniard to enter his territory. The chief was correct, for eight years after he adopted Ortiz, the de Soto expedition arrived. Mococho heard of the expedition before they actually reached his territory, and he informed Ortiz that his countrymen had returned. Ortiz, however, thought that the chief was only testing his loyalty and replied that he wished to remain with Mococho. The chief persisted and organized a small group of warriors to accompany Ortiz back to his people, but bade the Spaniard to remember his generosity and kindness. Just as Ortiz's adoption by Mococho had saved the Spaniard's life during perilous times, so too would bonds of kinship protect Mococho and his people from the unpredictably violent Soto expedition.<sup>57</sup>

As Juan Ortiz's saga reveals, the South's Native people maintained a broad captivity continuum and had probably done so for hundreds of years. Chiefs used captives for a variety of purposes, but they always attempted to control these conquered enemies and exploit them to aggrandize chiefly power. Because chiefs managed war and commanded its spoils, they directed the fates of captives. Captured enemies thus became prestige goods; like exotic shells, precious metals, and valuable furs, captives were trade goods with value, and their disposal fell to chiefs. Just as chiefs attempted to limit distribution of other prestige goods, they may have purposely rarified captives. By restricting the number and possession of captured enemies, chiefs employed captives as versatile symbols of their own power.

### *A Changing World*

When Europeans invaded the Southeast, Native peoples initially responded according to pre-existing political and social mores. Initially, chiefs received Spanish conquistadores as

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<sup>57</sup> Elvas, "The Account by a Gentleman of Elvas," I, 62; Garcilasso, "La Florida by the Inca," II, 111-13.

powerful, if rude, visiting dignitaries. Unsure of the invaders' intentions, Native chiefs responded in variety of ways: Tasculuza attempted to defeat and enslave the foreigners; Ozita wished to make a pathetic spectacle of Juan Ortiz to reinforce his own chiefly power; Mocozo's adoption of Juan Ortiz indicates his interest in forming alliances with the Spaniards.

In the early South, chiefs did not distinguish between Native and non-Native captives. A Spanish sergeant who served with Juan Pardo's expeditions in the 1560s observed "that the Indians were as cruel to other Indians they killed or captured in war as they were to the Spaniards."<sup>58</sup> Initially, Native Southerners did not create new categories for Africans and Europeans; they applied the same treatment to these newcomers as other conquered enemies. At the bottom of a hierarchical society, Juan Ortiz and Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda Ortiz and Fontaneda, like other slaves, served the chiefs who held them. In dealing with the invading Europeans, Native chiefs continued the diplomatic legacies of their privileged ancestors.

Uncowed by European technology, unimpressed with Spanish religious overtures, and seemingly unfazed by the physical appearance of the newcomers, Native Southerners probably did not afford their "first encounter" the monumental significance that modern historians bestow upon that event. In fact, chiefs of the Mississippi River Valley successfully expelled the de Soto expedition from the continent, pushing the starving, miserable army into the Gulf of Mexico in a handful of makeshift rafts.

Within a few decades, however, the European and African newcomers did succeed in severely disrupting Native Southern life, not with lances and horses, but with silent, terrible

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<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Charles Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions: Exploration of the Carolinas and Tennessee, 1566-68*, trans. Paul E. Hoffman (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 27.

killers—epidemic diseases. As one scholar has explained, “Before Europeans initiated the Columbian Exchange of germs and viruses, the peoples of the Americas suffered no smallpox, no measles, no chickenpox, no influenza, no typhus, no typhoid or paratyphoid fever, no diphtheria, no cholera, no bubonic plague, no scarlet fever, no whooping cough, and no malaria.”<sup>59</sup> Because Native Americans had never been exposed to these Old World diseases, they lacked the immunity that most Europeans and Africans had already acquired. Thus, in the Americas, “virgin soil epidemics” took life in devastating proportions, killing the young, old, and even those in the prime of life. Waves of disease, sometimes several at once, struck Native villages. Because virgin soil epidemics affected entire populations, the diseases created further destruction by disabling society’s farmers and hunters.<sup>60</sup> Scholars disagree on when the first round of epidemics struck the American South, but diseases almost certainly accompanied the 1565 foundation of St. Augustine, a small outpost that nonetheless harbored peoples from throughout the Atlantic world.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Henry F. Dobyns, *The Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 34-35.

<sup>60</sup> Alfred Crosby, “Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 33 (1976), 289-99.

<sup>61</sup> Dobyns argued that smallpox probably hit the region around 1520 or shortly thereafter. In *Their Number Become Thinned*, 25. N. David Cook cited the same smallpox epidemics and also asserted that the Narvaéz expedition brought disease to La Florida via Cuba in 1528. In *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 64-65. In his assessment of historical and archaeological evidence, Hudson argued that “the principal impact of epidemics on the Indians of the Southeast was during the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century”—when St. Augustine and Floridian missions brought Caribbean, European, and African peoples to the region. In *Knights of Spain*, 422. Paul Kelton hazarded a much later estimate—perhaps as late as 1696 for people of the interior Southeast—in “The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, 1696-1700: The Region’s First Major Epidemic,” in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, eds. Robbie Etheridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 21-38. Peter Wood has demonstrated that the Native Southern population declined throughout most of the colonial period, until the mid eighteenth-century, when numbers began to rise. Peter H. Wood, “The Changing Population of the Colonial South, 1685-1790,” *Powahatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 119-121.

Demographic devastation severely compromised chiefly political economies. Because killers like smallpox and influenza struck the young and able-bodied, societies' most productive hunters and farmers were no longer able to produce the staple surpluses on which Mississippian elites depended. Disease also claimed the lives of artisans and disrupted trade networks that had brought prestige goods into Mississippian communities. One-hundred years after the Soto expedition, Native Southerners lacked the population and economic power needed to support chiefdoms.<sup>62</sup>

As chiefdoms fell, so too did the social system that legitimized and supported privileged leaders. Kin groups began to take charge of duties formerly belonging to chiefs. In the seventeenth century, the communal granaries formerly controlled by chiefs disappeared; in their place appeared household corn cribs presumably controlled by extended families. Formerly chiefs' burials were the only ones that yielded exotic prestige goods, but in the seventeenth century non-elites carried their valuable trade goods into the afterlife. Mound construction ceased and temples fell into disrepair.<sup>63</sup> In their oral tradition, Cherokees commemorated the fall of chiefs, whom they called the *Aní-Kutánî*. The Cherokees recall that the *Aní-Kutánî* were a privileged class of oppressors who based their authority upon spiritual power. Non-elite Cherokees overthrew the *Aní-Kutánî*, killing all of them.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Timucuas, Guales, and Apalachees preserved chiefly political organization into the early eighteenth century—longer than elsewhere in the Native South. John Worth has argued that although war and disease significantly weakened these chiefdoms, the Spanish mission system helped preserve them. John E. Worth, "Spanish Missions and the Persistence of Chiefly Power," in *Transformation of the Southeastern Indians*, 39-64.

<sup>63</sup> Wesson, "Chiefly power and food storage"; Dye, "Warfare in the Protohistoric Southeast"; Marvin T. Smith, *The Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change in the Interior Southeast: Depopulation during the Early Historic Period* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1987).

<sup>64</sup> James Mooney, "Cherokee Mound-Building," *American Anthropologist*. 2 (1889), 167-71; Raymond D. Fogelson, "Who Were the *Aní-Kutánî*? An Excursion into Cherokee Historical Thought," *Ethnohistory*. 31 (1984), 255-63.

After the fall of the region's chiefdoms, Native Southerners developed new ways of governing and organizing themselves. As historian Paul Kelton has shown, "Native Americans were capable of responding creatively to epidemics and avoiding complete physical and spiritual destruction."<sup>65</sup> As chiefdoms splintered, the hierarchical settlement pattern once mandated by chiefs collapsed, and those formerly living in outlying villages and farms moved into central towns. Gradually, these towns forged alliances with one another, and new Native nations emerged. These nations often contained the remnants of several different chiefdoms, and their inhabitants had diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.<sup>66</sup> Although often only loosely integrated, post-contact Native nations maintained peace within and fought outside enemies. Towns of disparate heritage came together in times of war and crisis. Instead of relying on the authority of theocratic chiefs, they depended upon what were probably old Southeastern institutions—the matrilineal kinship system and the village—to guide their societies.<sup>67</sup> The largest nations, which endure to the present, include the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole. Throughout the eighteenth century, these nations continued to absorb smaller groups.

The fall of chiefdoms necessarily tolled the end of chiefly warfare. No longer would elite prerogatives guide the martial lives of Native Southerners. Beginning in the seventeenth century, clans took charge of their own disputes. Formerly, as in the case of the Coosas'

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<sup>65</sup> Paul Kelton, "Avoiding the Smallpox Spirits: Colonial Epidemics and Southeastern Indian Survival," *Ethnohistory* 51 (2004), 45-71.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, *The Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change*, 86-108.

<sup>67</sup> Jamie Carson has argued that "deep structures" endured in the Native South including "chiefly political organization, matrilineal kinship, a gendered division of labor, and a complex cosmological system based on the sanctity of the sacred circle and the rules and rites necessary to protect it from invasion." James Taylor Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path: The Mississippi Choctaws from Prehistory to Removal* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 11-12. While I agree that Native Southerners maintained aspects of Mississippian culture—such as kin-based rank and cosmological concepts—I argue that there were important discontinuities between Mississippian-era chiefdoms and Native nations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

campaign against the Natchez, chiefs had organized pitched battles in open fields. In the seventeenth century, however, clans and towns staged smaller forays into the lands of their enemies. After the Mississippian era, military leaders increasingly focused on preserving the lives of their warriors and made war by way of surprise attacks. In the early eighteenth century, Natchez leaders paid families for the loss of dead warriors, which according to a French observer “renders the chiefs very careful of the lives of their warriors.”<sup>68</sup>

Archaeologist David Dye has also suggested the function of war rituals may have shifted from demonstrating chiefly sacred power to preserving the lives of individual warriors.<sup>69</sup>

Native Southerners also became more concerned with preserving the lives of their enemies. The disease and dislocation triggered by arrival of Old World peoples produced crises among Native Southerners. As they attempted to combat the chaos that threatened to consume their world, successful Native groups altered their martial practices to fit the new demands of life in the colonial South.

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<sup>68</sup> Le Page du Pratz, *History of Louisiana*, 376. In *Their Number Become Thinned*, Dobyns argued, “Wars of conquest appear to have originated as a consequence of dense population and to have ceased with depopulation,” p. 333.

<sup>69</sup> Dye, “Warfare in the Protohistoric Southeast,” 138.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Chickasaws and the Indian Slave Trade

Long before Europeans and Africans arrived on Southern soil, the land's Native peoples had taken one another as captives. During the Mississippian era, chiefs used captured enemies as emblems of their power. By the late seventeenth century, most chiefdoms had collapsed, but the institution of captivity remained an important component of Native Southern culture. When European traders began to peddle their wares in the Southern interior, they found that Native peoples enslaved their enemies and eagerly traded these slaves for firearms, ammunition, clothing, and jewelry. Although historians have shown the staggering scale of the Indian slave trade and its impact on the colonial South, they have focused more on imperial ambitions than Indian motivations and goals. Verner Crane's classic *The Southern Frontier* and, more recently, Alan Gallay's *The Indian Slave Trade* have argued that ambitious South Carolinians ruthlessly controlled the trade in order to finance the colony's rise to dominate the region while pitting Indians against one another in a fratricidal orgy of destruction. Indian groups typically emerge as either victims of the trade or participants unable to extricate themselves from the increasingly powerful English and their irresistible trade goods.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the English were able to use Indian captives as imperial

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<sup>1</sup> Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1956), 17-21. In *The Indian Slave Trade*, Gallay attributes Indian involvement to three factors: superior English trade goods, the allure of European alliance, and fear of becoming slaves rather than slavers. See 5-6, 124-26, 130, 154, 354.

tools, especially to weaken Spanish prospects for empire in the American South.<sup>2</sup> But what prompted Native groups to make war on enemy Indians and sell their human spoils to Europeans? This chapter explores how the Chickasaws' own interests motivated them to take part. Using captured enemies as commodities and as a means of population replacement, the Chickasaws bolstered their power in a tumultuous era.

Before the advent of the Anglo-Indian slave trade, no resident of the Lower Mississippi Valley could have predicted that the Chickasaws would rise to dominate the region. During the late seventeenth century, many neighboring groups had far larger populations: to the northeast, the Cherokees numbered 32,000; toward the east were 15,000 Muskogees (later called "Creeks"); on the Chickasaws' southern border dwelled 28,000 Choctaws. The Chickasaws, meanwhile, were roughly 7,000 strong.<sup>3</sup> They lived along the headwaters of the Tombigbee River in what is now northeastern Mississippi. Like other Native Southerners, Chickasaw women farmed corn, beans, and squash. In order to cultivate

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Joel W. Martin discusses how historians have used dependency theory to understand Indian slaving societies in "Southeastern Indians and the English Trade in Skins and Slaves," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, ed. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 304-24. Martin, however, rejects the application of dependency theory in this case, arguing that "the portrayal would leave far too undeveloped the ways generations of southeastern Indians resisted, undermined, and countered the forces, trends, and practices that produce economic dependency," 304-5.

For an analysis of Native Floridians as victims of the trade, see, for example, John H. Hann, *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missisou* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996); John E. Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida*. 2 vols. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); Jerald T. Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Spanish Missions and Southeastern Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian University Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 24.

<sup>3</sup> It is very difficult to measure Indian populations of this era because of poor data and the disastrous effects of epidemic diseases on Native populations. These estimates, which roughly calculate populations in 1685, are based on Peter H. Wood's research in "The Changing Population of the Colonial South," 57-132, especially 60-61, 81, 89, 95-97. Other historians have also pointed to the Chickasaws' unlikely rise to power. See Wendy St. Jean, "Trading Paths: Mapping Chickasaw History in the Eighteenth Century," *American Indian Quarterly* 27 (2003), 758-780; Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 4; Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 171-72.



the valley's most productive lands, most families lived on dispersed farmsteads, rather than in densely populated villages.<sup>4</sup> Supplementing their families' diets, Chickasaw men hunted and fished along the Tombigbee.

The Chickasaws also lived at the crossroads of several of North America's busiest trade routes: the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers, the north-south Natchez Trace, and the east-west Creek Path, which led to the Creek Nation and the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>5</sup> Earlier, these paths had been an asset. Native peoples enthusiastically engaged in trade long before Europeans arrived, and valuable items such as copper, seashells, chert, sandstone, and animal furs circulated throughout the continent. The Chickasaws' advantageous locale afforded them access to these exotic, status-conferring items. By the seventeenth century, however, living at the crossroads of North America had become a liability for the Chickasaws. Disease spread rapidly along trade routes, exposing the Chickasaws to waves of epidemics. And by the mid-seventeenth century, rifle-toting Iroquoian raiders seeking captives ventured down Southern waterways to catch easy prey among bow-and-arrow tribes. When Father Jacques Marquette descended the Mississippi in 1673, he found groups of the Lower Mississippi Valley who lived under constant threat of terrible attacks: "The *Iroquois* are constantly making war upon them, without any provocation, because they have no firearms, and carrying them into captivity."<sup>6</sup> Though small, vulnerable, and exposed, the Chickasaws soon developed a

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<sup>4</sup> Nairne, *Nairne's Muskhogean Journals*, 36; James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 7-11.

<sup>5</sup> St. Jean, "Trading Paths," 758-59.

<sup>6</sup> "An Account of the Discovery of Some New Countries and Nations in North America in 1673, by Pere Marquette and Sieur Joliet," in *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, ed. Benjamin F. French (Philadelphia: Daniels and Smith, 1850), V, 292.

strategy for surviving and even thriving despite the harsh realities of the early colonial period.

### *Trade*

Chickasaws showed an early interest in European trade. Such an interest was logical for Native Southerners, who had exchanged goods with their allies for thousands of years. Gift exchange had been an essential component of foreign relations for chiefs, who needed prestige goods to confirm their elite status. In 1673, Father Marquette met a group of Indians at Chickasaw Bluffs, the site of modern Memphis, who possessed, “guns, knives, axes, shovels, glass beads, and bottles in which they put their powder.” These people were probably Chickasaws. Marquette found the Chickasaws’ wealth of trade goods remarkable because their neighbors lacked goods of European manufacture. Although historian Joel Martin has argued that the Chickasaws obtained the items through exchange with other Native groups, the Chickasaws themselves told Marquette “that they bought their goods from the Europeans, who live towards the east . . . That they were clothed as I was, and were very kind to them.”<sup>7</sup> The Chickasaws’ European friends were not the Spanish, the earliest colonial presence in the South, because Spaniards did not give guns to their Native allies in the seventeenth century. Moreover, as Marquette noted, “I did not see anything about them that could persuade me that they had received any instructions about our holy religion.”<sup>8</sup> Franciscan fathers of the Florida mission system were not the Europeans of whom the Chickasaws spoke. The most likely candidates were English colonists of Virginia or Carolina, who ranged far into the interior and readily exchanged guns for furs and slaves.

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<sup>7</sup> Joel W. Martin, “Southeastern Indians and the English Trade in Skins and Slaves,” 306.

<sup>8</sup> “An Account of the Discovery,” ed. French, *Historical Collections*, 293.

The traders may not have needed to travel as far as the Chickasaw settlements; instead, Chickasaws may have trekked eastward, purposely seeking out a new trade. By then, armed Iroquoian raiders active in their region perhaps convinced the Chickasaws to take active measures for their own defense. In any case, Carolinians and Chickasaws established a consistent trade by the late 1680s.<sup>9</sup>

As the Carolinians already knew, trade with Southern Indians entailed more than a purely economic exchange of goods. For the Chickasaws, trade represented a social relationship—an exchange of gifts between friends. As historian Daniel Richter has noted, gifts “denoted friendship, generosity, and hospitality.”<sup>10</sup>

Because English traders were outsiders, Chickasaw sought to incorporate them into their communities. Marriage between English traders and Chickasaw women provided a solution.<sup>11</sup> An English trader found that Chickasaw women scorned uncommitted sexual relationships: “what (say they) you think you’re among the Ochesses [Creeks] now, how brutall a proposal you make, a night[.] [T]hats the way that beasts couple[;] it belongs to mankind to be more particulare.” Instead the women demanded, “He that has me shall take incumbrances and all, and cohabit after that sociall manner, which love and Freindship require and if you incline to that you just aplay your selfe to my Unckle and Mother, and

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<sup>9</sup> Nairne reported that after Henry Woodward and the Creeks formed an alliance, he sent two traders (probably accompanied by Creek diplomats) among the Chickasaws. *Muskhogeian Journals*, 50; Robbie Etheridge, “Creating the Shatter Zone: Indian Slave Traders and the Collapse of the Southeastern Chiefdoms,” in *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 215-16.

<sup>10</sup> Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Anderson pointed out the importance of kinship ties to trade among American Indians in *Kinsmen of Another Kind*. Other Southern Indian nations forged fictive kin ties with traders through marriage. Andrew Frank has argued that through marriage traders “could find an acceptable place in Indian society and cease to be intrusive outsiders.” Frank, *Creeks & Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 21. See also Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 81-82.

they'le tell you farther.”<sup>12</sup> As the Chickasaw women told Nairne, Englishmen who married into their society gained far more than a wife. Although a trader did not join his wife's clan, he became bound to scores of her clan relatives throughout the Chickasaw Nation. Enveloped in a Chickasaw world, English traders had to play by the rules of their hosts. Although Englishmen sometimes believed their new Indian families to be a financial burden, they ultimately found the relationship beneficial. As Thomas Nairne explained, the trader “has at once relations in each Village, from Charles Town to the Missisipi, and if in traveling he acquaints them with what fameily he is incorporated into, those of that name treat, and wait on him as their kinsman.”<sup>13</sup> Although traders were not adopted, their wives' clan members provided them with food, lodging, protection, and other aid.

### *Kin and Enemies*

Southern Indians used kinship to order their world. Clans guaranteed their members rights to land and sustenance, redress for wrongs, and protection from aggressors. Within most nations, clans were ranked relative to one another, and some enjoyed more prestige than others. Political and religious leaders generally came from higher status clans. For eighteenth-century Chickasaws, clan affiliation was the most salient component of identity. It dictated relative status and provided a framework for social relations with all other Chickasaws. Foreigners could be adopted into clans, and these initiates enjoyed the same rights as those born into the clan. In the eighteenth century, such adoptees included captives of European, African, and Native American descent. Due to the flexibility of the clan system,

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<sup>12</sup> Nairne, *Muskogean Journals*, 45.

<sup>13</sup> Nairne, *ibid.*, 61.

Southern Indian societies successfully absorbed peoples whose physical appearance, culture, and language differed markedly from their own.

While European colonists and intellectuals abroad struggled to place Indians and Africans into their own worldview, Native Southerners incorporated outsiders much more easily. Certainly, Native Americans noticed that Europeans differed physically from them, but aesthetics were but one of a host of differences that separated Europeans and Indians in the colonial era. And indeed, European dress and hygiene may not have been in accord with Southern Indian tastes, but that was beside the point. From the Southern Indian perspective, the only pertinent question was whether they were allies or enemies.<sup>14</sup> Allies were of two sorts. Actual kin, related through clan ties, made up the first group. The other group was comprised of fictive kin, outside groups allied through ceremony, who occasionally joined together as partners in trade and war. Forging fictive kin ties with multiple groups enabled Southern Indians to create vast networks of allies across the region. In comparison to actual kin ties, which were inalienable, fictive kin ties needed maintenance—the bonds of alliance required frequent gift exchange and ceremony in order to remain strong.

Anyone not related through actual or fictive kinship was an enemy, and enemies had no rights which Southern Indians were bound to respect. Dualism pervaded Southern Indian culture, and such was the case with categorizing others. Kin were warmly loved, reverently respected, and protected at all costs; enemies lacked rights.<sup>15</sup> While allies worked to maintain peace, enemies frequently waged war. Native Southerners considered torture, enslavement,

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<sup>14</sup> James Axtell explored how Europeans and Indians categorized the other in *Imagining the Other: First Encounters in North America* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1991). In addition to allies and enemies, Axtell added a third category—"the spiritual beings with whom the Indian people closely shared the world," p. 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Theda Perdue has argued, "The Cherokees may have regarded an individual without kin ties as something less than a person." Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 49.

and death appropriate fates for conquered enemies. Inside the kinship system peace, security, and order dominated; outside danger, violence, and disorder reigned. In 1717, Louisiana's Commissary General observed this dualism: "The Indians are savages only in name. . . . They have a regular government among themselves after their own fashion, no injustice, no quarrels, a very exact subordination and great respect for their chiefs, whom they obey spiritedly." On the other hand, he pointed out their martial prowess and hatred for enemies: "They love war. They are brave. They despise those who show no indications of being brave. They suffer resolutely hardship, hunger, and even death. They lack generosity for the conquered, to whom they show no mercy."<sup>16</sup>

Native nations often harbored deep fear and hatred of enemy groups close to home and far afield. When Father Marquette announced his plans to descend the Mississippi, his Menominee friends vehemently objected: "They told me I would meet with Indians who spare no strangers, and whom they kill without any provocation or mercy. . . . That the Great River was exceedingly dangerous, and full of frightful monsters who devoured men and canoes together and that the heat was so great that it would positively cause our death."<sup>17</sup> Enemies, monsters, and searing heat, the Menominees feared, threatened to devour the black-robed Jesuit—especially now that he had become their ally. Southern Indians so zealously demonized their enemies that they sometimes accused them of cannibalism. Indian groups living along the Carolina coast told their English neighbors that the Westos, who slaved against them, were cannibals. From what planter Stephen Bull understood, the Westos "doe

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<sup>16</sup> Hubert to the Naval Council, 26 October 1717, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, edited by Dunbar Rowland and A.G. Sanders, *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1701-1763: French Dominion*, 3 vols. (Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1927), II, 249. Volumes IV and V were edited by Patricia Kay Galloway and published by Louisiana State University Press (Baton Rouge) in 1984. Vols. 1-5 hereinafter cited as *MPA:FD*.

<sup>17</sup> "An Account of the Discovery," *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, ed. French, 281.

strike a great feare in these Indians havinge gunns & powder & shott & doe come upon these Indians heere in the tyme of their cropp & destroye all by killinge Caryinge away their Corne & Children & eat them.”<sup>18</sup> The Choctaws called several tribes living to their southwest *Attacapa* meaning “cannibal.” Following the 1703 loss of three soldiers, reportedly eaten by these groups, the French concurred.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, both groups accused of this practice were cultural outsiders among Southern Indians; the Westos were recent immigrants, while the Atakapas lived on the region’s margins. To highlight just how different these groups were, other Southern Indians accused them of cannibalism, an unspeakable act in their own societies.

In the early colonial period, Native groups feared one another much more than they did Europeans.<sup>20</sup> Although Natives eagerly traded with Europeans, they otherwise found the foreigners’ military skills, religious overtures, and imperial ambitions unimpressive, even laughable. The climate of fear among Native enemies prompted many to seek alliances with European colonists. The Sewees, Native Carolinians of the Port Royal Sound, rushed to embrace the colony’s first English settlers as they landed in 1670. Mustering a bit of Spanish, along with gestures and drawings, the Indians communicated their wish to ally with the English. Proving their peaceful intentions through trade, the Sewees offered the English

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<sup>18</sup> From Stephen Bull to Lord Ashley, 12 September 1670, in *The Shaftesbury Papers and Other Records Relating to Carolina and the First Settlement on Ashley River Prior to the Year 1676*, ed. Langdon Cheves (Richmond: W.E. Jones, 1897), V, 194.

<sup>19</sup> Périer to Maurepas, 1 April 1730, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 32, 34 n. 3. French officer Monsieur de Belle-Isle, a captive among the Atakapas, also reported that they ate the flesh of enemy peoples. Jean-Bernard Bossu, *Travels in the Interior of North America, 1751-1762*, trans. and ed. Seymour Feiler (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 188-90. According to Louis LeClerc Milfort, a late-eighteenth-century visitor, the Atakapas said that formerly they had burned their prisoners to death, but did not eat them. Milfort, *Memoirs, or A Quick Glance at my various Travels and my Sojourn in the Creek Nation* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1959), 51.

<sup>20</sup> Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 333.

deerskins and they received knives, beads, and tobacco in return. According to one observer, “they hoped by our Arrivall to be protected from ye Westoes, often making signes they would ingage them with their bowes & arrows, & wee should with our guns.”<sup>21</sup> These coastal people had suffered from armed Westo slave raiders and now hoped to gain a European trade alliance of their own.

After the Chickasaws and English traders established fictive kin ties, they initiated proper gift exchange. In the early eighteenth century, however, English traders found that the great distance that separated Charleston and the Chickasaw Nation made the cost of transporting animal pelts higher than their value. However, as trader Thomas Nairne explained, “there is a remedy to be had for this.”<sup>22</sup> That remedy was the capture and sale of enemy peoples. The Chickasaws’ willingness to engage in such a commerce stemmed from their own worldview. For at least several hundred years, the Chickasaws and their ancestors had captured their enemies, whom they felt they could kill, adopt, or sell according to Chickasaw needs. After all, war captives lacked kin ties in Chickasaw communities, and they thus had no rights. Exploitation and commodification of enemies was nothing new in the Native South; the change initiated by the slave trade was the scale of the exchange.

### *Warfare in the Era of the Indian Slave Trade*

The Chickasaws were eager to incorporate English traders into their society because they brought such useful gifts. Along with Native peoples throughout the continent, Chickasaws especially esteemed firearms. Seventeenth-century technological advances had

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<sup>21</sup> From “Mr. Carteret’s Relation,” in *The Shaftesbury Papers*, ed. Cheves, V, 167-68.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.



made firearms increasingly practical weapons. A century earlier, Soto's army had carried arquebuses, a type of matchlock firearm. Cumbersome, inaccurate, and useless in damp conditions, the arquebus was poorly suited to the woodlands of eastern North America. In many ways, Native bows were superior weapons; experienced archers shot with ease and precision up to 70 yards and could launch arrows well beyond 100 yards. Soto and his army employed the loud, smoking arquebuses primarily in attempts to impress or intimidate Native Southerners. By the late-sixteenth century, however, Flemish smiths had invented the flintlock rifle, a lighter, more efficient weapon. To a greater degree than contemporary Europeans, American Indians adopted the flintlock, which became a popular and widely available trade item by the mid-seventeenth century. The flintlock did have some clear advantages over Native bows: the rifles shot an invisible projectile in a straight path (as opposed to the parabolic trajectory of the arrow, which skilled warriors dodged), and the guns had a range of up to 300 yards. Among Southern Indians, the most popular flintlock was the fusil, a simple smoothbore that weighed about five pounds. Still, when discharged, these firearms emitted loud blasts that scared away game and took longer than bows to reload; thus, they were not the best hunting weapons. Flintlocks were, however, ideal for making war.<sup>23</sup>

The arrival of flintlocks inaugurated a new era in Native Southern warfare. Native warriors used these firearms to complement the martial skills they had cultivated for centuries: marksmanship, tracking, and stealth. War leaders also adapted traditional techniques to meet new conditions created by the use of firearms. Compared to Mississippian

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<sup>23</sup> Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics among the New England Indians* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1991), 32-35; Steven Christopher Hahn, "A Miniature Arms Race: The Role of the Flintlock in Initiating Indian Dependency in the Colonial Southeastern United States, 1656-1730," (M.A. Thesis, University of Georgia, 1995), 18-29; Hudson, *Knights of Spain*.

war parties, eighteenth-century groups were generally smaller in size and specialized in guerilla-style attacks.<sup>24</sup> Although a liability in hunting, the flintlock's flash and loud discharge served as an asset in warfare, inspiring panic and fear in victims, especially those without guns. In the colonial era, many Southern Indians proclaimed that firearms were related to Thunder or the Thunderers, martial deities with great destructive power.<sup>25</sup> For unarmed groups, flintlocks remained a terrifying innovation. When war parties attacked enemy villages, the long range of flintlocks—as well as the psychological terror they inspired—gave them real advantages over bow-and-arrow nations.

In addition to firearms, the Chickasaws used spiritual power to succeed in the theatre of war. Thomas Nairne, a South Carolina planter, trader, and Indian agent, accompanied a Chickasaw war party in 1708 and described their expedition. A hierarchy of officers, so elevated due to their achievements in war, commanded rank-and-file warriors. Each officer carried what Nairne called “Amulet bags,” pouches containing medicinal roots, bones and feathers of predatory mammals and birds, and locks of hair taken from their former captives.<sup>26</sup> Through ritual, officers transferred the spiritual power contained in these items to their subordinates to ensure success. On the day of the battle, officers arranged soldiers in a half-moon formation, surrounding a portion of the enemy village. Then, according to Nairne, the war chief gave a whistle and “every man Clapes his hand to his mouth, gives the War Whoop, and then catch as catch can.” After their initial assault, the warriors closed their half-

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<sup>24</sup> Wayne Lee has argued, “The European arrival did not introduce the concept of lethality in warfare, what it did do was to introduce new technologies that upset the parity of offense and defense, making the open battle more lethal.” Lee, “Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1400-1800,” *Journal of Military History*, forthcoming.

<sup>25</sup> Hahn, “A Miniature Arms Race,” 33-36.

<sup>26</sup> Nairne, *Muskhogean Journals*, 42-43.

moon formation into a complete circle around the village.<sup>27</sup> As the battle progressed, a troop of ten to twelve young Chickasaw women sang to encourage the warriors: “If their own men succeed, they praise them highly and Degrade the Enemy, but if [the enemy] give Back the singers alter their praises into reproaches, Thus changing notes according as their party advance or give way.”<sup>28</sup> Although Native Southern women did not usually take part in combat, they were often central, if subtle, participants in warfare. As the Chickasaws gained advantage over their enemies, warriors attempted to kill male combatants and take women and children captive. Successful warriors bound their captives and hung their amulet bags about the prisoners’ necks, demonstrating the reality of their spiritual power and its efficacy in defeating their enemies.

After marching home, Chickasaw warriors redistributed their spoils, thereby allowing all members of society to benefit from their victory. Although high-ranking warriors retained their captives for use by their own clans, more junior members of the party presented their prisoners to their “patrons.” These patrons were important members of other clans, who accepted the captives as gifts and, in return, gave warriors new war titles. This ritual served to integrate Chickasaw society during the tumult of the early eighteenth century. Redistribution of war spoils—including captives—and confirmation of the bonds that united all the Chickasaw clans prevented jealousy and material accumulation from tearing at the fabric of society. Simultaneously, this ritual exchange ensured that honor-seeking warriors would continue to replenish Chickasaw society with captives. As Thomas Nairne explained,

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<sup>27</sup> As Charles Hudson has pointed out, the half-moon formation was also a popular method of communal hunting. Clearly, eighteenth-century warriors adapted the technique to hunting human prey. Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 276.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

“No man by Doeing an exploit becomes a warrior, untill that Honor be publickly bestowed upon him.”<sup>29</sup>

*The “bravest of the continent”*

By the late seventeenth century, the Chickasaws had become the most powerful polity in the region. In the words of one historian, the Chickasaws were “the scourge of the Mississippi.”<sup>30</sup> In 1698, Pierre Le Moyne d’Iberville, who attempted to colonize the area, found that the Chickasaws were only group that possessed firearms amidst a sea of bow-and-arrow tribes. Along with the Creeks, the Chickasaws had become the Carolinians’ premiere trading partners. Iberville’s brother, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, asserted that, “They have three or four Englishmen in each of these villages, who give them big presents. They have armed almost all of them with guns, a thing that we have not yet done for our allies for want of guns.”<sup>31</sup> Thus armed, the Chickasaws ranged widely along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, making war as far north as the Arkansas and Illinois and far to the west amongst the Caddos.<sup>32</sup> An English trader claimed that the Chickasaws most frequently warred against tribes to their southwest “wher they can with the Greatest Ease, get a Booty, but have the most bickering with the Chactaws who live 60 Miles south of them.” Given their

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>30</sup> Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 171.

<sup>31</sup> Bienville to Pontchartrain, 6 September 1704, *MPA:FD*, Vol. III, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Francois de Montigny to the Comte de Pontchartrain, 1699, in *Colonial Captivities, Marches, and Journeys*, ed. Isabel M. Calder, trans. Mary Learned (New York: Macmillan, 1935), 205-6; Timothy K. Perttula, “Social Changes among the Caddo Indians in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, eds. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 260; Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 45-46.

superior firepower, the Chickasaws dominated their neighbors, even the far more numerous Choctaws.

At this time, four divisions of Choctaws inhabited some fifty villages along the Pearl and Chickasawhay Rivers and tributary streams. Survivors of collapsed chiefdoms, these Choctaws numbered roughly 21,000 in 1700.<sup>33</sup> As detailed in Patricia Galloway's study of early Choctaw history, the Choctaws' ancestors had lived in chiefdoms strewn across the modern states of Mississippi and Alabama. After their chiefdoms splintered, rich farmland and abundant game drew these disparate peoples to east-central Mississippi.<sup>34</sup> During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Choctaws sought to overcome their divisions and forge a multi-ethnic confederacy. This impetus toward centralization resulted from the aggression of their newly armed Indian neighbors—especially the Chickasaws.

Taking advantage of the nascent Choctaw confederacy's political and military weakness, the Chickasaws drew upon their group cohesion and English trade alliance to bully their southerly neighbors. According to sociologist Duane Champagne, the four major Native Southern nations of the eighteenth century—the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks—experienced birth pangs as they struggled to achieve political solidarity. The Chickasaws, Champagne argued, were the most cohesive group.<sup>35</sup> Unlike the other nations, composed of motley groups with disparate ethnic identities and political affiliations, the early-eighteenth-century Chickasaws shared a relatively homogenous culture and remained

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<sup>33</sup> Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South," 97.

<sup>34</sup> Patricia K. Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) 2, 352-59.

<sup>35</sup> Duane Champagne, *Social Order and Political Change: Constitutional Governments among the Cherokee, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, and the Creek* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 27.

in their ancestral homeland. Making a virtue of their small population, the Chickasaws forged a strong group identity.

Seeking to preserve their exclusive access to firearms, the Chickasaws cut off the Choctaws from potential English trading partners. By 1700, according to the estimate of Chickasaw and Choctaw chiefs, at least forty percent of Chickasaw men owned guns, while firepower among the Choctaws was negligible.<sup>36</sup> The Chickasaws also managed to restrict Choctaw access to hunting territory by hemming them in geographically. When Frenchman Henri de Tonti traveled with Choctaw warriors in 1702, he complained that they took him dozens of leagues out of his way to avoid trouble at the hands of roaming Chickasaw war parties.<sup>37</sup> As a consequence of Chickasaw regional dominance, the early-eighteenth-century Choctaws controlled less territory despite their much larger population.<sup>38</sup> When Chickasaw hunting parties made their camps near Choctaw settlements, they fearlessly heralded their presence through bonfire-lighted feasting, smoking, and dancing to the beat of drums. Such ostentation, the Chickasaws explained, was designed “to show the Choctaws how little we valued them.”<sup>39</sup>

As the French sought to plant their own colony in the lower Mississippi Valley, they forged an alliance with the numerous Choctaws, then reeling from Chickasaw attacks. Like other residents of the region, the French harbored a great fear of the Chickasaws’ military

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<sup>36</sup> Pierre LeMoyne, Sieur d’Iberville, *Iberville’s Gulf Journals*, trans. and ed. Richebourg Gailliard McWilliams (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 174.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from M. de Tonti to d’Iberville, 23 February 1702, in Patricia Galloway, ed., *LaSalle and His Legacy* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982), 168.

<sup>38</sup> John R. Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 103; Wood, “The Changing Population of the Colonial South,” 96-97.

<sup>39</sup> Nairne, *Muskogean Journals*, 53.

strength. They realized that the Chickasaws controlled a portion of the Mississippi River, and thus had the power to cut off Louisiana's lifeline to New France.<sup>40</sup> Louisiana's leaders also saw the Chickasaws as an extension of English imperial power. Bienville claimed, "the Chickasaws have no commerce except that in slaves which they carry on with the English for what they give them they induce by presents to take them from our allies in order to weaken us."<sup>41</sup> In a bid to protect French Louisiana as well as the Choctaw Confederacy, Iberville tried to negotiate a peace between his allies and the Chickasaws. During a March 1700 conference, Iberville blamed the English for Chickasaw-Choctaw violence. His brother, Bienville, translated his speech to the Chickasaws:

The Chicaha [Chickasaw] have foolishly followed the advice of the English, who have no other objective than to work their destruction by inciting the Chicacha and the Chaqueta [Choctaw] to make war on each other so that the English can get slaves, whom they send away to other countries to be sold. . . . You Chichacha can observe that during the last eight to ten years when you have been at war with the Chaqueta at the instigation of the English, who gave you ammunition and thirty guns for that purpose, you have taken more than 500 prisoners and killed more than 1800 Chaqueta. Those prisoners were sold; but taking those prisoners cost you more than 800 men, slain on various war parties, who would be living at this moment if it had not been for the English.<sup>42</sup>

Iberville offered to initiate a trade in animal furs with both tribes to replace the former cycle of self-destruction. He explained "skins of buffalo, deer, bear . . . those are the slaves I want."<sup>43</sup> Reckoning that an alliance with more than one European power would prove beneficial, the Chickasaws agreed to the Frenchman's compact. As an English trader

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<sup>40</sup> Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 149.

<sup>41</sup> Bienville to Pontchartrain, 27 October 1711, *MPA:FD*, Vol. III, 160.

<sup>42</sup> Pierre LeMoyne, *Iberville's Gulf Journals*, 171-73.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

explained of the Chickasaws, “They’re apt to believe themselves at Liberty, when they please to turn to those who sell them the best pennyworths.”<sup>44</sup>

The peace settlement was short-lived, for the Chickasaws quickly realized that the French were unable to provide them with the manufactured goods they desired. French officials privately admitted that English traders offered Indian hunters much better prices for their deerskins, owing to the lower cost and higher quality of English manufactured goods. To make matters worse, French Louisiana was poorly supplied by its mother country, especially in terms of all-important firearms and ammunition. A French officer addressing Louisiana’s Naval Council speculated with only slight exaggeration, “If [hostile warriors] come to Louisiana they will find it easy prey since it has not enough [munitions] to defend itself for one day.”<sup>45</sup> The Chickasaws had come to rely upon firearms to support their newly-won dominance; they certainly could not depend upon such an unreliable trading partner as the floundering colony of Louisiana. In fact, the Chickasaws came to regard the Frenchmen of Louisiana as “women.”<sup>46</sup> According to historian Nancy Shoemaker, “In Indian diplomacy, *women* was shorthand for military incapacity or fear.”<sup>47</sup> Chickasaw war chief Oboystabee complained of the French trade agreement, “They b[u]oyed us up with a mighty expectation, of what vast profite we should reap by Freindship and commerce with them. . . . But after suficient Tryall made, our people are now undeceived.” Speaking to an English trader,

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<sup>44</sup> Nairne, *Muskhogeon Journals*, 56. In *The Indian Slave Trade*, Gallay argued that Iberville threatened the Chickasaws into the alliance. Considering the weak position of the French, Nairne’s explanation seems more reasonable. The Chickasaws likely pursued the alliance to manipulate the rivalry between the French and English and secure their own economic interests.

<sup>45</sup> Abstract of Letters from Bienville to Ponchartrain, 28 July 1706, *MPA:FD*, Vol. II, 23. Quotation from Minutes of the Naval Council, Speech of De Lamothe, 7 February 1716, *MPA:FD*, Vol. II, 217.

<sup>46</sup> Périer to Ory, 18 December 1730, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 43.

<sup>47</sup> Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 112. Shoemaker points out that the epithet was not always derogatory and that “women” were also peacemakers.



Oboystabee insisted that the Chickasaw warriors *chose* to traffic with Carolinians, “for they dispose of their slaves to your Traders much to their advantage.”<sup>48</sup> Acting in their own self-interest, the Chickasaws treated with whom they pleased.

For the Chickasaws and other Southern Indian groups, the colonial slave trade retained important aspects of the chiefly trade in captives, but also marked a new era. As their ancestors had, the Chickasaws made war upon enemy groups, captured prisoners, and exchanged them with one another or their allies. In addition to other Indian nations, the Chickasaws’ allies now included the English. However, downfall of chiefly political organization had brought changes to captivity practices. Disease and dislocation toppled chiefs who had wielded so much power over the political, economic, and social lives of Mississippian peoples. Native Southern societies became less stratified, governed instead by representatives from each clan. Indeed, clans fulfilled many of the responsibilities formerly belonging to chiefs: they now chose how to control and distribute their surplus crops and prestige goods, maintained social order, and took on more prominent roles in ritual and ceremony. The downfall of chiefdoms also changed the way Southern Indians waged war. No longer did armed conflict serve elite goals of further concentrating resources and power in the hands of a few. As a group, Chickasaws now used captives to ensure their survival and preserve their autonomy.

Thomas Nairne explained the Chickasaws’ motivation: “The good prices The English Traders give them for slaves Encourages them to this trade Extreably.”<sup>49</sup> According to the Englishman, “A lucky hitt at that besides the Honor procures them a whole Estate at once,

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<sup>48</sup> Nairne, *Muskhogeian Journals*, 56.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

one slave brings a Gun, ammunition, horse, hatchet, and a suit of Cloathes, which would not be procured without much tedious toil a hunting.”<sup>50</sup> Much more lucrative than the deerskin trade, trade in captives brought the Chickasaws manufactured goods such as steel tools, wool blankets, and handsome clothing. While Chickasaws readily adopted these useful trade goods, they increasingly tied their fortunes to the acquisition of firearms.

Firearms fueled the Chickasaws’ successful rise to become one of the South’s most powerful nations. Before the Chickasaws acquired guns, Iroquois warriors, who sought captives to replace their own declining population, had preyed upon Southern Indians.<sup>51</sup> The Chickasaws explained to Nairne that their fortunes had since changed: “Formerly when the Iroquois troubled these parts, they Drove the Chicasaws out of their Towns and made great Havock of them, but having attempted the like since they were furnished with Gunes found so warm a reception, that they thought fitt never to return since.”<sup>52</sup> Although Northern Indians did occasionally return to the Lower Mississippi Valley, they found that the Chickasaws no longer made easy captives.<sup>53</sup>

Despite their small numbers, the Chickasaws managed to use their military might to project resounding power throughout the region. Nairne found that “their success in the war against their Bow and Arrow Neighbours” created a heightened sense of pride among the Chickasaw people. A visiting Jesuit learned in 1699 that only lately had the Quapaws begun

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>51</sup> Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 145; Daniel K. Richter, “War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 40 (1983), 528-559.

<sup>52</sup> Nairne, *Muskhogeon Journals*, 37.

<sup>53</sup> Northern Indians did continue to inspire fear in the Chickasaws, and war parties of French-allied “Canada Indians” visited them into the mid-eighteenth century. See, for example, Périer to Maurepas, 25 March 1731, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 74; Périer to Ory, 15 November 1730, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 55.

to fear their southerly neighbors “for formerly they always had the advantage over this nation, but since the Chikachas have obtained firearms from the English, these, who have only arrows, would not dare to meet them.”<sup>54</sup> Through trade in slaves, Thomas Nairne explained, the Chickasaws “soon made themselves terrible to those who wanted that advantage, so they have now the reputation of the most military people of any about the great river [the Mississippi].”<sup>55</sup>

In addition to devastating enemy peoples in battle, the Chickasaws cultivated their martial reputation, which became well-known to Europeans and Indians throughout Eastern North America. Bienville asserted in 1726 that the Chickasaws “breathe nothing but war and are unquestionably the bravest of the continent.”<sup>56</sup> Other Native groups feared not only Chickasaw weapons, but their experience in the theater of war. One Louisiana governor observed that Native Southerners “fear those who they know are inured to war.”<sup>57</sup>

During the early eighteenth century, success in the slave trade and concomitant military power translated into broader regional power for the Chickasaw people. In a time when many small groups became absorbed by larger groups or disappeared altogether, the Chickasaws retained the power to rule themselves and even extended hegemonic power over others. Their ability to secure trade goods and their success in warfare convinced other groups that the Chickasaws made either powerful allies or terrible enemies. Throughout the early eighteenth century, the Chickasaws allied with neighboring groups including the

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<sup>54</sup> Francois de Montigny to the Comte de Pontchartrain, 1699, in *Colonial Captivities, Marches, and Journeys*, 205.

<sup>55</sup> Nairne, *Muskhogean Journals*, 37-38.

<sup>56</sup> Memoir of Bienville, 1726, *MPA:FD*, Vol. III, 538.

<sup>57</sup> Périer to Maurepas, 1 April 1730, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 33.

Natchez, Yazoo, Mobiliens, and Chitimachas. To ensure strong relationships with other tribes, a number of *fanemingos*, “squirrel chiefs,” acted as Chickasaw diplomats. Other tribes chose a fanemingo—usually a high-ranking warrior—to represent their interests; likewise, the Chickasaws selected fanemingos to speak for them among other nations. According to Thomas Nairne, “His business is to make up all Breaches between the 2 nations, to keep the pipes of peace by which at first they contracted Freindship, to devert the Warriors from any designe against the people they protect, and Pacifie them by carrying them the Eagle pipe to smoak out of, and if after all, ar unable to oppose the stream, are to send the people private intelligence to provide for their own safty.”<sup>58</sup> Nairne believed that European nations could take a cue from the Chickasaw fanemingos, who preserved open communication and promoted peace between allies. Allies also harbored one another during times of war, including a large contingent of refugee Natchez following their revolt against French colonialism. The Creeks and Chickasaws forged close bonds in the early eighteenth century. The groups intermarried, creating kinship ties across the nations.<sup>59</sup> To facilitate trade with the Carolinians, some Chickasaws temporarily moved into the Creek Nation, residing along the path to Charleston.<sup>60</sup>

Continual wars against enemy people also cemented the bonds that held the Chickasaw Nation together. In Southern Indian societies, war and masculinity were inexorably linked; men achieved no significant social status without public war honors. Thus, desire for rank drove men to seek out violent conflict that would bring them captives, scalps,

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<sup>58</sup> Nairne, *Muskogean Journals*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>60</sup> St. Jean, “Trading Paths,” 765-66.

and other status-conferring spoils. During the era of the slave trade, Chickasaw men enjoyed abundant opportunities for making war against enemies. Thus, Chickasaws always directed their aggression outside their own nation. At the same time, the logistics of war drew the Chickasaws closer together. The rituals that always preceded battle cut across clan lines, binding Chickasaw men of diverse rank and age groups together. In combat, Chickasaws carefully retrieved the bodies of those who fell. When prolonged periods of warfare kept Chickasaws away from their villages, they retained the bones of fallen warriors throughout their journeys until they could be buried in the Chickasaw homeland.<sup>61</sup> Successful war parties, upon returning to their villages, emphasized the connectedness of the Chickasaw people as they ritually exchanged war spoils to other members of society. Women also engaged in aspects of warfare, as they sang on the battlefield and determined captives' fates. At a time when some Native polities ceased to exist, the Chickasaws simultaneously maintained peace within their own nation and contributed to the violence and chaos that plagued the broader colonial Southern world.

### *Social Reproduction*

Although the Chickasaws found this trade lucrative and empowering, constant war took the lives of many warriors. In the early eighteenth century, French planter Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz asserted that the Chickasaws “cut off a great many nations who were adjoining to them,” but “could not succeed against their enemies without considerable loss to

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<sup>61</sup> The Chickasaws usually interred bodies into the ground. However, when a Chickasaw died abroad, they practiced a different mortuary ritual; after the deceased's flesh decayed, they bundled his bones and carried them home. Archaeologists have noticed a sharp rise in these so-called “bundle burials” occurred in the mid-eighteenth century, when Franco-Choctaw conflicts forced Chickasaw warriors far afield. Jay K. Johnson, Jenny D. Yearous, Nancy Ross-Stallings, “Ethnohistory, Archaeology, and Chickasaw Burial Mode during the Eighteenth Century,” *Ethnohistory* 41 (1994), 431-446.

themselves, and that they have therefore greatly lessened their own numbers by their many warlike expeditions.” Le Page du Pratz also observed that diseases like smallpox and influenza took a heavy toll on the Chickasaws and other Native people.<sup>62</sup> Historian Peter Wood has estimated there were about seven thousand Chickasaws in 1685, but only about four thousand by 1715. Already a comparatively small nation in the Native South, the Chickasaws steadily lost population until the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>63</sup>

In an effort to slow population loss in such dire times, the Chickasaws pursued a strategy of social reproduction by adopting captives. During his 1708 visit, Thomas Nairne saw this strategy in action. First, he noted that if a Chickasaw killed a fellow tribesman, the deceased person’s clan was obligated to either kill the murderer or replace the deceased with a captive. If the murderer’s clan opted for the latter, “they must likewise put the first slave they take in his place, to make up the number of the family.”<sup>64</sup> He also explained that whenever a Chickasaw was taken captive by an enemy group, he became socially dead; “as soon as any person is taken, they Account him dead, and call killing and being taken prisoner by the same name.”<sup>65</sup> Adopted captives replaced these fallen warriors and perhaps those killed by disease as well.

When captured enemies entered Chickasaw villages, tribal members chose whom to retain and whom to sell. Specifically, this task fell to clan matrons, the aged and wise women who led Chickasaw lineages. In Native Southern societies, which reckoned descent

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<sup>62</sup> Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 305-6.

<sup>63</sup> Wood, “The Changing Population of the Colonial South,” 94-95.

<sup>64</sup> Nairne, *Muskhogean Journals*, 34. This passage refers to a Creek practice, but Nairne later explains that the Chickasaws’ “Laws about murder, theft and relating to property are the same,” p. 39.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

matrilineally, women were the producers of crops and also progenitors of human life; likewise, they possessed the authority to ensure social reproduction in their clans. Once matrons chose adoptees, clan members surrounded their new member and performed a requickening ritual, a rite designed to bring their deceased relative back to life. First, they gathered about the adoptee and wept copiously. The clan then carried the adoptee round a fire (probably the town's central fire) four times and sprinkled ashes upon her head. Next, the clan carried him to the river, where they washed her. For four days thereafter, the captive took medicines prepared from cleansing plants and bathed again. Ritually purged of her former life and character, the adoptee could now assume her new role within the clan and broader Chickasaw society. Explained Nairne, "All this purification is because in their Esteem, [their kinsman] is risen from the dead, and come to life again."<sup>66</sup>

Because the Chicksaws strove to sustain population levels amidst war and disease, they often chose women captives over men. Native Southerners did not consider men fit for adoption, and victors usually killed them in combat or tortured them to atone for past transgressions. When waging war against enemy peoples, Southern Indians usually targeted women and children as captives. The demography of victim groups bears out this grim reality; in 1703, half the men of the Taensas, a Lower Mississippi Valley group, had no wives or children.<sup>67</sup> Slavecatchers' preferences resulted in severely imbalanced sex ratios for victims and victors alike. Groups like the Taensa lost many or most members of the next generation. Meanwhile, groups like the Chickasaws augmented their own numbers and enhanced their prospects for long-term survival. The adoption of sexually mature women was

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>67</sup> Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 116.

central to the Chickasaws' strategy for social reproduction. During Nairne's 1708 visit, he noted that polygyny—the marriage of a man to more than one woman—was “in fashion among the Chicasaws.”<sup>68</sup> In this case, Nairne's diction is quite apt, for the popularity of polygyny at the height of the Indian slave trade was no accident. Through polygyny, high-ranking, successful Chickasaw men were able to impregnate more than one wife, and thus create many more children than could a monogamous couple.

This strategy for social reproduction was so successful that by 1771, a Chickasaw man named North West claimed that he was one of only two “real original” Chickasaws left—all the rest were “of a slave race.”<sup>69</sup> By this statement, North West meant that nearly everyone in his nation had descended from former captives, and thus were only naturalized Chickasaws. Although he surely exaggerated, North West did reveal the extent to which Chickasaws relied upon captivity to ensure their continued existence as a people during a tumultuous era.

### *The Slave Trade's Victims*

The devastation suffered by the slave trade's victims highlights just how successfully the Chickasaws adapted to the demands and constraints of the early colonial period. The Chickasaws and several other slavers—the Creeks, Yamasees, Westos, and Savannahs—virtually destroyed dozens of tribes, especially smaller groups or those hit hard by epidemic diseases.<sup>70</sup> Historian Alan Gally has estimated that between 1670 and 1715 Indians sold

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<sup>68</sup> Nairne, *Muskhogeon Journals*, 46.

<sup>69</sup> Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, 125.

<sup>70</sup> For more on Indian groups involved in the slave trade, see Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*; Crane, *The Southern Frontier*; Steven J. Oatis, *A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Frontiers in the Era of the Yamasee War, 1680-1730* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); J. Leitch Wright, *The Only Land They Knew*:



English traders between 24,000 and 51,000 war captives.<sup>71</sup> A few powerful Indian nations, in the words of one ethnohistorian, “held control of the trade and . . . through their slave raiding, caused widespread dislocation, migration, amalgamation, and, in some cases, extinction of Native peoples.”<sup>72</sup>

The experience of the Apalachees is emblematic of the trade’s victims. Living near modern-day Tallahassee, Florida, the Apalachees had deep roots in the region. In Mississippian times, the Apalachee chiefdom controlled rich, arable lands between the Aucilla and Ochlocknee Rivers and appear to have controlled at least one tributary chiefdom. Throughout most of the period, Apalachee chiefs ruled from the Lake Jackson, which produced some of the Mississippian period’s most sophisticated art. When Soto arrived in Florida in 1539, the Apalachees, numbering twenty to thirty thousand, were one of the region’s larger groups. As the Spaniards approached Apalachee territory, other Native Floridians informed the Spaniards that the Apalachees were a powerful chiefdom of fierce warriors; indeed, the Apalachees harassed Soto’s army throughout the winter of 1539 and succeeded in killing a number of Spaniards.<sup>73</sup> A century later, another group of Spaniards—Franciscan missionaries—visited the Apalachees, who had been ravaged by epidemic

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*American Indians in the Old South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 102-150, 257-60; Rushforth, ““A Little Flesh We Offer You.”” Erie Bowne provides the most complete overview of Westo history in his monograph *The Westo Indians: Slave Traders of the Early Colonial South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

<sup>71</sup> Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 294-99.

<sup>72</sup> Robbie Etheridge, “Creating the Shatter Zone,” 208. In a similar case, John Thornton has argued that slaving in Africa had significant demographic impact, “but the people adversely affected by this impact were not the ones making the decisions about participation.” Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 74.

<sup>73</sup> Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun*, 117-45; John F. Scarry, “The Nature of Mississippian Societies,” in *Political Structure and Change in the Prehistoric Southeastern United States* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 21.

diseases. The Apalachee chiefs elected to join the Spanish mission system and converted to Christianity. The two groups lived in relative peace until 1704, when fifty Englishmen and a thousand-man army of Upper Creeks, Yamasees, and Apalachicolas marched against them. The Creeks had particular grievances against the Apalachees, whom they counted among their “bitter enemies” since “time immemorial.”<sup>74</sup> The combined Indian/Anglo army destroyed fourteen Apalachee villages, killed hundreds of people, and took between 2,000 and 4,000 captives. Some of these captives became slaves of the English, while the others were resettled along the Savannah River, South Carolina’s southern border, or among the English-allied Creeks at Ocmulgee.<sup>75</sup>

Several hundred refugees escaped to Mobile to ask for French protection. Many other small Southern Indian groups, including the Chatots, Tawasa, Pascagoulas, Biloxis, and Houmas, also called at Mobile.<sup>76</sup> The alacrity with which these refugees sought French friendship surprised officials in Louisiana: Bienville related, “I asked them why it is that they were leaving the Spaniards. They told me that they did not give them any guns at all, but that the French gave them to all their allies.”<sup>77</sup> Although this statement reveals more wishful thinking than truth, it does expose the depth of terror and vulnerability that unarmed groups felt. As English-allied Indians became increasingly well-armed and predatory, those friendly to the Spanish or lacking imperial ties altogether found themselves isolated in an increasingly

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<sup>74</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 187.

<sup>75</sup> Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 90-91. At least some of the Apalachees willingly resettled, perhaps believing the destruction of the Florida missions inevitable. Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 145-49, 186.

<sup>76</sup> André Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet, Being the Penicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana*, ed. and trans. Richebourg Gailliard McWilliams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 98, 125-26; Diron d’Artaguetto to Maurepas, October 17, 1729, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 20.

<sup>77</sup> Bienville to Pontchartrain, 6 September 1704, *MPA:FD*, Vol. III, 27.

dangerous world. After the French began to settle Louisiana in 1698, groups like the Apalachees quickly gravitated toward this new colonial power. Louisiana, too, needed allies, and officials eagerly embraced nations seeking protection. With Bienville's assistance, the Apalachees settled along the Tombigbee, just upriver from Mobile.

After generations of mission life, the Apalachees were quite comfortable living under French protection. In fact, those who visited Bienville at Mobile told him that they would not resettle in Louisiana unless the French provided a Catholic priest to tend to their spiritual needs. The Apalachees reverently celebrated Mass every Sunday, sang Psalms in Latin, and buried their dead in the church graveyard. Catholicism united the Apalachees and French colonists, who especially enjoyed celebrating the feast day of St. Louis—the Apalachees' patron saint—with their Indian neighbors. French colonist André Penicaut found very little to distinguish the Apalachees from the European residents of Louisiana: "They love the French very much, and it must be confessed that the only thing savage about them is their language, which is a mixture of Spanish and Alibamon."<sup>78</sup> Other Indian groups in the region concurred with Penicaut's assessment. Larger non-Christian groups told one French missionary that they would not convert because "if they should become Christians, they would become slaves of the French like the Apalachees."<sup>79</sup> Anthropologist Charles Hudson has observed that during the era of the Indian slave trade, the number of Native polities in the American South decreased markedly.<sup>80</sup> Those who lacked firearms—especially small tribes—made for easy targets. To survive, these vulnerable people had to seek protection from armed allies.

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<sup>78</sup> Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 133-35. Quotation on 135.

<sup>79</sup> Father Raphael to the Abbe Raguet, 15 May 1725, *MPA:FD*, Vol. II, 484.

<sup>80</sup> Disease, the collapse of chiefdoms, and the slave trade all contributed to this social transformation. Charles Hudson, "Introduction," *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, eds. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), xxxvi-xxxviii.

After suffering devastating slave raids, some Apalachees chose protection under the French; by the early eighteenth century, these refugees probably believed that they shared more cultural ground with these fellow Catholics than they did with Native confederacies like the Creeks or Choctaws. After all, it had been the Creeks who burned Apalachee villages, razed their crops, and enslaved their kin. Tumultuous times created difficult choices for the South's Native peoples.

The contrast between the Apalachees' and Chickasaws' experiences in the early colonial South could hardly be sharper. As victims of the Indian slave trade, the once mighty Apalachees suffered dramatic losses due to epidemic diseases, military defeat, enslavement, and dislocation. The Chickasaws, however, made a virtue out their small population, using their success as slavers to project power far in excess of their numbers. They managed to retain and even augment their territorial homeland as well as their autonomy. Due to their success in capturing enemies, the Chickasaws became the most feared warriors in the South. Indeed, in the colonial era, no European army marched successfully against the Chickasaws, though the French made three concerted attempts.<sup>81</sup> Captives ensured their political autonomy and ensured social reproduction despite losses due to war and disease. Even today, Chickasaws highlight their martial reputation as one of the hallmarks of their identity: They are “unconquered and unconquerable.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> St. Jean, “Trading Paths,” 760.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 30; St. Jean, “Trading Paths,” 760. The Chickasaw Nation's official website, <http://www.chickasaw.net>, explains that “unconquered and unconquerable” is its “unofficial motto.”

## *The Yamasee War*

The colonial market for Indian war captives, which deeply affected all Indian groups of the South—slavers and the enslaved alike—quickly dried up following the Yamasee War of 1715-1717. The Yamasees formerly resided within the mission system of Spanish Florida, but in 1687 they revolted and resettled within the colony of Carolina at Port Royal Sound. There, they became English allies and actively engaged in the slave trade. Within a few decades, however, the Yamasees came to believe that the English had not lived up to their responsibilities as allies: Traders did not give enough gifts to compensate for the slaves and furs the Yamasees provided; the Englishmen beat and abused Yamasees they should have treated as brothers and sisters; they sold allied Indians, leading the Yamasees themselves to fear enslavement. From the Yamasee perspective, their Carolina allies had become greedy, irresponsible, and violent. The first Englishman to pay for his nation's transgressions was none other than Thomas Nairne, chronicler of the Chickasaws. Aware of the Yamasees' grievances, Nairne, as South Carolina's Indian agent, traveled to their village at Pocatigo. On April 14, 1715, Nairne and other English officials met with Yamasee chiefs. They feasted, drank rum, and discussed trouble in the trade. While the Englishmen probably went to bed believing they had mended relations with the Yamasees, they awoke to a far different reality. That morning, Good Friday, Yamasees dragged Nairne to Pocatigo's central square, where they bound the trader to a post and pierced him with scores of lighted splinters, which slowly burned him to death.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The most comprehensive account of the war's origins and evolution is Oatis, *A Colonial Complex*, especially chapters 4-6. See also, Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, chapter 7; Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, chapter 12; Snell, "Indian Slavery," chapter 4; William L. Ramsey, "'Heathenish Combination': The Natives of the North American Southeast during the Era of the Yamasee War" (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1998).

Similarly discontented Indian nations applauded the Yamasees' declaration of war and followed suit. Carolina's neighboring Indian nations, the Catawbas and Creeks, killed their resident traders, and joined the Yamasees in attacks against Carolina settlers. Indian warriors succeeded in destroying several hundred colonists, about seven percent of white Carolinians according to one historian of the war.<sup>84</sup> Those who escaped the attacks fled in terror toward the colony's capital; soon, Charleston and its immediate environs held all of Carolina's European and African colonists. Further west, even Chickasaws participated in the anti-English uprising, killing fifteen of their nation's traders. While Chickasaw motives are unclear, they may have been unhappy with trader Thomas Welch, who had been accused of enslaving three free Chickasaws. In any case, the Chickasaws correctly reasoned that they could compensate for the loss of English trade by increasing their commerce with the French.<sup>85</sup> Fearing complete destruction of their colony, South Carolinians cobbled an army drawn from their own militia, enslaved African Americans, friendly Indian nations, and volunteers from Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>86</sup> This motley force pursued a brutal campaign against the war's instigators. They enslaved most Yamasee survivors, and those who escaped sought Spanish protection at St. Augustine. The war effectively concluded in 1717, when South Carolina made peace with remaining militant nations and gained an important ally in the Cherokees.

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<sup>84</sup> Oatis, *Colonial Complex*, 167.

<sup>85</sup> Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 318, 340; September 12, 1713, *Journals of the Commissioners of the Indian Trade, September 20, 1710-August 29, 1718*, ed. William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1955), 50. Gallay's interpretation of Chickasaw and Creek involvement seems implausible. He argues that after visiting South Carolina, "The free Indians recognized that some of this wealth was produced by slave labor on plantations, but they also realized their role in creating these riches." Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 333.

<sup>86</sup> The Indians in South Carolina's army included friendly Tuscaroras and Settlement Indians—members of small groups who lived under the colony's protection. Oatis, *Colonial Complex*, 146.

Although the Yamasees suffered defeat, they succeeded in their goal to punish the English and reform the Anglo-Indian trade. Realizing that the abusive behavior of Anglo-American traders had caused the war, British colonists began to believe that Indian slavery was dangerous and feared further reprisals from the powerful Indian nations of the Southern interior.<sup>87</sup> Although no British colony, except Virginia, banned Indian slavery outright, English demand for such captives decreased markedly after 1717.<sup>88</sup> Instead, English planters turned to African slaves for several reasons. First, planters believed that Africans' lack of familiarity with the Southern landscape prevented them from escaping as easily as Indians. They also believed that Africans, especially compared to Indian men, were hardier, more capable of intense agricultural labor. Indeed, many had acquired immunity to the Old World diseases—smallpox, yellow fever, influenza, malaria—that killed Indians in such great numbers. Finally, Anglo-Americans wished to rid themselves of the dangerous Indian slave trade and prevent future wars. Indian enslavement did continue throughout the eighteenth century, but the Chickasaws and other groups no longer found English traders ready buyers of their prisoners. Those seeking to sell their prisoners of war sometimes found a market in French Louisiana, and Indians who caught runaway slaves, military deserters, and convicts

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<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, chapter 12; Snell, "Indian Slavery," chapter 4; Ramsay, "Heathenish Combination," 4-5. Scholars have debated whether the Yamasees initially acted alone or in concert with other Southern Nations. Contemporary South Carolinians harbored an abiding fear of interior Indian nations, especially the Creeks, and imagined a generally Indian conspiracy against them. Steven Oatis, however, is probably correct in his estimation that the Yamasees independently began the conflict, and other disgruntled nations following their lead, sometimes as allies, sometimes acting alone. Oatis, *Colonial Complex*, 112-30.

<sup>88</sup> Virginians passed a series of laws, in 1691, 1705, and 1777, designed to outlaw all forms of Indian slavery. Although the colony was not entirely successful in this bid, Virginians made a more concerted attempt than its neighboring Southern colonies. In 1740, South Carolina's legislature outlawed enslavement of allies friendly to the colony. Almon Wheeler Lauber, *Indian Slavery in Colonial Times within the Present Limits of the United States* (New York: Columbia University), 564-68.

sold these captives back to European colonies.<sup>89</sup> In diminished form, the economic aspect of captive trade remained. In the decades that followed the Yamasee War, however, Southern Indians placed more emphasis on retaining captured enemies in their own communities. There, the seemingly disparate practices of captive execution, adoption, and enslavement preserved social order, an increasingly important goal for Indian nations in the colonial South.

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<sup>89</sup> For more on bounties paid to captors for slaves, deserters, and convicts, see Daniel H. Usner, "American Indians in Colonial New Orleans," in *Powhatan's Mantle*, 163-86; Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery," *Journal of Southern History* 57, no. 4 (1991), 611-612; Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 261-62, 318; Patrick Riordan, "Seminole Genesis: Native Americans, African Americans, and Colonists on the Southern Frontier from Prehistory through the Colonial Era" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1996), 233-38; Isabel M. Calder, ed., "Journals of Sergeant Wright, 1771," in *Colonial Captivities, Marches, and Journeys*, 239; Jean-Baptiste Bénard de la Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*, trans. Joan Cain and Virginia Koenig and ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette, LA: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1971), 126.



## Part II. The Native South: Crying Blood

### CHAPTER 3

#### Death

In Native Southern societies, a simple law protected the lives of the people: As the Red Coat King of Oakfuskee told Governor Glen of South Carolina, “we must have Blood for Blood.”<sup>1</sup> In this practice, known as blood vengeance, clans avenged a relative’s death—even an accidental one—by taking the life of the one responsible, or a near relative of the one responsible. To Native Southerners, the murder of kin represented a dangerous loss of clan power. Eighteenth-century trader James Adair reported that warriors went to almost unimaginable lengths to redress that imbalance:

I have known the Indians to go a thousand miles, for the purpose of revenge, in pathless woods; over hills and mountains; through large cane swamps, full of grapevines and briars; over broad lakes, rapid rivers, and deep creeks; and all the way endangered by poisonous snakes, if not with the rambling and lurking enemy, while at the same time they are they were exposed to the extremes of heat and cold, the vicissitude of the seasons; to hunger and thirst, both by chance, and their religious scanty method of living when at war, to fatigues, and other difficulties.

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<sup>1</sup> Red Coat King to Governor Glen, July 26, 1753, in *Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21- August 7, 1754*, ed. William L. McDowell (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), 380. Hereinafter cited as *DRIA*.

All of these efforts warriors considered “imaginary trifles” if they succeeded in their object: the capture of the enemy. With an enemy’s death—preferably through torture at the village’s blood pole—clans satisfied the “craving ghosts of their deceased relations.”<sup>2</sup>

### *Blood Vengeance*

When the murderer came from within a nation, the law of blood was easy enough to enforce. The murderer’s clan gave satisfaction by surrendering one of its members (either the offender or a volunteer who paid the blood price) or, if both the victim’s and murderer’s clan agreed, compensation for the life lost.<sup>3</sup> Blood vengeance became much more complicated when the murderer belonged to an outside nation. As military historian Wayne Lee has argued, the law of blood could be dangerously open-ended because of “the lack of specificity in who should be on the receiving end of the revenge.”<sup>4</sup> Grieving clans focused on appeasing the spirits of the deceased rather than punishing murderers, and they were less discerning in their retaliation.<sup>5</sup>

In the colonial era, Euro-Americans understood the law of blood, and though they preferred to capture the person who had committed the crime, officials often accommodated Native standards of justice when dealing with powerful Indian nations. On October 6, 1752, William Mackrachun, an employee of trader John Pettygrove, was shot and killed by a Chickasaw man named Noabbey. Frustrated when Noabbey would not give himself up,

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<sup>2</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 184-86. Quotations from 186.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 185; John Phillip Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970). Although Reid addressed the Cherokees in particular, all Southern Indians maintained this form of social justice.

<sup>4</sup> Lee, “Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge.”

<sup>5</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 64.

Governor Glen of South Carolina asked trader and diplomat Thomas Bosomworth to seek justice. Meanwhile, Noabbey remained in hiding, but his uncle stepped forth to pay the blood price. Noabbey's uncle reported to the Chickasaw King that "if his Nephew was affraid to dye for the Good of his People and for Satisfaction to the English he [the uncle] would sacrifice his own Life for him." When Bosomworth pressed the Chickasaw King to produce the actual murderer, the chief demurred, saying "by the Laws of [our] Nation one of the same Blood was equally satisfactory." Noabbey's uncle then "repaired to his own House to seek for his Gun which his Wife had hid from him, but finding a long French Knife, with that in one Hand and Paint in the other with which he besmeared himself, came out into the open Street and made a publick Declaration that as one of his Family had split the Blood of a white Man and was affrayd to dye for it, he was now going to pay the Debt for him . . . and with the greatest Undauntedness struck the Knife into the Gullet and immediately dyed with the Wound." Bosomworth, who had missed the excitement, sent an English trader to confirm that the debt had been paid. After some initial hesitation, "the King ordered his Brother to go and open the Grave over which two Woman [sic] his Relations, were making doleful Cries and the Body was seen fresh in its Gore."<sup>6</sup>

Noabbey's magnanimous uncle paid William Mackrachun's blood price, and the British, in this case, were willing to accept Chickasaw justice. However, the satisfaction of blood vengeance by an outside party was not always so straightforward. By the mid-eighteenth century, Chickasaws and British traders had forged both fictive and real kin ties in their already decades-long trading relationship. But what if the murder occurred between peoples who were sworn enemies? Or those who lived much farther afield? In reality, finding

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<sup>6</sup> Second Journal of Thomas Bosomworth, in *DRIA*, 310-16; Affidavit of James Geddes, November 6, 1752, in *DRIA*, 342. Noabbey, his kin, and the Chickasaw chief (called here "King") resided at Breed Camp, among their Creek allies, near South Carolina.

a murderer or his clan relatives was often an impossible task. Yet the victim's clan had to satisfy the law of blood because otherwise the souls of unrevenged clan members could not enter the afterlife and would remain in This World to torture the living. Native Southerners, who shared their lands with myriad supernatural forces, harbored a general fear of these wandering spirits. In 1791, traveler John Pope observed,

The *Creeks* in approaching the Frontiers of *Georgia*, always encamp on the right hand side of the Road or Path, assigning the left, as ominous, to the *Larvae* or Ghosts of their departed Heroes who have either unfortunately lost their scalps, or remain unburied. The Ghost of an Hero in either Predicament, is refused Admittance into the Mansions of Bliss, and sentenced to take up its invisible and darksome Abode, in the dreary Caverns of the Wilderness; until the Indignity shall be retaliated on the Enemy, by some of his surviving Friends.<sup>7</sup>

Among the Chickasaws, female relatives of a murdered warrior mourned his loss every morning and night until the men avenged his death.<sup>8</sup> Restless spirits and social order demanded blood-for-blood justice.

The unavenged death of a relative upset earthly and cosmic balance, and a clan had to go to war to redress that balance.<sup>9</sup> Native Southerners believed that they must shed “equal blood . . . to quench the crying blood of their relations, and give rest to their ghosts.”<sup>10</sup> Otherwise, relatives' ghosts haunted their kin and This World remained dangerously unbalanced. As Daniel Richter has noted, Native American justice stressed “restoration for the victim rather than punishment of the offender.”<sup>11</sup> The deaths of even the lowliest

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<sup>7</sup> John Pope, *A Tour through the Southern and Western Territories*, 63-64. For the Yuchis' beliefs on souls and haunting, see Speck, *Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians*, 97.

<sup>8</sup> Nairne, *Muskhogeian Journals*, 49.

<sup>9</sup> Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 50. As George Lankford has argued, Native Southerners considered order on earth a reflection of cosmic order. Lankford, “World on a String,” 207.

<sup>10</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 189.

<sup>11</sup> Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 64. See also Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 32.

members of nations required retaliation. In words of one contemporary, Southern Indians must “take revenge of blood before they can rest, cost what it will.”<sup>12</sup>

### *War and Status*

In addition to quenching crying blood, men went to war to achieve glory. Hereditary chiefs had ruled Native Southerners’ ancestors, and although Mississippian chiefdoms had collapsed by the seventeenth century, social and spiritual inequalities persisted. While some men benefited from high status that came from being born into prestigious clans, war represented a unique opportunity for young men of all clans to enhance their social and material capital.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, a desire for war honors drove Native Southern men to fight their enemies. In 1772, an old Creek man told British officer David Taitt that he had been the first to initiate hostilities with the Choctaws: “He says that he made war on purpose to keep his Young people from falling out with the English . . . as he know they must be at war with some body.”<sup>14</sup> As this warrior explained, the Creeks had to focus their martial energy

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<sup>12</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 183-85. Quotation on 185.

<sup>13</sup> In each nation, certain clans enjoyed a disproportionate amount of power and prestige. Caleb Swan, “Position and State of Manners and Arts in the Creek, or Muscogee Nation in 1791,” in *Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, ed. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott and Grambo, 1855), V, 264; Speck, *Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians*, 72; George Stiggins, *Creek Indian History: A Historical Narrative of the Genealogy, Traditions and Downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek Indian Tribe of Indians*, ed. Virginia Pounds Brown (Birmingham: Birmingham Public Library Press, 1989), 64-65; Saunt, *New Order*, 19-21; Theda Perdue, “Mixed Blood” Indians: *Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 24; Adam King, “Historic Period Transformation of Mississippian Societies” in *Light on the Path*, 183. For the connection between war and rank, see Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa, 1999), 143; Swan, “Position and State,” 264-265, 270; William Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, eds. Gregory A. Waselkov and Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 144; Nairne, *Muskhogeon Journals*, 43; F.A. Robin and Robert R. Rea, eds., “Thomas Campell’s Sojourn among the Creeks,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1974), 110; Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 91; Brown, *Old Frontiers*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> David Taitt, “Journal of David Taitt’s Travels from Pensacola, West Florida, to and through the Country of the Upper and Lower Creeks, 1772,” in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton D. Mereness (New York:

somewhere; better against the Choctaws than their English trading allies. Native Southern culture demanded a *continuous* state of war.<sup>15</sup>

Almost from birth, boys trained for war. Their older clan kin sought to inure them to pain and hardship. At dawn every morning, they took icy baths in nearby lakes and rivers. Regular ceremonial scratching with rows of gar fish teeth imbued boys with strength and stamina. One chronicler reported that Native peoples of the lower Mississippi Valley celebrated a festival each September during which leading warriors and politicians flogged the boys, “telling them that they have been flogged to teach them to have no fear of the evils of their enemies can do to them and to teach them to be good warriors that would never cry out or shed tears even in the middle of fire, supposing that their enemies should cast them into it.”<sup>16</sup> Beyond physical conditioning, elders doubtlessly prepared youths by telling them stories of the great heroes who came before them. Native Southern oral traditions are replete with brave young men who travel into the supernatural world to battle enemies and monsters, bringing back trophies and gifts with which to honor their communities.<sup>17</sup> After careful

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MacMillan, 1916), 534. William Bartram made a similar observation on the goals of Native warfare in the 1770s. Bartram, “Travels,” 58.

<sup>15</sup> Steven Oatis explained cultural differences between European and Southern Indian warfare in *A Colonial Complex*, 9. Oatis described European warfare as an “exceptional” state whereas in Southern Indian societies “war was a permanent part of a dualistic worldview: a ‘red state of violence that always coexisted with a ‘white’ state of peace.”

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Andre Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calument, Being the Penicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana*, ed. and trans. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 65. See also Bossu, *Travels*, 134; Romans, *Concise Natural History*, 146.

<sup>17</sup> Richard F. Townsend discussed Southeastern oral tradition in his thoughtful essay, “American Landscapes, Seen and Unseen,” 33. Collections of Native Southern oral traditions include James Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Asheville: Bright Mountain Books, 1992); Swanton, *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians*.

physical, mental, and spiritual training, a boy went to war, and when he spilled blood, he became a man.<sup>18</sup>

Communities reproached men who had never taken a scalp or a prisoner, while successful warriors expected such social accolades as the affection of local women and increased stature within the community. The society of warriors was a strictly ranked hierarchy, wherein a man achieved status through accumulation of captives and scalps. In 1791, Euro-American visitor Caleb Swan observed, “Every individual is at liberty to choose whether or not he shall engage in any warlike enterprise. But the rage of the young men to acquire war-names, and the thirst of plunder in the elder ones and leaders, are motives sufficient to raise gangs of volunteers to go in quest of *hair* [scalps] and horses at any time when they are disengaged from hunting.”<sup>19</sup> When men presented captives or scalps to their communities, they received new war ranks and tattoos commemorating their feats.<sup>20</sup>

### *Cut Off Warfare*

Native Southerners created a distinctive style of warfare, which contemporary Euro-Americans called “cutting off” the enemy. Attacks differed in scale, but the goal was to isolate a segment of the enemy group (ideally by surprise), kill or capture them, take war

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<sup>18</sup> Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 140-41; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 34-37.

<sup>19</sup> Swan, “Position and State,” 279. Men who lacked war honors were often dubbed “old women” or “women.” Swan, “Position and State,” 280; Tobias Fitch, “Journal of Captain Tobias Fitch's Mission from Charleston to the Creeks, 1726” in *Travels in the American Colonies*, 209. Historian Nancy Shoemaker has argued, “In Indian diplomacy, *women* was shorthand for military incapacity or fear.” Context, however, dictated the meaning of the term: “Women could be weak and cowardly” or “women could be highly regarded as advocates of peace.” Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 112.

<sup>20</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 391; Bartram, *Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 144; Bossu, *Travels*, 134.

spoils, and withdraw with minimal losses.<sup>21</sup> The cutting-off style of war, while generally small in scale and limited in material and human costs, still remained deadly. Indeed, in a tactic which has been styled “conquest by harrassment,” Native nations did sometimes endeavor to cut off an entire region, a feat that required constant pressure over a number of years.<sup>22</sup> In 1723, during French Louisiana’s ongoing war with the Chickasaws, the Superior Council suggested a peace overture, but Bienville demurred, saying that their Choctaw allies would never brook such a settlement. According to Bienville, the Choctaws asserted “that we should listen to no sort of proposal of peace and [they have promised] that they would continue the war until the entire destruction of [the Chickasaw] nation.”<sup>23</sup> Perhaps because the smaller Chickasaw Nation, quicker to procure and employ firearms, had bullied their more numerous neighbors for decades, the Choctaws wished to use their alliance with the French to crush their enemies.

As heads of grieving matrilineages, clan matrons initiated warfare, spurring the young men on and instructing them, “Go to war! Avenge the death of our relatives, our allies, and our friends.”<sup>24</sup> Trader James Adair, who lived among Native Southerners for over thirty years, had plenty of opportunity to witness their cutting-off style of war. First, a war captain announced his intention to attack the enemy and invited others to join him. According to Adair, “On this, a sufficient number of warriors and others, commonly of the family of the

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<sup>21</sup> Wayne Lee followed colonial Euro-Americans in dubbing this style of warfare. He provides an insightful analysis of the “cutting off” style and its tactics in “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” 713-770. Daniel Richter noted a similar style of warfare among the Iroquois. See Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Lee, “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” 722, 754.

<sup>23</sup> Bienville to the Superior Council of Louisiana, July 23, 1723, *MPA:FD*, Vol. III, 355.

<sup>24</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, 62. Historian Theda Perdue has argued that “the most important role that the matrilineal clan played was as the arbiter of justice.” Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 49. As heads of clans, women logically took charge in directing warfare.



murdered person, immediately arm themselves, and each gets a small bag of parched corn-flour, for his war-stores.” Typically, twenty to forty warriors volunteered. Because success in warfare required considerable spiritual power, a warrior needed to prepare himself.

Accordingly, those who volunteered went to the war captain’s house where they sat in order of rank and drank black drink, a tea made of yaupon holly leaves. Black drink purified warriors before battle, reportedly “inspir[ing] them with an invincible prowess in war.” After these three days of purification, war parties set out against their enemies. To evade detection by the enemy, and thus employ the element of surprise, they traveled alongside swamps and canebrakes which provided ready cover. Once reaching enemy territory, war parties attempted to catch isolated individuals or parties unawares, preferably outside of town.

Warriors often killed enemies in the heat of combat, and they always took care to recover the scalps of the slain. However, war parties preferred to capture enemies, particularly if they happened to be women or children.

In addition to their weapons, parched corn, and spiritual safeguards, war parties brought along restraints with which they planned to bind captives. Scattered evidence suggests that such restraints were common and took diverse forms. A group of Savannah Indians caught skulking in the South Carolina backcountry had on them “a Ligamen[t] of a black Colour made up of Buffalo’s Wool.” Upon interrogation by Governor Glen, a warrior explained, “It is to tie my Prisoners with.” Similarly, Charles Johnston’s Shawnee captors bound him to a tree every night with “a strong rope of buffalo hide.” When one of his fellow captives attempted to escape, they took stronger measures, tying a cord with an attached bell from each prisoner’s neck to a nearby tree: every time the prisoner moved, the bell rang. In another incident, a coalition of American and Cherokee forces confiscated from a Creek war

party “slave strings,” which they described as “Strings to bind prisoners, of whom the Creeks make slaves.” In addition to cords and slave strings, some parties brought along more advanced tools of captivity. Cherokee masters had “slave collars” ready for their new captives, and Creek warriors carried “Stocks prep[ared] to secure prisoners.”<sup>25</sup>

Although often restrained and occasionally laden with baggage, captives who later recorded accounts of their ordeal generally attested to their good treatment en route to captors’ nations. Warriors attempted to preserve captives’ lives until justice could be meted out in their home villages. Antoine Bonnefoy, a voyageur captured along with two other Frenchmen and one African slave in 1740, remembered that after his Cherokee captors plundered his boat, they offered the prisoners breakfast “and gave us to understand by signs that no harm should come to us, and that we should be even as themselves.” As a token of their generosity and good intentions, the Cherokee warriors measured out a cup of rum to each prisoner, then to themselves, after every meal.<sup>26</sup> Charles Johnston, whose boat was attacked by a war party, received the surprise of his life when the warriors did not immediately torture him: “Bred up with an instinctive horror of Indians and of Indian cruelties, it was a situation which, of all others, I had most deprecated . . . already my imagination placed me at the stake, and I saw the flames about to be kindled around me.”

When it became clear that the warriors would take the boat, Johnston resigned himself to his

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<sup>25</sup> Proceedings of the Council Concerning Indian Affairs, June 18, 1753, *DRIA*, 424; Charles Johnston, “A Narrative of the Incidents Attending the Capture, Detention, and Ransom of Charles Johnston,” in *Held Captive By Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642-1836*, ed. Richard VanDerBeets, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 267-69; John McKee to Gov. Blount, August 11, 1794, *Knoxville Gazette*, 2, TSLA; Antoine Bonnefoy, “Journal of Antoine Bonnefoy,” trans. J. Franklin Jameson, in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton D. Mereness (New York: MacMillian, 1916), 241-42; James Robertson to David Henley, October 24, 1795, David Henley Papers, reel 625, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville. Eunice Barber, one of the last Euro-Americans captured by Native Southerners, asserted that her Seminole master had bound her with a cord at night. *Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Eunice Barber* (New York: Garland, 1978), 9.

<sup>26</sup> Bonnefoy, “Journal of Bonnefoy,” 243. Louboey to Maurepas, March 7, 1741, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 177-81. See also n. 4, p. 181. The other voyageurs captured with Bonnefoy were André Crespé and Jean Arlois.

fate and began to help his captors aboard. However, “When they entered, they shook hands with me, crying out in broken English, ‘How de do! How de do!’ I returned their salutation by a hearty squeeze of the hand, as if glad to see them.”<sup>27</sup> One of Johnston’s traveling companions, Peggy Fleming, was taken by Cherokees in the war party. Although Johnston expected her to plunge “into grief and despondency,” Fleming “enjoyed a high flow of spirits; and, indeed, I had never seen any one who appeared to be more contented and happy.”<sup>28</sup> Johnston entered into his captivity with a deep bias against Indians, but immediately he found himself forced to revise these notions, even to admire some aspects of Native culture.

Although conquering European armies had, for centuries, raped women whose lands they invaded, sexual violence did not play a similar role in Native Southern martial culture. Euro-Americans always implicitly feared the rape of women captives by Indians, and, in a candid moment, General James Wilkinson was explicit: “The great fear is, that being helpless, unprotected females, they may have lost their innocence, & formed attachments, which spoiled their return.”<sup>29</sup> Although women captives often had other complaints—hard labor and beatings, for example—they rarely accused their captors of rape.<sup>30</sup> On the contrary,

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<sup>27</sup> Johnston’s party was taken by a combined party of Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and Cherokees upon the Scioto in 1790. Johnston, “A Narrative,” 254.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 267. Though initially content with her captivity, Peggy Fleming was deeply depressed when Johnston saw her several weeks later.

<sup>29</sup> James Wilkinson to Isaac Shelby, June 16, 1796, Isaac Shelby Papers, Folder 4, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. In this case, Blue Jacket, a Shawnee chief, had agreed to turn several young women captives back to their families in Kentucky.

<sup>30</sup> As June Namias has pointed out, Euro-American men sometimes argued that Indian failure to rape their captives owed to their inferior masculinity. June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 65-66. See also James Axtell, “The White Indians of Colonial America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1975), 67-68; Frederick Drimmer, ed., *Scalps and Tomahawks: Narratives of Indian Captivity* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1961), 12.

a French woman among the Choctaws, like many other captives, reported that “they showed her . . . all sorts of kindness.”<sup>31</sup> Contemporaries of these women captives as well as modern scholars have puzzled at why Indian captors refrained from sexual violence. Many have made the ethnocentric assumption that rape is a “natural” accompaniment to warfare, when, in reality, rape as a tool of war is cultural construct.<sup>32</sup>

The Native Southern taboo against captive rape welled from two sources. First, Southern Indian cultures linked sexual abstinence to success in warfare. A warrior who broke the taboo risked the capture and death of his entire party. As trader James Adair observed, “The Indians will not cohabit with women while they are out at war; they religiously abstain from every kind of intercourse even with their own wives, for the space of three days and nights before they go to war, and so after they return home, because they are to sanctify

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Indian men were, however, sometimes accused of rape. George Tillet and other citizens of St. Marys alleged that William Kinnard, brother of Lower Creek headman Jack Kinnard, robbed Tillet’s house and raped his wife. According to the governor of Spanish Florida, Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, officials at Amelia Island “gave for certain that the brother of Juan Canard, and five or six other Indians enjoyed [Mrs. Tillet] by force.” One Alexander Steele, who claimed to have witnessed the assault, swore, “we found that they had Carried her and Dragd her a considerable Distance into the fields where we went to Rescue her and found her in the possession of about fourteen or fifteen Indians, and with one in such positon and others a holding her that we Doubted not but they had ravished her.” The governor thought the incident remarkable, adding that if it was true, “It was the worst disgrace in which he [William] had participated.” Other Spanish Floridians seem to have doubted the veracity of George Tillet’s story; Juan Forrester challenged Tillet’s credibility, calling Tillet “a Rogue,” and accusing him of “Stealing, conveying stolen property,” and “harboring Villians.” There is no extant account from Mrs. Tillet herself, but see Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Juan Forrester, July 4, 1792, East Florida Papers [hereinafter EFP], Section 32, reel 47, doc. 1792-247, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History [hereinafter PKY], Gainesville; Juan Forrester to Quesada, September 22, 1792, EFP, Section 32, reel 47, doc. 1792-335, PKY; Citizens of St. Marys to Quesada, August 18, 1792, EFP, Section 32, reel 47, doc. 1792-291, PKY; Deposition of Alexander Steele, September 12, 1792, EFP, Section 32, reel 47, doc. 1792-32, PKY.

See also my discussion of Antonia Bonelli in Chapter 5. After warriors’ purification period had lapsed and once captives had been rejected for adoption, women became vulnerable to sexual violence.

Claudio Saunt has argued that rape became more common in the late eighteenth century as warriors frustrated by the “new order” directed their aggression against women. Saunt, *New Order*, 151-53.

<sup>31</sup> Journal of Lusser, in *MPA:FD*, Vol. I, 100.

<sup>32</sup> For a short discussion, see Thomas S. Abler, “Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism and Rape: An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Conflicting Cultural Values in War,” *Anthropologica* 34 (1992), 14-15. For a different interpretation, see Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 140.

themselves.” Adair noted that even the Choctaws, whom he considered especially “libidinous,” observed this proscription.<sup>33</sup> From his experience with nations of the lower Mississippi Valley, the Jesuit missionary Charlevoix reported that a warrior who took his first captive had to abstain from sex (including with his wife) for a month thereafter.<sup>34</sup> The second contributing factor to sexual restraint was Native Southerners’ taboo against incest.<sup>35</sup> Southern Indians reckoned their relatives much more expansively than did Europeans; they counted as clan members all who were descended from an ancient (usually mythic) ancestor, and many groups extended the taboo to include members of the clan of one’s father. Thus, the incest taboo prevented intercourse with a significant portion of one’s nation. Because women were sometimes adopted into the clans of their captors, warriors avoided sexual contact with women who might become their kin. As explorer John Lawson reported, a dishonorable death awaited those who broke the taboo: “For if an *Indian* lies with his Sister, or any very near Relation, his Body is burnt, and his Ashes thrown into the River, as unworthy to remain on Earth.”<sup>36</sup>

Euro-American men indulged in sexual violence against captives with much greater frequency, and the historical record has preserved evidence of rape or attempted rape committed by white men against Indian women. A prominent chief cited English rape of Cherokee women as a contributing factor to the Anglo-Cherokee War, which began in 1759. John Moultrie, who served as a major during that war, wrote that during his participation in

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<sup>33</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 196-97.

<sup>34</sup> John R. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998), 124.

<sup>35</sup> Axtell also noted this in “White Indians,” 67.

<sup>36</sup> Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, 193. Charles Hudson provides an excellent discussion of clan functions and obligations in *The Southeastern Indians*, 185-202.

retaliatory strikes he was “making free with the Cherokee squaws.” Moultrie detailed how he “dr[o]ve them naked out of their beds to hide in the woods and mountains.” Dispassionately, Moultrie concluded, “But this among others I did without much concern, besides burning of houses destroying fine fields gardens orchards &c.” Three decades later, when Tennessee militiamen took another Cherokee woman prisoner at the militant Chickamauga town of Nickajack, General Robertson ordered her to deliver a letter to her people. She set out from Tennessee on her way back to the Cherokee Nation, but as she made camp that first night, the woman found that some white men had pursued her. As the men threatened her, she abandoned all her possessions, including her horse, to hide in the tall grass. Luckily, she managed to complete the journey back to her homeland, letter in hand. Although this document is not explicit, it implies that the men intended to rape the Cherokee woman.<sup>37</sup>

Although warriors treated most captives kindly, those unable to complete the often long journey back to their captors’ villages met a different fate. When a badly wounded or ill prisoner faltered, captors unceremoniously dispatched them. Bonnefoy reported that after the initial ambush Cherokee warriors put slave collars on him and his three companions. During the battle, one man had been hurt, and his wounds steadily worsened. Seeing this, the Cherokees released him and told him to return to the French, “but not knowing where to go, he followed the pirogues for two days. On the third . . . the savages, tired of seeing him, gave him over to the young people, who killed him and took his scalp.”<sup>38</sup> Those disabled by

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<sup>37</sup> Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians Through the Era of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 107; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 263; John Moultrie to Eleanor Austin, July 10, 1761, Moultrie Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston; John Haywood Papers, Folder 6, Document 1, Tennessee State Library and Archives [hereinafter TSLA].

<sup>38</sup> Bonnefoy, “Journal of Bonnefoy,” 244. See also Alexander Kellet, “A true Relation of the unheard-of Sufferings of David Menzies, Surgeon, among the Cherokees, and of his surprizing Deliverance,” in *A Pocket of Prose and Verse* (New York: Garland, 1975), 198. Two men captured along with Menzies were too sick “to keep pace with us” and so his Cherokee captors “scalped [them], and left [them] on the path.”

disease or physical trauma compromised one of the key objectives of cut-off warfare—returning home before the enemy could mount a counter-attack.

When a war party and its captives finally completed the journey, the warriors transferred control of the prisoners, ritually purified themselves, and prepared to receive their new war honors. A mid-eighteenth-century visitor to the Quapaws observed of their war parties: “Even before their arrival, they announce, through a system of cries, how many prisoners have been taken, how many have been killed, and the number of scalps that have been brought back.”<sup>39</sup> Those who had managed to take prisoners or scalps looked forward with pride to the war honors the community would bestow in a forthcoming ceremony. According to one observer, “One of the young Fellows, that has been at the Wars, and has had the Fortune to take a Captive, returns the proudest Creature on Earth, and sets such a Value on himself, that he knows not how to contain himself in his Senses.”<sup>40</sup> For the time being, however, warriors began the process of ritual purification, usually lasting three days. Because Native Southerners believed that exposure to blood was spiritually powerful and potentially dangerous, warriors had to cleanse themselves before they could safely reenter society.<sup>41</sup>

At this point, warriors passed their captives to the village’s “beloved women.” In their oral traditions, the Senecas, an Iroquois group with a long history of warring with Southern nations, remembered, “It was the custom among the Cherokee to let two women say what should be done with captives.” According to the Senecas, “Each of these women had two

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<sup>39</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, 64.

<sup>40</sup> Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 207.

<sup>41</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 383. For more on the power of blood, see Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 140-41; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 34-36.

snakes tattooed on her lips, with their heads opposite each other, in such a way that when she opened her mouth the two snakes opened their mouths also.”<sup>42</sup>

In a significant departure from Mississippian martial practices, eighteenth-century warfare was primarily a clan affair, and, as heads of lineages, beloved women had the power to determine how captives’ fates would best fulfill the demands of justice.<sup>43</sup> As a visitor to the Cherokees reported, the title of “Beloved” afforded such women so great a power “that they can, by the wave of a swan's wing, deliver a wretch condemned by the council, and already tied to the stake.”<sup>44</sup> Women were the dominant figures in disposing of captives. According to a contemporary observer, clans had to kill captives until blood vengeance was fulfilled, but thereafter they could choose to adopt or enslave captives.<sup>45</sup>

Clan matrons sorted through the captives, deciding whose fiery deaths would atone for past murders, who would take the place of deceased clan members, and whose labor would enrich the clan’s wealth and prestige.<sup>46</sup> Stripping the captives and beating men with

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<sup>42</sup> Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas*, 360, 363.

<sup>43</sup> The term “beloved women” was widely, though not universally used among Southern Indians. Certainly, the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Creeks employed the term, and while it is unclear whether or not the Choctaws followed custom, ethnohistorian Michelene Pesantubbee has argued that they did. Michelene Peasantubbee, *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World: The Clash of Cultures in the Colonial Southeast* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005). As discussed in the introduction, the overwhelming majority of Native Southerners were matrilineal, and thus women held a place of privilege in their kinship systems.

<sup>44</sup> Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lieut. Henry Timberlake*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 94.

<sup>45</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 188.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 384; Timberlake, *Memoirs*, 82; Benjamin Hawkins, *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, ed. C.L. Grant. 2 vols. (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1980), I, 38; Fabel and Rea, eds., “Lieutenant Thomas Campbell's Sojourn,” 108; Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 23; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 53.



canes or switches, women attempted to divine their overall health and strength.<sup>47</sup> They also closely examined the captives' chests and arms for tell-tale blue pictographs—the tattoos that graphically told the stories of their exploits against enemy peoples. Very accomplished warriors could expect to “atone for the blood they spilt, by the tortures of fire.” Those selected for the fiery torture were painted black, the color of death; lucky adoptees were embraced by their new relatives; slaves were retained by their captors or sold to others.<sup>48</sup>

Euro-American traveler William Bartram noted that Southern Indians executed warriors, but noted, “they do not kill the females or children of either sex.”<sup>49</sup> For most of the eighteenth century, Native Southerners used sex and age to determine a captive's fate. During this period, a captive's race was irrelevant. Captors usually killed men, adopted most women and children, and enslaved the remainder. As Daniel Richter has argued, these seemingly disparate forms of captive treatment all served to enhance a clan's power.<sup>50</sup> Captives served as flexible mediums of power: they quenched crying blood, performed labor, produced children, and conferred status. For clans, enhancing power following the death of a relative was essential to maintaining social order.

Native Southerners considered warriors dangerous and unfit for adoption. A Creek oral tradition tells of a young Creek boy taken captive by his people's longtime enemies, the Choctaws. Raised among them, he grew to become a great warrior and took many of his former people as captives. One day as a battle raged between the two groups, the former captive became separated from his fellow Choctaw warriors. By calling out to him in

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<sup>47</sup> Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, ed. and trans. Joseph G. Tregle, Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 374; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 384.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 384; Bossu, *Travels*, 65.

<sup>49</sup> Bartram, *Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 58.

<sup>50</sup> Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 35.

Choctaw, the Creeks deceived him into coming out of a hollow tree, where he had been hiding. Though the warriors knew that the man was born a Creek, they killed him and took his head as a war trophy.<sup>51</sup> Although it was generally true that clans tortured men and adopted women and children, they made exceptions for *some* men—perhaps those they deemed exceptionally talented or likeable.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, non-Indian men have left behind captivity accounts out of proportion to their numbers because they were more literate than other captives in the eighteenth-century South.<sup>53</sup>

Clans bound those slated for torture and tied them to the village’s “blood pole.”<sup>54</sup> There, through torture, clans quieted the crying blood of their kin. Each town had two or three blood poles, described in detail by the naturalist William Bartram:

[A]bout twelve feet high . . . these pillars are usually decorated with the scalps of their slain Enemies;—the scalp, with the hair on them, are stretched or strained on a little hoop . . . round about the top of the pole, where they remain as long as they last. . . . [T]he pole is usually crown’d with the white dry skin of an enemy. In some of their towns, I have counted 6 or 8 scalps fluttering on one pole in these yards.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Swanton, *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians*. See “A Fight between the Alabama and the Choctaw,” p. 155, and “The Captive Alabama,” p. 157.

<sup>52</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, 146. The Alabamas joined the Creek Nation in the eighteenth century, but maintained a distinct ethnic identity. Ethnic minorities within Indian nations are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>53</sup> Chapter 4 cites these accounts. Euro-American men’s accounts include those of Antoine Bonnefoy and Joseph Brown (a teenager at the time of his captivity). Significantly, two major eighteenth-century captivity narratives come from African American men—David George (see Chapter 6) and John Marrant (also a teenager at the time). Unfortunately, although women and children made up the majority of captives, their accounts are more fragmentary in nature and were often related by male kinsmen or government officials.

<sup>54</sup> Jack B. Martin and Margaret McKane Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee with Notes on the Florida and Oklahoma Seminole dialects of Creek* (Lincoln, 2000), 288-89, 9.

<sup>55</sup> William Bartram claims that each town had two poles, while Benjamin Hawkins saw three in Tallassee. Bartram, *Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 154; H. Thomas Foster II, ed., *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810* (Tuscaloosa, 2003), 63.

Into the twentieth century, elderly Creeks still recalled the blood poles of the square grounds, remembering that the poles were shaped like war clubs, ancient and symbolically potent weapons.<sup>56</sup>

To preserve a captive's scalp, villagers either removed it or placed clay atop the prisoner's crown to protect the flesh underneath. Beneath the blood pole, the women lit and fueled the fire, and participants encircled the captive. If the victim attempted to run outward, the people burned him with torches or lit pipes. A trader who witnessed such an event observed, "Not a soul, of whatever age or sex, manifests the least pity during the prisoner's tortures: the women sing with religious joy, all the while they are torturing the devoted victim, and peals of laughter resound through the crowded theatre—especially if he fears to die."<sup>57</sup>

For his part, the tortured ideally endured his painful death with stoicism, a circumstance which amazed Euro-American spectators. In their continuous wars against enemies, eighteenth-century warriors often faced mortal peril. Pragmatically, they adopted a fatalistic attitude toward death, "for they affirm, that there is a fixt time, and place, when, and where, everyone must die, without any possibility of averting it."<sup>58</sup> One astonished observer asserted that, throughout his torture, the victim "sings in many songs":

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<sup>56</sup> Swanton, *Social Organization and Social Usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy* (New York: Johnson Reprints, 1970), 437.

<sup>57</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 384-85; Von Reck, *Drawings and Journal*, 47. Fire seems to have been the universal means of torture among Native Southerners, but some groups, especially those on the fringes of the region, differed in the details. In the lower Mississippi Valley, participants fashioned a frame out of three poles and tied the prisoner in the form of a St. Andrew's cross. In what is today North Carolina, some groups stuck captives with lighted wooden splinters. Du Pratz, *History of Louisiana*, 374; Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, xxxvi, 53.

<sup>58</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 90. Bartram also quoted a Choctaw song about death:  
The meaning of the chorus was,  
All men must surely die,  
Tho' no one knows how soon,

During all these torments the captive takes care to show a constant undaunted courage, to rebuke his enemies as cowardly and womanish people for inflicting on him such a womanish death, that he only laughs at all these torments, that nothing better has previously happened to him, that his death even in this manner will soon be found out.<sup>59</sup>

Some captives went even further: “They even taunt their executioners by saying that they are not suffering enough. If things were reversed, the victims would know how to make the executioners suffer even greater torment.”<sup>60</sup> A victim commonly promised his tormentors that the cycle of vengeance would continue, saying he looked forward to the day when they, too, suffered a similar fate. If the warrior began to faint, participants doused him with water and continued the ordeal. Because torture was a means by which the entire community could participate in the defeat of enemies, children also assisted by caning or shooting arrows at victims.<sup>61</sup> A Frenchman in Louisiana reported that captives sometimes endured for three days and nights, singing all the while.<sup>62</sup>

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Yet when the time shall come,  
The event may be joyful.

Bartram, *Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 125. Von Reck thought that “they hold death itself to be no punishment and do not fear it.” Von Reck, *Drawings and Journal*, 47. According to Swan, “they are most of them flattered with the expectation of hereafter becoming great warleaders, or swift hunters in the beloved country.” Swan, “Position and State,” 270.

<sup>59</sup> Von Reck, *Drawings and Journal*, 47. Similarly, William Byrd related that prisoners “make it a Point of Honour all the time to Soften their Features, and look as pleas’d as if they were in Actual Enjoyment of Some Delight, and if they never sang before in their Lives, they will be sure to be Melodious on this . . . Occasion.” William Byrd, *William Byrd’s Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1929), 222.

<sup>60</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, 65. Eighteenth-century documents contain many such speeches by captives. Among Carolina Indians, John Lawson reported, “these Wretches behave themselves (in the Midst of their Tortures) with a great deal of Bravery and Resolution, esteeming it Satisfaction enough, to be assur’d, that the same Fate will befall some of their Tormentors, whensoever they fall into the Hands of their Nation.”

<sup>61</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 384; Von Reck, *Drawings and Journal*, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Among Carolina Indians, John Lawson reported, “these Wretches behave themselves (in the Midst of their Tortures) with a great deal of Bravery and Resolution, esteeming it Satisfaction enough, to be assur’d, that the same Fate will befall some of their Tormentors, whensoever they fall into the Hands of their Nation.” Lawson, *Voyage to Carolina*, 53. Du Pratz, *History of Louisiana*, 374.

Clans used torture to restore the social order that had become unbalanced through the unjust death of a loved one. Beyond satisfying the demands of blood vengeance, torture, in the words of one ethnohistorian, served as an augur “to divine the physical and spiritual strength of the enemy.”<sup>63</sup> As participants doled out ever-increasing pain, the victim challenged them with threats and insults. Thus, torture became a test of the victim’s mettle, a miniature contest of strength between two enemy peoples. Following the victim’s death, kin took the warrior’s preserved scalp and either tied it atop the blood pole or placed it on the roof of their dead relative’s house. The victim’s fiery death and the exposure of his scalp released the relative’s wandering soul into the afterlife, where he or she could rest peacefully.<sup>64</sup> As trader James Adair explained, “when that kindred duty of retaliation is justly executed, [the dead] immediately get ease and power to fly away.”<sup>65</sup>

### *Scalping*

When warriors failed to bring captives back to village blood poles, scalps served as acceptable substitutes. As James Axtell and William Sturtevant have noted, the scalp was a distinctly American sort of war trophy.<sup>66</sup> Although Europeans may have scalped in antiquity, the practice was much more popular in Native America. In eastern North America, the earliest archaeological evidence for scalping dates roughly to 2,500-500 B.C. At this site in western Tennessee, the crowns of three men’s craniums were found scored with a series of

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<sup>63</sup> Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 15.

<sup>64</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 390; Nairne, *Muskhogeon Journals*, 49.

<sup>65</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 186.

<sup>66</sup> James Axtell and William Sturtevant, “The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 37 (1980), 451-472.

circular cut marks, evidence consistent with historical accounts of scalping.<sup>67</sup> Among later groups, warriors cut a circle around the crown of a victim's head, lifted the skin, and cut or pulled off the scalp. Among the Quapaws, Jean-Bernard Bossu observed how young men practiced scalping through ritualized dance:

All the young men are painted red. The one who does the discovery or surprise dance remains in a crouching position as he spies on his enemy. He jumps up suddenly, club in hand, and utters piercing screams as he attacks his foe in simulated battle. The dance partner falls as though struck by lightning and stiffens his arms and legs like an epileptic. After this, the victor does a scalping dance. He pretends to make an incision in the forehead and around the neck of the enemy. He then goes through the motion of digging his long fingernails into the cut and places his knees on the victim's shoulders. He then pushes forward quickly with his knees as he yanks back with his hands, removing the dead man's scalp, hair and all.<sup>68</sup>

Scalping usually, though not exclusively, occurred after a victim's death.<sup>69</sup>

Although Southern Indians sometimes took other disarticulated body parts, the distinctiveness and portability of scalps made them the most popular war trophies.<sup>70</sup> Because Native Southerners' hairstyles reflected their identity, warriors and their communities easily discerned which enemy nation the former owner of the scalp had belonged. An early-eighteenth-century German observer remarked, "In battle they cut the upper part of the head hair from those they have conquered in order to see from what nation and tribe they are."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Maria O. Smith, "Scalping in the Archaic Period: Evidence from the Western Tennessee Valley," *Southeastern Archaeology* 14 (1995), 60-68.

<sup>68</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, 63.

<sup>69</sup> James Robertson, "Remarks on the Management of the Scalped-Head" *Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal* 2, no. 2 (1805-06), 27-30.

<sup>70</sup> In 1743, Edward Kimber, who accompanied James Oglethorpe and the Creek Indians on an expedition against the Spanish, reported that the Indians took five scalps along with "one Hand, which was cut off with the Glove on." Edward Kimber, *A Relation or Journal of A Late Expedition to the Gates of St. Augustine on Florida* (Boston: Charles E. Goodspeed & Co., 1935), 15. Given their frequency in Mississippian iconography, disarticulated hands may have been a popular war trophy in more ancient times. On the portability of scalps, see Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 183.

<sup>71</sup> Von Reck, *Drawings and Journal*, 40.

After battle, as James Adair related, “they tie with bark or deer's sinews, their . . . trophies of blood in a small hoop, to preserve it from putrefaction, and paint the interior part of the scalp, and the hoop, all round with red, their flourishing emblematical colour of blood.”<sup>72</sup> Preserved scalps thereby provided durable trophies.

Among Native Southerners, scalps served as a portable representation of a conquered enemy. Archaeologist David Dye has explained, “Human body parts were believed to contain the essence, soul, or spirit of the person killed. The trophy then becomes a representation of the whole, linking the spirit of the victim with the captor.”<sup>73</sup> Moreover, in Native Southern ceremony, scalps and captives served the same ritual purpose. Returning warriors presented them to grieving relatives, who then exposed the scalps atop the houses of the deceased. Whether warriors killed enemies abroad or clans tortured them at village blood poles, the successful acquisition and exposure of enemy scalps satisfied blood vengeance and released murdered relatives’ souls.<sup>74</sup> Captives and scalps alike enabled non-combatants to participate in quieting crying blood.

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<sup>72</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 383.

<sup>73</sup> Dye, “Art, Ritual, and Chiefly Warfare,” 203.

<sup>74</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 390; Romans, *Concise Natural History*, 132; Letter of Mathurin le Petit to Père d'Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France: 1610-1791*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1900), Vol. 68, 149.

## *Newcomers*

When Europeans and Africans became embroiled in conflicts against or between Native Southerners, they necessarily subject to deeply rooted Native rules of engagement.<sup>75</sup> During the Natchez War, after the Natchez captured a French soldier whom they recognized from a previous campaign against them, they attempted to break him emotionally during torture, “their intention being to make him shed tears, so as to call him a woman not a warrior.”<sup>76</sup> Also during the Natchez War, Father le Petit reported that the French handed over three Africans, who had aided the Natchez, to the French-allied Choctaws: “They have been burned alive with a degree of cruelty which has inspired all the Negroes with a new horror of the Savages.”<sup>77</sup> The more culturally savvy newcomers, especially educated Jesuit priests (who perhaps sought their own martyrdom), knew what was expected of them, and did not disappoint their Indian audiences. During the Franco-Chickasaw Wars, the Chickasaws captured a group of French settlers and soldiers, including Father Sénat. Mingo Ouma, a war chief among the Chickasaws, later recounted that during the torture “The Black Robe—he meant Father Sénat—had sung until his death.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Even as Native Southerners tortured white and black bodies, they did not necessarily expect African and Euro-American men to meet Native standards of masculinity. Richter has argued that “cultural predispositions” were important for captive treatment. See *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 71.

<sup>76</sup> “M. Dumont’s Memoir,” in *Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*, ed. Benjamin F. French, 88.

<sup>77</sup> Letter of Mathurin le Petit to Père d’Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, Vol. 68, 199. The French hoped to foster animosity between Native Americans and African Americans in order to prevent another cooperative uprising. Le Petit assured his superior that the torture of the African men would “have a beneficial effect in securing the safety of the Colony.”

<sup>78</sup> Crémont to Maurepas, February 21, 1737, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 141; Bienville to Maurepas, December 20, 1737, *MPA:FD*, Vol. III, 708. Ethnohistorian James Axtell explored how Jesuits used their skills in cultural mediation to achieve missionary success in New France. James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).



Euro-Americans, even as they recounted tales of torture in voyeuristic detail, quickly condemned the practice as “barbaric.” In describing the exotic, alien nature of torture, however, chroniclers were a bit dishonest. In fact, for centuries, torture had played an important role in European justice, and, in the eighteenth century, Europeans still flocked to public quarterings. In 1757, after Robert-François Damiens attempted to kill King Louis XV, a French crowd watched executioners burn, pierce, and finally quarter the criminal. A contemporary newspaper reported, “This last operation was very long, because the horses used were not accustomed to drawing; consequently, instead of four, six were needed; and when that did not suffice, they were forced, in order to cut off the wretch’s thighs, to sever the sinews and hack at the joints.” In Europe, brutal torture and execution were prerogatives of the state; the public were only spectators. Native Americans, in contrast, saw torture as a public right belonging above all to those most directly affected by the death of a loved one. Although Euro-Americans purported to see only chaotic mob violence, Southern Indians clans used torture to quiet crying blood, maintain social order, address cosmic balance, and augment their power.<sup>79</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth century, various Euro-American men tried to convince Native Southerners to give up the fiery torture. Resident traders, for example, routinely offered money to ransom the condemned captives, especially if those captives happened to be Euro-Americans. The more honest chroniclers admitted that their attempts were unsuccessful. James Adair related that during the Franco-Chickasaw Wars, the Chickasaws put a number of Frenchmen to death in their fires: “The English traders solicited with the

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<sup>79</sup> Michael Foucault discussed Damiens’ torture in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), quotation on 3. For the nature and eventual transformation of punishment, see also 3-69. For more on differences in Native American and European attitudes toward torture, see Lee, “Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge”; Abler, “Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism, and Rape.”

most earnest entreaties, in favour of the unfortunate captives; but they averred, that as it was not our business to intercede in behalf of a deceitful enemy who came to shed blood, unless we were resolved to share their deserved fate.”<sup>80</sup>

Blood demanded blood, and traders had no business interfering in torture. In a revealing moment during Joseph Brown’s captivity among the Chickamaugas, his captors threatened to take him to “Running water town”—more isolated than the other main village at Nickajack—where there were “no white people” to interfere.<sup>81</sup> In accord with the law of blood, Native Southerners continued to torture enemies throughout the eighteenth century because the practice fulfilled essential social and spiritual needs.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 189. Louis LeClerc Milfort, a Frenchman who lived among the Creeks, claimed to have persuaded them to give up torture in May 1780. Because Milfort was an egotist who often exaggerated his exploits, he almost certainly fabricated this portion of his account. Milfort, *My Sojourn in the Creek Nation*, 99.

<sup>81</sup> Autobiographical Sketch, n.d. [1860?], Joseph Brown Papers, Folder 1, TSLA.

<sup>82</sup> William Bartram showed a keen interest in torture. In 1774, he quoted an old trader as saying that the Creeks no longer practiced “burning or tormenting their male captives; though it is said they used to do it formerly.” Later, however, he contradicted this statement, writing that on their chunkey yards “modern and even present nations of Indians” practice torture. Writing at about the same time, Bernard Romans asserted that Native Southerners regularly tortured prisoners of war. Bartram, *Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 58, 131; Romans, *Concise Natural History*, 147.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Adoption

Southeastern Indians retain oral traditions about the adoption of outsiders into their societies. Choctaw statesman Peter Pitchlynn related the story of the Crawfish People, a clan of crustaceans who became humans, to artist George Caitlin in the early 1830s. “They formerly, but at a very remote period, lived under ground, and used to come up out of the mud—they were a species of crawfish; and they went on their hands and feet, and lived in a large cave deep under ground, where there was no light for several miles.” According to Pitchlynn, the Crawfish lacked hallmarks of humanity: “They spoke no language at all, nor could they understand any.” Nearby Choctaws took an interest in the Crawfish, and they “used to lay and wait for them to come out into the sun, where they would try to talk to them and cultivate an acquaintance.” Following many attempts at capturing the Crawfish, the Choctaws finally succeeded when they smoked the Crawfish out of their underground tunnels. After the Choctaws captured the Crawfish, “they treated them kindly—taught them the Choctaw language—taught them to walk on two legs—made them cut off their toe nails, and pluck the hair from their bodies, after which they adopted them into their nation.”<sup>1</sup> The only reminder of their former identity was their clan name—the Crawfish People.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in John R. Swanton’s, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 83. Some Chakchiumas also settled among the Chickasaws, who maintain a similar oral tradition. See Speck, “Notes on Chickasaw Ethnology and Folklore,” 52.

The Crawfish People were not mythic figures, but an actual Indian group absorbed by the Choctaws in the early eighteenth century. The Choctaws called them *shâktci homma* meaning “red crawfish.” The Chakchiumas lived at the confluence of the Yazoo and Yalobusha, near the Choctaws. Like their neighbors, the Chakchiumas became French allies and joined the Louisianans in campaigns against the Yazoos, Koroas, and Chickasaws. Already a small group, war and disease further weakened the Chakchiumas. By 1740, the Chakchiumas sought refuge in Choctaw communities.<sup>2</sup> As is commemorated in the oral tradition, the Choctaws incorporated the Chakchiumas. While the Choctaws normally assigned individual captives to pre-existing clans, in the case of the Chakchiumas, who numbered at least several dozen, the Choctaws created a new clan designation for the Crawfish People.

In addition to its historical significance, the Crawfish story serves as an allegory about captive adoption, capturing the spirit and purpose of naturalizing the other. Initially, the Crawfish were nothing like the Choctaws: The Crawfish lived below ground, the Choctaws above; the Crawfish walked on four legs, the Choctaws upright; the Crawfish lacked a spoken language, the Choctaw language was one of the most salient markers of their identity. Even so, the Choctaws determined to incorporate these foreigners. Displaying their good intentions, the captors “treated [the Crawfish] kindly.” The foreigners’ first step toward humanity was their mastery of the Choctaw language, which endowed them with a distinctly Choctaw worldview and the ability to communicate with their captors. Secondly, the Choctaws “taught them to walk on two legs”—a metaphor for instructing their captives in proper behavior. Finally, the Choctaws changed the Crawfish People’s physical appearance, cutting off their long nails, removing their body hair, and generally tailoring their looks to

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<sup>2</sup> Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 106, 217.

Choctaw tastes. Mentally, behaviorally, and physically transformed, the Crawfish became fully Choctaw. The Crawfish allegory was a testament to Southern Indians' ability to transform aliens into members of their own society. Through proper ritual, anyone—regardless of appearance or cultural background—could become a full member of society.

### *Taming Outsiders*

Oral history suggests that Southern Indians believed that the appearance and behavior of humans, animals, and plants were mutable. In the Chakchiuma case, the Choctaws transformed crawfish into humans. Likewise, when humans rejected these cultural norms, they sometimes reverted to an animal or even monstrous state. According to Cherokees, bears originated when the *Ani-Tsaguhi* clan began to spend too much time outside of the village, preferring to make an easy living off of the bounty of the mountains instead of farming. After seven days of living in the wilderness, “they had not taken human food and their nature was changing.” Members of the Ani-Tsaguhi clan became covered with fur, and soon they were no longer humans, but bears.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Creeks told the story of a hunter who ate a mixture of taboo foods, namely “a black snake, a black squirrel, and a wild turkey.” The man mutated into a black snake or, in some versions of the story, a tie-snake, a monster with the body of a snake, antlers like a deer, and wings of a raptor.<sup>4</sup> For Native Southerners, being human meant abiding by cultural norms: Those who did so, no

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<sup>3</sup> Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 161-62.

<sup>4</sup> John Swanton's Creek informants provided him with several different versions of “The Man Who Became a Snake.” See Swanton, *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians*, 30-34. The tie-snake (or, as the Cherokees called it, *uktena*) is pervasive in Southern Indian oral traditions

matter what their original state, could be groomed into kin; those who did not were less than human.

Coming from the outside world, enemy others were “wild”—physically different, uneducated in behavioral norms, and potentially dangerous. Native Southerners transformed wild people into family members through ritual. When Frenchman Antoine Bonnefoy arrived at the Cherokee town of Tellico, he was stripped, given a white stick and rattle (white being the color of peace) and forced to sing for much of the next two days “singing both French and Indian songs.” On the second day, the Cherokee clans buried a lock of Bonnefoy’s hair, signifying the death of his old life. Afterward, they sang again in the council house, a place of honor. Singing had a spiritual dimension, and the act of joining other Cherokees in song at the council house forged sacred bonds between the adoptee and his new people.<sup>5</sup> Then, Bonnefoy’s new brother “on entering into his cabin, washed me, then, after he had told me that the way was free before me, I ate with him, and there I remained two months, dressed and treated like himself.”<sup>6</sup> After being symbolically purged of his former identity, shorn and scrubbed, Bonnefoy was born anew as a Cherokee.

Four decades later, the Chickamauga faction of the Cherokee Nation adopted a boy named Joseph Brown. Luckily for Brown, he became nephew to the Breath of Nickajack, one of the most respected chiefs among the Chickamauga. During Brown’s adoption, the Breath “seemed very solemn” and told Brown to join hands with him. Brown recalled, “He then informed me that I would have to become an indian or I could not be saved. . . . [H]e would

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<sup>5</sup> When the Catawbas incorporated outside groups, the two peoples cemented their relationship by joining together in song. John Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 177. See also the Prologue of Theda Perdue’s *Cherokee Women*, which offers a quick glance at the unifying and spiritually-charged Cherokee stomp dance. Clyde Ellis explores the sacred aspect of song in *A Dancing People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 173-75.

<sup>6</sup> Bonnefoy, “Journal of Bonnefoy,” 246.

put me in his own family & I must call him uncle.” Joseph’s new clan then transformed his appearance: “The same day [that I was adopted] they cut my hair all [off] except a patch on the top of my head to ty a bunch of feathers to & Shaved all the balance of my head & bored holes through my ears.”<sup>7</sup> Integral to Brown’s “becom[ing] an indian” was not the alteration of his skin color, which was unimportant to the Cherokees, but rather the tailoring of his hairstyle, dress, and jewelry to Cherokee norms.

When the Quapaws adopted French traveler Jean-Bernard Bossu in 1751, they made his new marks of identity permanent. Of his adoption into the deer clan, Bossu related, “I sat on a wildcat skin while an Indian burned some straw. He put the ashes in water and used this simple mixture to draw the deer. He then traced the drawing with big needles, pricking me until I bled. The blood mixed with the ashes of the straw formed a tattoo which can never be removed.” Because Euro-Americans often lacked knowledge about Native Southern culture, adopting clans may have initially expected less of them than Indian adoptees. In Bossu’s case, however, the Quapaws were delighted when their new kinsman endured the novel experience of tattooing without complaint: “The spectators, surprised by my stoicism, cried out in joy, danced, and told me that I was a real man.”<sup>8</sup>

Because sex and age, not race, were a captive’s most important characteristics throughout the colonial era, African American adoptees experienced the same ritual and treatment as their Euro-American counterparts. A young, free black man, John Marrant, produced one of the South’s most fascinating captivity narratives. Born in New York, Marrant moved to Florida and Georgia before settling in Charleston, South Carolina, where he became a musical prodigy. After hearing George Whitfield preach at the age of fourteen,

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<sup>7</sup> Autobiographical Sketch, n.d. (probably 1860), Joseph Brown Papers, Folder 1, TSLA.

<sup>8</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, 66.

Marrant converted to Methodism, and his fervor convinced his family that he was “insane.” Shortly thereafter, in 1770, Marrant ran away from home, and a Cherokee hunter found him wandering in the Carolina piedmont. Brought before the Cherokee “king,” the captive cried and prayed, fearing an unpleasant end. The chief, according to Marrant, “expressed a concern for me, and said I was young.” After the chief’s clan adopted him, Marrant “assumed the habit of the country” and dressed “purely in the Indian stile.” Marrant passed his time learning the language, dressing skins, and sharing his religious beliefs with other Cherokees. More fortunate than many African Americans of his time, Marrant never experienced enslavement—not at the hands of Anglo Americans, not among the Cherokees.<sup>9</sup>

With little or no memory of their former lives, child captives made the best new kin. Children readily learned Native languages, kin relations, gender roles, and belief systems. When captors took more than one member of the same family, they split them up, probably to facilitate cultural amnesia.<sup>10</sup> The Creeks captured six-year-old Tempest Ellice from her family’s home near present-day Athens, Georgia, in 1790. When Indian agent James Seagrove redeemed her seven years later, he reported, “she is 13 years of age, but does not

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<sup>9</sup> John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord’s wonderful Dealings, with John Marrant, a Black Now gone to Preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia) Born in New-York, in North-America, Taken down from his own Relation, arranged, corrected, and published, By the Rev. Mr. Aldridge in Held Captive By Indians*, 177-201. Portions of Marrant’s narrative, like many narratives, are certainly exaggerated, especially concerning his success in converting the Cherokees. In broad outline, however, Marrant’s story corresponds well to that of his contemporaries.

<sup>10</sup> In the case of Nancy Caffrey and her infant son John, the child was taken and given to another to rear. Deposition of James Ore, June 16, 1792, *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, from the First Session of the First to the Third Session of the Thirteenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing March 3, 1789, and Ending March 3, 1815: Indian Affairs*, edited by Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clarke (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832), Vol. I, 274 [hereinafter *ASP: IA*]; William Blount to James Robertson, May 16, 1792, James Robertson Papers [hereinafter *JRP*], reel 801, TSLA; *Knoxville Gazette*, March 13, 1795, TSLA. Also see the case of Esnahatchee (alias Molly Williams) earlier in this chapter. John Sevier to Benjamin Hawkins, April 26, 1797, Governor Sevier Collection, bin 1, folio 3, doc. 42, TSLA. Presented in the Digital Library of Georgia.



remember anything of her [birth] family.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, George Mayfield, captured around the age of ten, adjusted well to his new life. Adopted by a clan, Mayfield was reared as a Creek. When he returned to his birth family fourteen years later, Mayfield had completely forgotten his native tongue and “had contracted a fondness for [the Creek] mode of life.” Indeed, Mayfield had become so thoroughly Creek that he attempted to apply aspects of matrilineality to his new life in Tennessee; peers chided Mayfield for granting his mother and sisters virtually his entire estate.<sup>12</sup>

When birth families attempted to redeem children adopted by Indian families, the children often responded with horror. As part of his diplomatic mission following the 1759-60 Anglo-Cherokee War, Lieutenant Henry Timberlake attempted to redeem Anglo-American children captured and adopted by the Cherokees. Timberlake found many unwilling to return to South Carolina: “Among them were above twenty boys who had become so habituated to the Indian manners that, after they were delivered up, they did nothing but cry, and would not eat.”<sup>13</sup> When her brother came to “redeem” five-year-old Polly Brown, captive for just one year with the Chickamaugas, Polly “would not leave her Indian mother, who had ever treated her kindly, but wept and clung to her neck.”<sup>14</sup> So

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<sup>11</sup> James Seagrove to Jared Irwin, September 18, 1796, “Creek Indian Letters, Talks, and Treaties, 1705-1839, in Four Parts,” typescript compiled by Louise F. Hays, Part 2, 494, Georgia Archives, Morrow [hereinafter GA]; *Georgia Gazette*, July 28, 1796; E. Merton Coulter, “The Birth of a University, a Town, and a County,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1962), 120-21.

<sup>12</sup> Relief of George Mayfield, January 13, 1832, *United States Congressional Serial Set*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Session, H.R. 182, v. 1; Relief of George Mayfield, April 4, 1840, *United States Congressional Serial Set*, 26<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Session, H.R. 360, v. 2; Joseph Martin to Edward Telfair, October 16, 1786, “Cherokee Indian Letters, Talks, and Treaties, 1786-1838,” typescript compiled by Louise F. Hays, vol. 1, 5b, GA. Later documents suggest that Mayfield was taken in 1789 or 1788, but Martin’s letter confirms a date of 1786.

<sup>13</sup> Timberlake, *Memoirs*, p. 111, n. 62.

<sup>14</sup> “Historical Traditions of Tennessee: The Captivity of Jane Brown and her Family,” from *American Whig* 15, 235-249, in *The Garland Library of Narrative of North American Indian Captivities* (New York: Garland, 1978), vol. 64, 8; Joseph Brown, n.d. (1860?), Autobiographical Sketch, Joseph Brown Papers, Folder 1, TSLA.

successful were clans in “habituat[ing]” adopted children “to the Indian manners” that the children considered clan kin to be their authentic families and loathed returning to a life that they could not remember.

Although many birth families eventually redeemed their stolen children, other captives grew to adulthood in Native nations. During the American Revolution, a clan from Hilabi adopted nine-year-old captive Daniel Eades. By 1793, he answered to the name “Sausey Jack” and sported “a remarkable scar on the inside of his left thigh above the Knee,” likely the result of his warring and hunting.<sup>15</sup> Hannah Hale, also taken captive during the Revolution at the age of eleven or twelve, certainly fulfilled the expectations of her new kin. She married a headman of her town and reared their five children. As Creek women had done for centuries, Hale controlled her household’s production, which by the late eighteenth century included spinning and weaving as well as tending to livestock. Beginning in the 1790s, the state of Georgia attempted to redeem Hale and several other captives; Hale, however, refused to leave the Creek Nation.<sup>16</sup> Those who grew to adulthood in Indian nations not only had a vast network of clan kin; they also usually married and had children of their own. During 1795 treaty negotiations, the Chickamaugas attempted to comply with the United States’ demand that they release all former captives, giving up three young children recently taken. However, they reported, “There is also a man in the Nation captured at twelve years of age now married, has Children & unwilling to return to the white People.”<sup>17</sup> When

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<sup>15</sup> Affidavit of John Eades, October 30, 1793, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 349, GA.

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Hawkins, “A Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1798 and 1799,” in *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810*, ed. Thomas Foster (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 50s; Samuel Alexander to the Governor of Georgia, 1792, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 262, GA.

<sup>17</sup> Tellico Blockhouse Treaty Negotiations, December 28, 1794-January 3, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

clans adopted children, they hoped their new kin would grow to become successful warriors, productive farmers, and loyal family members. Many of them did just that.

Eunice Barber became a prisoner of the Seminoles during the First Seminole War. While Barber's narrative clearly states that she did not enjoy her time among the Seminoles, she could not help but admire her captors' genuine love for adopted kin. According to Barber, these captives were "led to the cabin of the person into whose family he was to be adopted, and received with all imaginable marks of kindness." Thereafter, the adoptee was "treated as a friend and a brother, and they appeared soon to love him with the same tenderness as if he stood in the place of their deceased friend. In short, he had no other marks of captivity."<sup>18</sup> Even the most prejudiced and cynical captives could not deny the transformative power of adoption in Native communities.

### *Multiethnic Indian Nations*

The eighteenth-century villages of Southern Indians were truly multiethnic, home to Indians of various nations as well as peoples of European and African descent. When Antoine Bonnefoy and his companions arrived in Tellico, they were surprised to find other former captives there. One of Tellico's most famous inhabitants was Christian Priber, a German by birth who attempted to create a utopian society among the Cherokees. Because the English feared that Priber was a French spy, they repeatedly tried to capture him, but the Cherokees "rejected the presents of the English" and continued to protect Priber because "he was adopted into the nation." Priber told Bonnefoy and his companions, in French, "that he was very sorry for the misfortune which had come upon us, but that it would perhaps prove to be our happiness." Additionally, Bonnefoy and his companions were perhaps surprised to

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<sup>18</sup> Barber, *Captivity and Sufferings*, 17.

learn that they were not the only Frenchmen in town—the Cherokees had two other voyageurs, captured upon the Ohio River. Residents of Tellico also included “a negro and a negress who formerly belonged to the widow Saussier, and having been sold in 1739 to a Canadian, deserted when on the Ouabache, on their way to Canada, and were captured by a troop of Cheraquis who brought them to the same village.”<sup>19</sup>

While Southern Indians experienced tremendous success at incorporating new peoples into their world, they probably did not expect adoptees to completely shed their former identities. Indeed, they valued the skills adoptees brought to their communities. Cherokee adoptee Christian Priber, by all accounts, was a man of exceptional intelligence. A gifted linguist, Priber knew several European and Indian tongues, and he used his skills to compile a Cherokee dictionary. According to one English trader, the Cherokees asserted that Priber “was made a great beloved man,” one of Tellico’s most important leaders.<sup>20</sup> The French voyageurs brought to Tellico their knowledge of the fur trade, which would have been of great interest to eighteenth-century Indian men. The African couple, formerly belonging to the widow Saussier, had fled from the lower Mississippi Valley. Like most enslaved Africans in early Louisiana, they probably came from Senegambia, were experienced agriculturalists, and spoke several languages.<sup>21</sup> The selective adoption of outsiders into their communities allowed Native Southerners to control the process of cultural

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<sup>19</sup> Bonnefoy, “Journal of Bonnefoy,” 246-48.

<sup>20</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 259. Unfortunately for Priber, the English of Georgia and their Creek allies captured Priber in 1743. He died in prison at Fort Frederica that same year.

<sup>21</sup> Based on Bonnefoy’s description of the African couple’s journey to Cherokee country, they must have come from the lower Mississippi Valley, possibly from New Orleans. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall demonstrated the Senegambian roots of Afro-Creole culture in *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

change. They embraced certain individuals, technologies, and ideas and rejected those which they did not value.

Former captives became important kin, in part, because they came from the outside world and thus knew foreign languages and customs. That knowledge made them ideal cultural mediators. Just like the Chickasaw *fanemingos*, former captives served as diplomats and peacekeepers. James Carey, taken by the Cherokees in his youth, became a translator and consultant for the Cherokee National Council as an adult. Carey's uncle, Little Turkey, introduced him to the council members, saying, "though a white man, I consider [Carey] as one of my own people, for I have raised him from a boy."<sup>22</sup> When Creek headman Hoboithle Mekko negotiated with officials from Georgia during the American Revolution, among his consultants was a white woman (almost certainly a captive) who "much rejoiced him to see that his Plan of doing good had so far taken Place."<sup>23</sup> When Native diplomats made alliances with other nations, they typically brought along several women as a sign of their peaceful intentions.<sup>24</sup> This woman's English language skills and knowledge of Anglo-American culture heightened her importance. Similarly, Marianne Bienvenu, taken along with some voyageurs by the Chickasaws, attempted to broker a peace between the French of Louisiana and her captors. She wrote letters to Governor Vaudreuil on behalf of her captors, conveying their hopes for peace.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Journal of the Grand Cherokee National Council, June 26, 1792, *ASP:IA*, Vol. 1, 271.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Henderson to Governor Martin, December 23, 1782, "Creek Indian Letters," Part 1, 42, GA. Although the document does not explain the woman's status, virtually the only white women in Creek country were captives. At that time, all traders were men, and white women would not have traveled alone.

<sup>24</sup> Greg O'Brien, "The Conquerer Meets the Unconquered: Negotiating Cultural Boundaries on the Post-Revolutionary Southern Frontier," *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 1 (2001), 39-72.

<sup>25</sup> Marianne Bienvenu to Vaudreuil, August 27, 1743, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 213. Although Bienvenu asked Vaudreuil to send her some clothing, she reported that otherwise "These Chickasaws treat us well."

Southern Indians rarely sought the total destruction of an enemy people. Rather, through captivity, Southern Indians incorporated enemy others into their societies as beloved family members. Captivity augmented population levels reduced by disease and even strengthened diplomatic ties with former enemies. Following American victory in the Revolution, Creek headman Fine Bones was incredulous that the British were deserting his people, and he beseeched them to remember the bonds forged between the two peoples through captivity: “[The Creeks] often took prisoners whom the English redeemed and had children by them who live among us. . . . Do the English mean to abandon their own children with their friends?”<sup>26</sup> With this rebuke, Fine Bones attempted to call the British to task, reminding them how captivity had created indelible ties of kinship between the two.

#### *Adoption as a Metaphor for Inclusion*

Beyond the adoption of prisoners of war, Native Southerners used captivity as a framework for incorporating entire groups into their societies. As the Chakchiuma case demonstrates, nations absorbed formerly independent peoples, just as lineages adopted formerly unrelated individuals. Frequent wars, epidemics, and shifting alliances made the colonial South a dangerous homeland. As Native chiefdoms throughout the region declined and collapsed, surviving peoples became vulnerable to the vicissitudes of everyday life as well as targets for Indian slavers. Peoples weakened by war and disease sought protection from more powerful groups; sometimes, as in the Apalachee case, Natives allied with Europeans, but more often they looked toward emerging Native nations. Anthropologist Charles Hudson has argued that refugees sought the protection of other Native groups not

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in David H. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 323.

because they shared a common language and history (often they did not), but because they shared a belief system, a way of seeing the world.<sup>27</sup> Part of this shared ideology was the notion that ceremony could transform foreigners into kin.

No polity in the colonial South absorbed more refugee peoples than the Creek Nation. Trader James Adair asserted, “The nation consists of a mixture of several broken tribes, whom the Muskohge artfully decoyed to incorporate with them, in order to strengthen themselves against hostile attempts.”<sup>28</sup> Archaeologists have argued that in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries refugees gathered around a number of strong towns with a recent history of stability. These strong villages—Tuckabatchee on the lower Tallapoosa River, Abihka on the middle Coosa, and Coweta on the lower Chattahoochee—became the Creek “mother towns,” the birthplaces of the nation.<sup>29</sup>

During the seventeenth century, when many Native towns and chiefdoms vanished, Tuckabatchee’s population soared.<sup>30</sup> Among the newcomers to Tuckabatchee were refugees who, according to a late-eighteenth-century visitor, had been “almost destroyed by the Iroquois and the Hurons.” As anthropologist John Swanton has argued, these refugees were probably Shawnees forced out of the Ohio River Valley by the mid-seventeenth-century

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<sup>27</sup> Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 122. As recounted in Chapter 2, some Apalachees sought French protection, while others resettled among the Creeks.

<sup>28</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 273. Milfort similarly described the Creek Nation as “composed of a large number of other nations which have come to unite with it, and which it has adopted, but of which the greater number retain their customs and their particular tongue.” Milfort, *Sojourn in the Creek Nation*, 97.

<sup>29</sup> James Vernon Knight, Jr., “The Formation of the Creeks,” in *The Forgotten Centuries*, 384-386. Thomas Foster has demonstrated that archaeology can be used to trace the birth of the Creek Nation. He used ceramics to chart migrations into the Lower Chattahoochee and to mark ethnic diversity therein. H. Thomas Foster II, “Evidence of Historic Creek Indian Migration from a Regional and Direct Historic Analysis of Ceramic Types,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 23, no. 1 (2004), 65-84.

<sup>30</sup> James Vernon Knight, Jr., *Tukabatchee: Archaeological Investigations at an Historic Creek Town, Elmore County, Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: Office of Archaeological Research, Alabama State Museum of Natural History, 1985).

Iroquois Beaver Wars. Among Eastern Indians, Shawnees were remarkable for their ability to move easily among disparate Native groups; they bridged the cultural divide that often separated Native peoples of the North and South, acting as mediators and messengers. Wide travel and diplomatic success, abilities usually associated with great spiritual power, afforded the Shawnees a certain cachet among Southern Indians. Creek oral tradition recalls that these refugees came bearing powerful medicine and gave local leaders spiritually-powerful copper plates, which the Tuckabatchees believed were from the Upper World.<sup>31</sup>

Seeking protection among the Creeks, other groups followed the Shawnees' lead. According to one eighteenth-century observer, word of the Creeks' "friendly welcome" to the Shawnees spread among Indian nations. Attracted by "[t]he reputation of the Creeks as warriors . . . those among them who were too weak to resist the attacks of an enemy, came immediately to be them for help."<sup>32</sup> Along with the Chickasaws, the Creeks shared a reputation as the South's most "warlike" Indian nation.<sup>33</sup> Such a reputation attracted smaller groups, and the Creeks incorporated them into their nation. When Captain Tobias Fitch visited Creek country in 1726, he reported that a Seneca delegation visited the Lower Towns. The Senecas advised the Creeks to borrow one of their own population-boosting techniques, saying "Take Care That you oblige all Such as you make a peace with That they Imediately Remove and Setle near you. By that you will have all your Friends Ready to oppose your

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<sup>31</sup> Milfort, *Sojourn in the Creek Nation*, 163; Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 44-45; John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), 277-282; John R. Swanton, *Creek Religion and Medicine* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 504-10.

Similarly, the Natchez likely parlayed their storied history and elaborate ritual traditions to their advantage following their defeat in the Natchez War of 1729-1731. They found refuge in the Creek and Cherokee Nations, enjoying a privileged position. Among the latter, according to anthropologist James Mooney, "[t]hey seem to have been regarded . . . as a race of wizards and conjurers." James Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas*, 386.

<sup>32</sup> Milfort, *Sojourn in the Creek Nation*, 115.

<sup>33</sup> Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 175.



Enemies.”<sup>34</sup> A study of Creek demography revealed that the population reached a nadir of perhaps 9,000 in 1700, but rebounded thereafter, largely due to the incorporation of refugee peoples. By the late eighteenth century, the Creek population numbered between 15,000 and 20,000. In the words of one visitor, “Their numbers have increased faster by acquisition of foreign subjects, than by the increase of the original stock.”<sup>35</sup>

Although the Tuckabatchees regarded Shawnee newcomers with a certain amount of reverence, most refugee groups did not enjoy that luxury, and they became incorporated into pre-existing groups as inferiors. In addition to Shawnees, those incorporated into the Creek Nation included large numbers of people from what is now central and southern Georgia, who spoke an unintelligible dialect of Muskogee called Hitchiti. The nation’s dominant ethnic group, speakers of Muskogee-proper, referred to the others as *estenko* meaning “worthless hand.” (Englishmen misheard the derision as “stinkard.”)<sup>36</sup> The Yuchis, a group from what is now eastern Georgia, were even more linguistically distinct from Muskogees than were Hitchitis, and they sought the protection of Creek Nation around 1729. In George Stiggins’ history of his people, he depicted the Yuchi as subversives who refused to learn Muskogee, calling them “savage,” “indolent,” “thievish,” “dissipated,” and “depraved.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Talk of the Senecas to the Lower Towns, August 11, 1726, in “Journal of Captain Tobias Fitch’s Mission” in *Travels in the American Colonies*, 189.

<sup>35</sup> Wood, “The Changing Population of the Colonial South,” 84-87. The quotation, originally from Swan’s “Position and State,” appears on page 87. Wood put the Creeks’ 1790 population at 15,000, but Braund argued for a higher number. Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, 9. See also Anthony Paredes and Kenneth J. Plante, “A Reexamination of Creek Indian Population Trends: 1738-1832,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 6, no. 4 (1983), 3-28.

<sup>36</sup> J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks & Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 18; Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 108-9. According to Creek George Stiggins, Muskogees called the Alabamas “Che-loke-cul-ga, which is ‘a man that uses an imperfect or mixed language.’” Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 29.

<sup>37</sup> Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 31-33.

Like other formerly independent groups within the Creek Nation, the Yuchis gave up a measure of their autonomy in exchange for security, but they never forgot their distinct ethnic identity. As William Bartram noted during a 1775 visit to the Yuchis, “They are in confederacy with the Creeks, but do not mix with them . . . and are usually at variance, yet are wise enough to unite against a common enemy, to support the interest and glory of the general Creek confederacy.”<sup>38</sup>

Each Southern Indian nation represented not a collection of individual citizens, but an alliance of groups with disproportionate access to power. Father Baudouin, who was a missionary among the early-eighteenth-century Choctaws, reported that they were split into two moieties: *Inholahta* or “chiefs” and *Yuka-tathlapi* or “the five slave people.”<sup>39</sup> According to scholar Patricia Galloway, formerly autonomous groups created a new society in east-central Mississippi: From the east came remnants of the Moundville chiefdom and those who lived on the Tombigbee’s western tributaries; from the west, they came from the Nanih Waiya, the Choctaw’s “mother mound,” and from the Pearl River. Those from the east became the elder brothers, the *Inholahta* moiety, while the westerners had to settle for the less-prestigious moiety.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the Chickasaws were divided into a superior *Imosaktca*

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<sup>38</sup> Speck, *Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians*, 7, 68; Bartram, “Travels,” in *Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 90. Even into the twentieth (now twenty-first) century, hostility sometimes marks relations between Yuchis and Creeks. A Creek of Coweta told Frank Speck, “When the Creator made the ancestors of the Indians he gave them different languages until he had none left. He found that there were still some Indians whom he had not provided for. These were the Yuchi. Having no language for them, he kicked them in the buttocks saying “BA!” which explains why the Yuchi have such an unintelligible speech.” Speck, *Ethnology of the Yuchis*, p. 12, n. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Salmon to Maurepas, February 8, 1733, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 128. See also p. 128, n. 3; John R. Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 663.

<sup>40</sup> Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 2, 354-55. As Galloway noted, *Yuka-tathlapi* was probably a derogatory name for the less powerful moiety was *Imoklasha*. Salmon to Maurepas, February 8, 1733, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, p. 12, n. 1. Similarly, the Creek moieties were *Hathagalgi*, the “white” or peaceful people, and *Tcilokogalgi*, “people of a different speech” or “foreigners.” Swanton, *Indians of the Southeast*, 664. As opposed to many other scholars of the Native Southeast, Greg O’Brien placed little emphasis on heredity in his study of the Choctaws. Instead, he linked

moiety, whose leading clan always produced the nation's religious leader, and a lesser *Intcukwalipa* moiety. Among the *Intcukwalipas*, the four lowest-ranking clans had names indicating their lack of permanent housing or homelessness.<sup>41</sup> Outwardly, especially in ceremony, moieties and clans appeared to have equal, complimentary roles; within each nation, however, certain kin groups enjoyed a disproportionate share of power.<sup>42</sup>

Given that their ancestors had lived in chiefdoms with institutionalized social rank, it is not surprising that colonial-era Natives entered into relationships of dominance and subordination as they formed new nations. The metaphor of adoption, with its ceremonies of conquest, submission, and incorporation, enabled ambitious nations to peacefully augment their populations.

Although host nations might dub weaker groups “worthless,” “homeless,” or “slave people,” Southern Indians were remarkably successful at integrating them and thereby strengthening their own nations. Native groups maintained strict exogamy rules, forcing members to marry outside of their clan and sometimes outside of their moiety as well. As trader Thomas Nairne observed, “Establishing a Custome of not marrying in the same name for family seems at first to have been a politick contrivance to encrease Freindship and keep peace.”<sup>43</sup> Whatever the origin, exogamous marriages had the effect of integrating disparate and unequal groups. The social fabric that joined strangers and even former enemies together by ceremonies of incorporation became stronger when people became kin by blood. Native

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political power to manly success in warfare, hunting, and diplomacy—all signs of great spiritual power. See Greg O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Speck, “Notes on Chickasaw Ethnology and Folklore,” 50-58.

<sup>42</sup> For more on internal moiety and clan rank throughout Southeastern Indian history, see Adam King, “Historic Period Transformation of Mississippian Societies” in *Light on the Path*, 179-95.

<sup>43</sup> Nairne, *Nairne's Muskhogean Journals*, 61.

Southern ceremonial life, including diplomacy, funerary rites, and annual harvest festivals, also had an integrating effect, as each moiety depended upon the other to fulfill its complimentary role.<sup>44</sup> As explorer John Lawson trekked his way across the Carolina piedmont in 1701 among the coalescent Catawbas, he noted that when two nations entered into a peace someone appointed by the chiefs made a song “and relates, how the bad Spirit made them go to War, and destroy one another; but it shall never be so again; but that their Sons and Daughters shall marry together, and the two Nations love one another, and become as one People.”<sup>45</sup>

### *Race?*

Before the late eighteenth century, kinship dictated identity, strongly informing an individual’s rank, labor, obligations, ceremonial roles, religious and political status, even potential marriage partners, and friends. Those connected through real or fictive kin ties were allies, and alliances created expansive networks which connected diverse peoples across the region and beyond. The opposite of adoption was enmity. Counting enemies among the less esteemed members of the animal world, Native Southerners labeled them “accursed nothings” and “dunghill fowl.”<sup>46</sup> Englishmen who attempted to trade with the Choctaws after decades of conflict between the two peoples discovered as much. As trader James Adair explained, “The English traders among them . . . are often very glad to be allowed to pass

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<sup>44</sup> Archaeologist Adam King argued that eighteenth-century politicians pursued a corporate strategy, meaning they emphasized the group rather than individuals in their quest to incorporate ethnic outsiders. Adam King, “Creek Chiefdoms at the Temporal Edge of the Mississippian World,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 21, no. 2 (2002), 113-116.

<sup>45</sup> Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 177.

<sup>46</sup> Governor Johnstone’s Report, June 23, 1766, *Mississippi Provincial Archives: English Dominion*, ed. Dunbar Rowland (Nashville: Brandon Printing, 1911), 511; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 185, 265.

muster . . . as fellow-brethren of the human species.” Usually, Adair continued, “the general name they give us in their most favourable *war-speeches*, resembles that of a contemptible, heterogeneous animal.”<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the colonial period, Native Southerners divided their captives according to sex and age, no matter what their color. They continued to capture other Natives in their continuous wars: Creeks took Cherokees, Saponis took Senecas, Choctaws took Chickasaws, and so forth.<sup>48</sup> As with other Indians, Native Southerners categorized European and African newcomers as either kin or enemies. Even though enslaved Africans had no choice in joining their European masters in the American South, they, too, received the same treatment. As historian James Merrell has argued, because Native Southerners encountered Europeans *and* Africans through every step of colonization from initial explorations to a fully developed plantation economy, these circumstances “probably led natives to conclude that Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans were partners in the invasion of the Southeast.”<sup>49</sup> In colonial era wars, black men died alongside their white masters, while black women and children became adopted kin.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 65.

<sup>48</sup> A few examples will illustrate this point. During the long-term Creek-Cherokee War, in the spring of 1749, four hundred Creek warriors attacked the Cherokees, killing between thirty and forty and burning seven. George Galphin to Commissioner Pinckney, November 3, 1750, *DRIA*, 4. In 1772, the Creeks of Little Tallassee burned a Choctaw captive to death. Taitt, “Journal of Taitt’s Travels from Pensacola,” 529-30. In February 1753, Cherokees attempted to make war upon the Choctaws, but they were surprised and ambushed by a party of their foes. The Choctaws killed three and wounded another Cherokee, whom they “took alive, and carried him to the Choctaws, throw [sic] several of their Towns, whipping him at every Town for three Days, which is their Custom with Slaves.” Journal of John Buckles, February 22, 1753, *DRIA*, 384. During John Lawson’s tour among Carolina Indians, he reported that they were constantly at war with the Iroquois, and that the Saponis had recently taken Seneca captives. Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 53.

<sup>49</sup> James H. Merrell, “The Racial Education of the Catawba Indians,” *Journal of Southern History* 50, no. 3 (1984), 369.

<sup>50</sup> For the torture of black men, see Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 129; Jerald T. Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Spanish Missions and Southeastern Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1999), 187; Letter

During this period, Europeans and Native Americans shared similar views on physical difference. Educated Europeans believed that all humans shared the same ancestors—Adam and Eve—and bodily differences, including skin color, resulted from environmental factors. In this environmental view, Europeans thought, rather ethnocentrically, that all humans were born white. Traveler Jean-Bernard Bossu argued, “A combination of many causes must have been responsible for turning men from their original white color to black, red, and brown.”<sup>51</sup> A German visitor asserted that the Yuchis’ skin was “black-yellow, which is due not only to the sun but rather to their unusual manner of living.” These hue-altering lifestyle choices included “color[ing] their faces with all sorts of colors, especially black shaded with red.”<sup>52</sup>

Although eighteenth-century Europeans did not believe that they benefited from inherited racial characteristics, they did think that they were *culturally* superior to Native Americans. On the origin of Native North Americans, Bossu speculated,

I believe that those who come the closest to the truth are the ones who believe that the Americans are of Tatar origin. You have no idea of the similarity between the customs of the Americans and those of the ancient Scythians. This is evident in religious ceremonies, habits, and diet.<sup>53</sup>

Here, Bossu likened Natives to the Scythians, the most “uncivilized” group of *barbaroi* (meaning non-Greeks) that the ancient Greek historian Herodotus encountered. In the eyes of European, American Indians, just like the barbarians of antiquity, frequently warred, engaged

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of Abraham Wood, August 22, 1674, in *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540-1800*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, TN: Watauga Press, 1928), 29, 34. See also the case of John Marrant in this chapter. The relationship between race and captivity is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

<sup>51</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, 209. See also Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 67; Von Reck, *Drawings and Journal*, 45.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>53</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, 217.

in bloodthirsty acts like scalping, and inverted gender roles by having the women farm while men only hunted.<sup>54</sup> According to Europeans, nothing in Natives' bodies or blood made them inferior; they simply lacked cultural sophistication.

Certainly, Southern Indians noticed the physical differences that distinguished themselves from European and African newcomers. The Euro-Americans that Native Southerners most frequently encountered were men, who, in comparison to Indian men, had a profuse amount of body hair. As one Frenchman put it, "In that respect, they say we resemble animals." The Euro-American propensity to consume raw salads did nothing to dispel Indians' observation that they were animalistic; humans, according to Southern Indians, always cooked their greens.<sup>55</sup> An African American man who became a captive of the Creeks in the 1760s recounted how they anticipated his appearance even before they saw him: "They can tell the Black people's track from their own, because they are hollow in the midst of their feet and the Black's feet are flatter than theirs."<sup>56</sup> Jesuit Pierre de Charlevoix's guide told him that when his people drew Frenchmen in their pictographs, "they were represented by their arms upon their haunches in order to distinguish them from Indians whose arms were left in a hanging posture. This distinction is not very arbitrary but proceeds from their having

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<sup>54</sup> By definition, all non-Greeks were *barbaroi*. Herodotus generally described them as people who maintained customs contrary to those of the civilized Greeks: "the Egyptians themselves in their manners and customs seem to have reversed the ordinary [meaning Greek] practices of mankind"; "Like the Egyptians, the Scythians are dead-set against foreign ways, especially against Greek ways." Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (London: Penguin, 1972), II. 35; IV. 76. For other illuminating passages, see I. 216; IV. 64; IV. 186; IV. 114; II. 35; II. 50; IV. 59. The Western inheritors of Greek thought used the term *barbarian* to describe people who were not European and, therefore, culturally inferior. Bernard Romans was also profoundly influenced by classical discourse on barbarism. See Romans, *Concise Natural History*, 111-12.

<sup>55</sup> Bossu, *Travels*, p. 65, n. 10.

<sup>56</sup> John Rippon, ed., "An Account of the Life of Mr. David George, from Sierra Leone to Africa, given by himself in a conversation with Brother Rippon of London, and Brother Pearce of Birmingham," in *The Baptist Annual Register for 1790, 1791, 1792, & part of 1793, Including Sketches of the State of Religion Among Different Denominations of Good Men at Home and Abroad* (London, 1793), 474. Jean-Bernard Bossu's Indian guide could also "read" the footprints of Frenchmen, Indians, and Africans. Bossu, *Travels*, 166.

observed the French make use of this attitude frequently, which is never done amongst them.”<sup>57</sup> Skin color was but one of a host of differences that separated Europeans and Africans from Native Southerners, who, not surprisingly, reportedly found their own coppery hue most handsome.<sup>58</sup> Equally as remarkable were newcomers’ hairy bodies, uncivilized diets, distinctive footprints, and odd posture.

During the colonial era, Southern Indians seem to have reserved the label “white people” exclusively for the British and Anglo-Americans, probably because they stressed this characteristic to a greater extent than other Europeans. As historian Claudio Saunt has argued, Native Southerners generally called the Spanish “Christians” and the French “French.”<sup>59</sup> At a 1767 conference between the Seminoles and British, Governor James Grant related an illuminating story about the Seminoles’ categorization of others. Recently, shipwrecked Frenchmen had washed upon the coast of East Florida. Newly arrived, the Frenchmen obviously lacked kin ties, and the Seminole warriors who happened upon them decided, for whatever reason, to kill them. Shortly thereafter, “The Headmen took the alarm in order to give satisfaction, but upon enquiry finding that no *white men* (so they call the English) had been killed, they thought there was no harm done.”<sup>60</sup> In Native Southern eyes, these Frenchmen were French, not “white.” Throughout the colonial era and for thousands of

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<sup>57</sup> Account of Pierre de Charlevoix, 1721, in *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country*, 87.

<sup>58</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 65. “All the Indians are so strongly attached to, and prejudiced in favour of, their own color, that they think as meanly of the whites, as we possibly can do of them.”

<sup>59</sup> Saunt, *A New Order*, 112. The English were occasionally called “blond” as well. See Bossu, *Travels*, 138.

<sup>60</sup> From James Grant’s speech at the Picolata Conference, 1767, in *The British Meet the Seminoles: Negotiations between British Authorities in East Florida and the Indians, 1763-68*, ed. James W. Covington (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1961), 43.



years before, skin color was not an important component of identity in Native North America, and neither Indians nor Europeans constituted racial groups.

In the eighteenth century South, Europeans and Indians thought that identity was mutable. As historian Andrew Frank has argued, both groups “relied on traits that could be learned, practiced, altered, contested, and concealed to determine who was who. They assumed that members of one society could become full members of the other.”<sup>61</sup> Among Native Southerners, kinship—not phenotype—determined identity. In diplomatic rituals of alliance, ties of kinship could be made or remade. Thus, eighteenth-century Indian politicians who created alliances with Europeans spoke of having a “French heart” or becoming “Spanish.”<sup>62</sup> The fluidity of identity in the early South is most evident in the context of captivity. Through adoption, total strangers, former enemies, even animalistic beings could and did become kin.

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<sup>61</sup> Frank, *Creeks & Southerners*, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Speech of Captain Aleck at the Picolata Congress, 1765, in *British Meet the Seminoles*, 29; Journal of Lusser, January 12-23, 1730, in *MPA:FD*, Vol. I, 101; Gagane-huma to Esteban Miro, January 3, 1788, “Mississippi Provincial Archives: Spanish Dominion,” Vol. 3: 1787-1791, reel 405, p. 110, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Slavery

As the nineteenth century dawned in East Florida, people living on the outskirts of St. Augustine found themselves unwillingly drawn into a protracted war with the Mikasuki Indians. The Mikasukis, who resided in north-central Florida, were angry over the imprisonment of a leading warrior named Macloggy, whom the Spanish accused of aiding the rebel William Augustus Bowles in his attempt to overthrow their government. East Florida Governor Enrique White had asked Macloggy to deliver a letter to the fort at San Marco de Apalache, where the warrior was captured and imprisoned. In the classic cut-off style, the Mikasukis began their war in the summer of 1800, taking captive a number of slaves from Francis Fatio's expansive New Switzerland plantation. Lower Creek headman Jack Kinnard warned Governor White, "I think my friend there is no sense in keeping Macloggy in the fort . . . I am afraid that they will do more Mischief if he is not turned out." Kinnard's message proved prophetic as Mikasuki attacks continued for another year and a half, culminating in a January 1802 raid.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Forrester to Enrique White, August 31, 1801, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Jack Kinnard to Enrique White, October 2, 1801, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; White to Someruelos, December 2, 1801, EFP, Section 2, reel 10, doc. 1801-394, PKY; Citizens of St. Augustine to White, July 1, 1802, Papeles procedentes de Cuba [hereinafter PC], legajo 1554B, reel 39, folio 67, PKY; Petition to Governor White from Citizens of East Florida, January 27, 1803, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY. For quote by Kinnard, see Jack Kinnard to Governor White, October 2, 1801, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY. The Mikasukis were Hitchiti-speaking people originally from what is now central Georgia. They moved to the lake now named after them (spelled Miccosukee). Their principal village, Mikasuki, sometimes appears in documents as "Fowl Town" or "New

On the morning of January twenty-first, shotguns and piercing cries alarmed the farming community at Mantanzas. Planter Jesse Dupont, who was outside working with his sons and slaves, “concluded that we Should Soon be landed into Eternity.” Although Mikasukis captured ten of Dupont’s slaves and his English indentured servant, most members of the household found cover in the nearby woods and marshes. After fleeing the Dupont plantation, two enslaved African American women went to check on their neighbors, the Bonnellis. José and Maria Bonnelli, who had emigrated from Italy as indentures on Dr. Andrew Turnbull’s plantation at New Smyra, now enjoyed their freedom as a modest farming family. Knowing that the Bonnelli patriarch, José, was in nearby St. Augustine on business, the enslaved women tried to warn them of impending danger. While nearby, “[T]hey heard three Guns fire and directly the crys of the family.” In terror, the enslaved women fled back to their own plantation and alerted its inhabitants. As their master Jesse Dupont soon discovered, the Mikasukis had killed the eldest Bonnelli son, Tomas, and taken captive Mrs. Maria Bonnelli and her five younger children—Antonia, José, Teresa Maria, Catarina, and Juan.<sup>2</sup>

Antonia Bonnelli, then fifteen years old, later recalled that she and her younger sister Teresa Maria had to take turns carrying newborn sibling Juan on the twenty-four day journey back to Mikasuki. Once there, the Bonellis were “turned over to some Indian women who came out to meet us.” With horror, Antonia remembered how the Mikasukis had celebrated acquisition of her brother Tomas’ scalp. In testimony over thirty years later, Antonia offered

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Town.” See Mark F. Boyd, “The Seminole War: Its Background and Onset,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1951), 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Jesse Dupont to Governor White, January 24, 1802, EFP, Section 45, reel 83, doc. 1802-7, PKY; Citizens of St. Augustine to Governor White, July 1, 1802, PC, legajo 1554B, reel 39, f. 67, PKY. “Bonelly Family Genealogy,” compiled by Marguerite M. Mathews, Saint Augustine Historical Society.

no more details of her captivity, saying only that she “experienced many hardships and cruelties, and her trials were very severe; and the circumstances and history of her captivity and that of her family were so peculiar and barbarous that . . . she does not think that anything but death can efface them from her memory.”<sup>3</sup> The unspeakable “hardship” that Antonia endured was slavery. Within her lifetime, Antonia’s status changed from daughter of a poor farmer, to the slave of an Indian master, to a well-married white American woman. Antonia remembered, but she did not want to look back.

### *Owned People*

The Mikasukis made Antonia a slave. Among Native Southerners, captivity was a flexible institution, which included a broad spectrum of treatment for the captured. In the broadest sense, captives were detained foreigners. A slave, then, was a more particular sort of prisoner—one whose detention served to enhance the social or material capital of the captor. In this regard, the experiences of slaves in Southern Indian communities were often similar to those of African Americans in other parts of the South. The death of Tomas Bonelli and the taking of his scalp served to quiet the crying blood of an unnamed, wandering Mikasuki soul, but captors had different goals in mind for the remainder of the Bonellis. The capture of the Bonellis and other East Floridians gave Mikasukis the political leverage to force the release of Macloggy. Moreover, the Mikasukis benefited materially from the captives’ labor and eventual ransom.

Native Southerners commonly enslaved their prisoners of war. Recounting his trek throughout Creek and Seminole territory, William Bartram asserted that he saw slaves “in

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<sup>3</sup> Testimony of [Antonia] Mary Bonelly Leonardy, October 1, 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, HR, 24<sup>th</sup> Cong, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, p. 500.

every town.”<sup>4</sup> Spared from the blood poles and denied adoption ceremonies, these captives were chattel slaves. Because Native Southerners warred indiscriminately among their white, black, and Indian enemies, these slaves included people of different colors, status, and ethnicity. Slaves were usually adult men and women, but they occasionally included youths. Although the individual warrior who caught the slave became his master, he could share that slave’s labor with other clan members.<sup>5</sup> A captor could also sell his slave. Antoine Bonnefoy, captive among the Cherokees, observed how a clan bought one warrior’s slave: the “merchandise is collected from all the family of the one who makes the purchase, and is delivered in an assembly of all the relatives, each one of whom brings what he is to give and delivers it, piece by piece, to him who sold the slave.”<sup>6</sup> This “family”—either a clan or a lineage—jointly owned the slave. In another case, Tiger King, a Lower Creek, called African American captive Sambo “his famely Property.”<sup>7</sup> Captors did not necessarily have to destroy an enemy to take his life; by enslaving that enemy, they could socially and materially enrich themselves and their families and thus diminish the loss of a relative’s labor. At the same time, they denied the captive kinship ties essential to membership in their community.

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<sup>4</sup> Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 58. See also Swan, “Position and State,” 260.

<sup>5</sup> Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 14, 34; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 134-35. Braund argued that captors took slaves “into their extended matrilineal households.” Kathryn Holland Braund, “The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery,” *The Journal of Southern History* 57, no. 4 (1991), 602.

<sup>6</sup> Bonnefoy, “Journal of Bonnefoy,” 244-50. Quotation on 274. Those who purchased captives could also choose to adopt them, as was the case with Bonnefoy. See also Timberlake, *Memoirs*, 111-112; Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, Report on the condition of Louisiana, August 25, 1733, *MPA:FD*, Vol. I, 198.

<sup>7</sup> John Millar to Arturo O’Neill, September 1, 1788, Joseph Byrne Lockey Collection of Documents Related to the History of Florida [hereinafter LC], Group 174, Box 6, PKY.

Native Southerners called them “owned people.”<sup>8</sup> Because owned people lived in Indian communities but outside the kinship system, they lacked the rights and protection that clan membership afforded. As in most societies with slaves, the experiences of owned people depended largely on the objectives of their masters. Native Southerners treated these captives as vessels for exploitation. They served as laborers and commodities.

### *Labor*

Clans put their owned people to work. When trader John O’Reilly attempted to purchase Euro-Americans Elsey Thompson and Nancy Caffrey from a Creek man, the women’s master educated him on the purpose of their captivity. O’Reilly learned that “they did not bring the prisoners there to let them go back to the Virginia people [Americans], but had brought them to punish and make victuals and work for them, the Indians.” Slaves often engaged in gender-appropriate labor. Nancy Caffrey, for example, hoed corn and beat meal alongside other Creek women, while captors placed Elsey Thompson to work in the cornfields.<sup>9</sup> Male slaves, meanwhile, followed their male masters. In the early-eighteenth-century Carolina piedmont, John Lawson’s guide Enoe Will brought along a slave “who killed us Turkeys, and other Game, on which we feasted.” Lawson observed that Carolina Indians had few packhorses, so they employed male slaves as burden-bearers on long treks

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<sup>8</sup> Martin and Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, 313, 141. The term *este* means “person,” and *vpuekv* indicates an owned being. *Vpuekv* is also the term for “domestic animal” or “livestock.” The Cherokee term for “slave,” *atsi nahsa’i*, similarly translates as “one who is owned.” Theda Perdue noted this in *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 4. In his travels among Siouan-speaking Indians of the Carolinas, John Lawson noted that their term for “slave” referred to both human and animal domesticated beings: “So when an *Indian* tells us he has got a Slave for you, it may (in general Terms, as they use) be a young Eagle, a Dog, Otter, or any other think of that Nature, which is obsequiously to depend on the Master for its Sustenance.” Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 210. Brett Rushforth has noted that the term for “slave” among Native Americans of the Northeast meant “domesticated animal” or “tamed.” Rushforth, “‘A Little Flesh We Offer You,’” 783.

<sup>9</sup> Deposition of James Ore, June 16, 1792, *ASP:IA*, Vol. I, 274; Statement of Francis Spann, December 10, 1794, printed in *Knoxville Gazette*, March 13, 1795; *Knoxville Gazette*, October 11, 1794.

for hunting, trading, and diplomacy. Male slaves also followed their masters into the most masculine of village spaces—the council house—where they tended to guests and cleaned up after feasts.<sup>10</sup>

The Bonnellis, who found themselves enslaved at Mikasuki, probably also engaged in sex- and age-appropriate labor. Maria Bonnelli along with her daughters Antonia, Maria Teresa, and Catarina probably worked in the fields and prepared food, just as Mikasuki women did. José, fourteen when captured, probably helped his masters in hunting and tending to the vast herds of Mikasuki cattle.

Although female slaves do not seem to have engaged in tasks which compromised their femininity, the same could not be said for men. In Native Southern societies, farming was the work of women; men hunted and warred. Although some masters put their men to gender-appropriate tasks, others sent male slaves out to the fields with the women and children. Just as Chief Ozita forced Juan Ortiz to fetch wood and water, these masters may have wished to reinforce male slaves' status as conquered inferiors. African American David George met this fate during his captivity in the 1760s. George, who ran away from a cruel Virginia master, fled westward to Creek country. Near the Okmulgee River, in modern central Georgia, a hunting party captured George, and he became Chief Blue Salt's "prize." On the nature of his work, George recalled, "I made fences, dug the ground, planted corn, and worked hard." George had performed the same sort of labor under his former Virginia master, but in Creek country that work had a different meaning—digging the ground and planting corn marked George as "other." Just as colonial Virginians attempted to defeminize

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<sup>10</sup> Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 64, 44, 49; Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 62.

African women by putting them to men's work, so too did Southern Indians emasculate male slaves by sending them to the cornfields.<sup>11</sup>

To ensure that male captives did not escape, masters sometimes maimed their feet. Early eighteenth-century travelers John Lawson described the procedure: "They first raise the Skin, then cut away half the Feet, and so wrap the Skin over the Stumps, and make a present Cure of the Wounds." This treatment, Lawson explained, "commonly disables them from making their Escape, they being not so good Travellers as before, and the Impression of their Half-Feet making it easy to trace them."<sup>12</sup> This practice dates back at least to the sixteenth century. In the chiefdom of Cofitachequi near modern Camden, South Carolina, and in Pacaha on the Mississippi River, a Soto chronicler reported that masters also compromised their slaves' mobility by "disabl[ing] them in one foot, cutting the nerves above the instep where the foot joins the leg, or just above the heel."<sup>13</sup> Because Native Southerners feared keeping male captives as slaves, masters sapped their power by disabling them.

In a practice harkening back to the Mississippian era, captors forced male slaves to fetch wood and water, a task traditionally belonging to women and children.<sup>14</sup> In December of 1794, Creeks attacked the Titsworth family farm in middle Tennessee. Warriors killed most of the men and spirited away two captives, thirteen-year-old Peggy and the family's

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<sup>11</sup> John Rippon, ed., "An Account of the Life of Mr. David George," 474. See also Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 195. For a Euro-American comparison, see Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1996). Brown argues that Virginia elites legislated African women as laborers, stressing their blackness to the exclusion of their femininity. Creek denial of the masculinity of enslaved men (through agricultural labor) is an interesting inversion. Kathryn Holland Braund has argued that Creeks used the practice to emasculate black men. Braund, "The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery," *The Journal of Southern History*, 608. It should be noted, however, that Indian men underwent the same ordeal.

<sup>12</sup> Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 59, 208. In this case, Lawson clearly meant male slaves, for he wrote that captors "cut *his* Toes, and half *his* Feet away." Emphasis added.

<sup>13</sup> Garcilasso de la Vega, "La Florida by the Inca," 312, 400.

<sup>14</sup> For earlier accounts of men carrying water and wood, see Juan Ortiz's ordeal in Chapter 1.



fifteen-year-old slave Mingo. Although Peggy and Mingo had formerly possessed very different stations within the Titsworth household, they found that, as slaves of the Creeks, they shared the same lowly status and performed identical tasks. Both Peggy and Mingo, “cut wood, made fires, [and] brought water.”<sup>15</sup> The slaves’ gender and race made no difference.

As their Mississippian ancestors had, elite Southern Indians such as chiefs and traders often used their slaves as personal servants. A visitor to early-eighteenth-century Creek country who called at Chief’s Brims’ house in Coweta found, “He has a number of slaves who are busy night and day cooking food for those going and coming to visit him.” Brims, according to this account, treated his guests to fresh cuts of beef served up on silver dishes. Deeply impressed, just as the chief had undoubtedly intended, the visitor concluded that Brims was a successful politician and “very rich” to boot. When William Bartram toured the Southeast in the 1770s, a number of powerful Native leaders hosted him. Among the Seminoles, Chief Cowkeeper had as attendants “many Yamasee captives, taken by himself when young.” According to Bartram, “They were dressed better than he, served and waited upon him with signs of the most abject fear.” To the north and west, at Apalachicola, Bartram stayed at planter and merchant Boatswain’s house, where young African American slaves brought “excellent Coffee served up in China Dishes.”<sup>16</sup> These episodes call to mind the conspicuous consumption of Mississippian chiefs. Though diminished in scale, the mores of eighteenth-century elites, the inheritors of Mississippian cultural traditions, were not different in kind.

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<sup>15</sup> Report of Isaac Titsworth to William Blount, August 9, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Statement of Isaac Titsworth, December 20, 1794, printed in *Knoxville Gazette*, January 9, 1795, TSLA. Mingo may have been as old as sixteen.

<sup>16</sup> From anonymous eighteenth-century French letter, quoted in John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors*, 225; Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 51, 156.

## *Commodities*

Captors exchanged their slaves with Indians from other nations. An exchange of captives commonly accompanied peace between two former enemies. As historian Brett Rushforth has pointed out, a “gift of captives . . . signified the opposite of warfare, the giving rather than the taking of life.”<sup>17</sup> In 1753, when the Shawnees came to make peace with the Chickasaws, they brought “a Chickesaw and a Creek Woman whom they had formerly taken Slaves.” In return, as “a Present,” the Chickasaws gave the Shawnees a young French girl enslaved five years earlier. In one episode during the Creek-Cherokee Wars, which lasted throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, a Creek warrior brought a Cherokee slave woman back to her people, saying that if the Cherokee agreed to a peace “they would send all the Cherokees home which they had Amongst them as Slaves.”<sup>18</sup> Like other forms of trade in the Indian South, captive exchange strengthened diplomatic ties between allies.

Native Southerners also traded captives for goods. Shortly after Antoine Bonnefoy’s capture, his Cherokee masters met up with some Chickasaws, and the two parties “made several exchanges of merchandise and slaves, [and] smoked together.” Indeed, captives, like other trade goods, traveled well-worn routes of exchange throughout the Indian nations of eastern North America. In 1789, Chickamaugas (and possibly Creeks) attacked the Johnston farm in east Tennessee, taking five Johnston children captive. Captors then traded the children to their Wyandot allies far to the north in what is now Ohio. Four years later, one of the children, Elizabeth, was back in the Southern Appalachian region, because the

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<sup>17</sup> Brett Rushforth, “ ‘A Little Flesh We Offer You,’ ” 785.

<sup>18</sup> Journal of John Buckles, April 8, 1754, in *DRIA*, 510; “Journal of Colonel George Chicken's Mission From Charleston, South Carolina, to the Cherokees, 1725,” in *Travels in the American Colonies*, 116.

Chickamauga warrior Otter Lifter had “obtained her by purchase from the Northward Indians.”<sup>19</sup>

Once former enemies had achieved peace, they could ransom kin taken in earlier wars. When the Chickasaws and Choctaws reached an accord in 1746, they agreed that the former could redeem captives among the latter: “to obtain their slaves they had only to bring fifty skins for the young ones and forty for the old ones, in return for which they would be delivered to them.”<sup>20</sup> As Euro- and African Americans became tangled in conflicts with Southern Indians, they, too, had to abide by Native mores of captive exchange. After hearing repeated American demands for captive repatriation after the Chickamauga Wars in early Tennessee, Chickamauga leaders wearily responded that exchange was possible, but captors commanded “a considerable Price.”<sup>21</sup>

Outside of Indian country, the trade in Indian slaves waned after the Yamasee War, but it did not cease. The near-destruction of Carolina convinced most Anglo-American planters that the Indian slave trade might lead to another war, and they looked instead to enslave Africans. However, Indians remained enslaved on plantations throughout the region. In fact, Virginia was the only Southern colony to ban Indian slavery outright, but repeated confirmation of the law, originally passed in 1691 and reenacted in 1705 and again in 1777, suggests that it was not effective.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Tellico Blockhouse Treaty between the Cherokees and the United States, December 28, 1794-January 3, 1796, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

<sup>20</sup> Bonnefoy, “Journal of Bonnefoy,” 245; Louboey to Maurepas, February 8, 1746, *MPA:FD*, Vol. IV, 260.

<sup>21</sup> William Blount to James Robertson, January 6, 1794, James Robertson Papers, reel 801, TSLA.

<sup>22</sup> Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 288-344; Lauber, *Indian Slavery in Colonial Times*. 300-10, 564-68; Rushforth, “ ‘A Little Flesh We Offer You,’ ” 777-808.

Although Anglo-American demand for Indian bondspeople had sharply decreased, Native Southerners continued to enslave other Indians because slaving was deeply ingrained in Native Southern culture and served important social and economic needs. When the Catawbas agreed to join the English against the French in the Seven Years' War, they stated, "We want no Pay, only what we can take and plunder, what Slaves we take to be our own of Indians."<sup>23</sup> In the Native South, humans had long served as legitimate spoils of war and acceptable commodities. Certainly, groups whose autonomy had been compromised through direct victimization or unfair trade wanted an end to slaving, but Native war parties continued to take human spoils. Throughout much of the eighteenth century, slaving endured on a diminished scale. When the opportunity presented itself, many eagerly took part.

When Spanish Floridians attempted to recover the Bonnellis and other captives of the Mikasuki War, they discovered that they would have to pay captors handsomely. In all, the Mikasukis had taken roughly seventy captives. Most of them were enslaved Africans, whose labor in the open fields of East Florida made comparatively easy targets. Other captives included a free black family, Mrs. Persalls and her four children; Mikasukis had killed Antonio, the husband and father, during a June 1800 attack. Those of Euro-American descent included the Bonnellis and Jesse Dupont's indentured servant, an English boy. The citizens of East Florida clamored for the return of the captives. In a petition to the governor, planters complained that Mikasuki captive-taking had resulted in chaos among the enslaved population: "Fathers and mothers" deserted the plantations "in order to reunite with their stolen children."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew Tool to Governor Glen, April 9, 1754, *DRIA*, 488.

<sup>24</sup> Petition to Governor White from Citizens of East Florida, January 27, 1803, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Petition to Governor White, January 27, 1803, PC, legajo 1555, reel 41, f. 122, PKY.

Under great pressure from subjects, Governor Enrique White leaned heavily on the Seminole chiefs, especially Kinache of the Mikasukis and Payne, leader of the Alachua Seminoles near present-day Gainesville, Florida. Kinache was reticent to push for the return of his community's slaves—an understandable position, since the taking and holding of captives was a traditional prerogative of victorious warriors. Moreover, the prominent Mikasuki warrior Macloggy remained imprisoned at the fort at Apalache. Far more responsive was Chief Payne, a skilled politician who maintained strong ties with the Spanish government at St. Augustine. When the chief agreed to negotiate for the return of the captives, Governor Enrique White was relieved, counting on “My friend Payne who has always kept his people in friendship with us.” White also enlisted the help of traders and translators, including Juan Forrester and Jamie Durouzseaux. In a diplomatic maneuver common in the Native South, several Seminole chiefs, including Chief Payne, along with Spanish representative Juan Forrester went to Lower Creek Chief Jack Kinnard's house on Kinchafoone Creek, where they asked several Creek chiefs to serve as mediators between the Spaniards and Mikasukis. The Creeks agreed, and the peace party, now including chiefs from the Seminole towns and Upper and Lower Creeks as well as several hundred warriors, journeyed down to San Marco de Apalache to negotiate for Macloggy's freedom.<sup>25</sup>

By mid August, 1802, the party had arrived at Apalache, and the commandant, eager to secure a peace with the Mikasukis, released Macloggy. The successful peace party returned to Mikasuki with Macloggy in tow, and the Mikasukis and Chief Kinache agreed to enter into negotiations to sell their East Florida slaves. With Kinnard and Payne presiding,

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<sup>25</sup> Jacobo Dubreuil to Governor Salcedo, September 4, 1803, PC, legajo 76, reel 250, f. 419, PKY; Enrique White to Jack Kinnard and other chiefs of the Creek Nation, July 14, 1802, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

Juan Forrester, who represented the governor and citizens of East Florida, offered to purchase the captives on behalf of their families or owners from the Mikasukis. Forrester found that the Mikasukis drove a hard bargain. As a medium of exchange, Forrester had brought only cattle—usually a favorite currency among the Seminoles—but he found that many captors preferred other goods. Secondly, Forrester did not have nearly enough cattle with which to purchase all the captives. Recovering the Bonnellis was obviously a priority for Forrester and, for a steep three hundred dollars worth of cattle, he succeeded in redeeming Maria along with only *three* of her *five* children. Not even the entreaties of Chiefs Payne and Kinnard could secure the release of the two eldest children, Antonia and José, who remained slaves. Mikasuki masters may have kept these teenagers because their value as laborers was greater than that of the younger children. In addition to the Bonnellis, Forrester bought “Seventeen Negros of Mr. Fatio’s, four of Mr. Duponts, four free Negroes”—the Persall family. As Forrester left town, a Mikasuki runner bearing a message caught up with him: the runner said that the Mikasukis would give up more captives if the Floridians paid for them properly.<sup>26</sup>

### *The treatment of slaves*

Chroniclers who witnessed slavery in Indian country disagreed on its severity. Even as William Bartram extolled slaves’ relative material comfort, he also described them as meek, defeated people, “the tamest, the most abject creatures that we can possibly imagine . . . they seem to have no will or power to act but as directed by their masters.” And John

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<sup>26</sup> Juan Forrester to Enrique White, September 7, 1802, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Jamie Durouzeaux to Vincente Folch, August 21, 1802, PC, August 21, 1802, legajo 1554B, reel 39, f. 191, PKY; Dubreuil to Salcedo, August 31, 1802, PC, August 31, legajo 2355, reel 381, f. 102, PKY; Forrester to Governor, September 7, 1802, Heloise H. Cruzat Papers, courtesy of the Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, Florida, Box 1, PKY.

Lawson, while arguing that “Their Slaves are not over-burden’d with Work,” also claimed that Southern Indian placed their owned people firmly in the category of property.<sup>27</sup>

Historians, too, have downplayed the severity of bondage in Indian communities.<sup>28</sup> As Claudio Saunt has argued, “Historians frequently describe Indian slavery as a benign institution with little relationship to bondage elsewhere in the South, but more accurately the spectrum of servitude . . . ranged from kinship to chattel slavery.”<sup>29</sup> The experiences of owned people in Native Southern communities represent one extreme of the captivity spectrum. Lacking the clan ties that amounted to citizenship in Native communities, these people had a status more akin to livestock than human beings.

Those with intimate knowledge of Indian slavery were quick to compare it to bondage as practiced by white Southerners. David George, who escaped his cruel Virginia master only to be reenslaved by a Creek chief, found the experiences similar. Although George ultimately concluded that he preferred Creek slavery, in both situations he became the property of another and performed difficult agricultural labor. Peggy Titsworth, the white Tennessee teenager taken captive along with her family’s black slave Mingo, claimed that she and Mingo received the same treatment. Put to hard labor, Peggy later told her father that she “was whiped & in other respects treated as a Slave.” Nancy Caffrey, taken by the Creeks, similarly reported that she “was treated as a slave . . . and made to hoe corn, beat meal, and to

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<sup>27</sup> Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 51-53, quotation on 52-53; Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 240, 187.

<sup>28</sup> Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 3-4, 12-18, 34-35; Martha Condray Searcy, “The Introduction of African Slavery into the Creek Indian Nation,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (1982), 21. In “‘The English has now a Mind to make Slaves of them all’: Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problem of Slavery,” *American Indian Quarterly* 22 (1998), 157-180, Claudio Saunt argued, “Though Southeasterners may have employed forced labor centuries earlier to build the ceremonial mounds that still dot the landscape, in the eighteenth century no Native American in the Deep South Interior could recall ever seeing or hearing about such slavery,” p. 157.

<sup>29</sup> Claudio Saunt, “The Paradox of Freedom: Tribal Sovereignty and Emancipation during the Reconstruction of Indian Territory,” *Journal of Southern History* 70, no. 1 (2004), 67.

perform other duties of slavery, and when released, obligated to leave her child behind.” A fellow Creek slave, Lillian Williams also claimed that her masters physically abused her, saying they punished her “with much severity, having been often beat until she was black and blue.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed, these accounts include the key elements that made slavery as practiced by white Southerners so deplorable: difficult and undesirable labor, physical abuse, and forced separation from loved ones.

Maria Bonelli initially had opposed attempts to redeem a portion of her family because she wanted to keep everyone together. Finally, however, she relented and took the youngest children back to their East Florida home. Juan Forrester may have convinced Maria to do so because he later stated that they were in such a “miserable Situation” that they had to leave. Maria found comfort in the fact that José and Antonia would have each other, even though they remained enslaved in Mikasuki.<sup>31</sup> Apparently, however, José’s hatred of enslavement proved stronger than his desire to protect his sister; soon after Forrester redeemed most of his family, he ran away. From Mikasuki, he fled westward, finding his way to the fort at San Marco de Apalache. There, Lieutenant Colonel Jacobo Dubreuil arranged José passage on a ship, and the young man earned his keep as a sailor while the boat called at various ports on the Gulf. In the fall of 1803, roughly one year after his escape, José finally returned to St. Augustine.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Rippon, ed., “Account of the Life of David George,” 474; Report of Isaac Titsworth to William Blount, August 9, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Statement of Isaac Titsworth, December 20, 1794, in *Knoxville Gazette*, January 9, 1795, TSLA; *Knoxville Gazette*, October 11, 1794, TSLA; Deposition of James Ore, June 16, 1792, *ASP:IA*, Vol. 1, 274.

<sup>31</sup> Juan Forrester to Enrique White, September 7, 1802, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; John B. Collins to unknown, May 11, 1802, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

<sup>32</sup> Testimony of [Antonia] Mary Bonelly Leonardy, October 1, 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6. HR, 24<sup>th</sup> Cong, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, p. 500; Dubreuil to Salcedo, September 4, 1803, PC, legajo 76, reel 250, f. 419, PKY. Although some documents claim that the Mikasukis freed José when Macloggy was released



After seven months of captivity, Antonia was the only remaining Bonelli in Mikasuki and, indeed, one of the few remaining Spanish Floridian slaves there. The Bonelli family's relative poverty was not the impediment to Antonia's freedom; her Indian master would not release her. The commanding officer at Apalache, Jacobo Dubreuil, offered him one hundred pesos, and Chiefs Payne and Kinache presented him with ten cows, but these offers achieved nothing. Apparently, "her Indian master was a *hechicero* [sorcerer], and he had decided not to give her up." Perhaps more appropriately termed the Conjurer of Mikasuki, this man had considerable spiritual power, which afforded him wealth and power. Because he had four grown sons, the Conjurer was at least middle aged and perhaps older, having by that time accumulated prestige in his community. The Conjurer enjoyed enough material comfort to find the Spaniards' offers unappealing. (Indeed, he may have bought Antonia from another Mikasuki.) Kinache and Payne advised Juan Forrester not to attempt to take Antonia by force for "it might end with very bad Consequence, for the villain with his four sons might follow [Forrester] on the road & murder the Girl."<sup>33</sup>

### *Marriage, Sex, and Children*

Those who attempted to buy Antonia from the Conjurer reported that he had "taken her as a wife." Documents only hint at what transpired within the Conjurer's household, and Antonia herself was silent on the details of her enslavement: Did she enter into this

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(Salcedo to Someruelos, October 11, 1803, PC, legajo 1556, reel 44, d. 455, f. 963, PKY), this does not seem to have been the case. Most contemporary correspondence as well as Antonia Bonelli's later testimony claimed that José escaped. Tellingly, in June of 1805, warriors from Mikasuki stole 35 cows from the fort at San Marco de Apalache. Through the interpreter Juan Sandoval, Chief Kinache told officials there that his people were owed 160 pesos for the slave José Bonelli, whom the Spanish never had paid for properly. Ignacio Balderas to Enrique White, August 12, 1805, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

<sup>33</sup> Juan Forrester to Enrique White, September 7, 1802, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Dubreuil to Salcedo, September 4, 1803, PC, legajo 76, reel 250, f. 419, PKY.

relationship to improve her station in Mikasuki society? Was she forced to do so? What is certain is that the Conjurer was both “master” and sexual partner to Antonia. The need to remain pure during warfare and taboos against incest with potential kin lapsed once warriors’ purification period ended and clans had denied captives adoption ceremonies. While evidence is inconclusive, domestic slaves may have been vulnerable to sexual abuse. One of Chief Payne’s African slaves, who mediated between the Mikasukis and the Spaniards, reported to Governor Enrique White that Antonia “was taken as a wife against her will.” After conversations with Payne and Kinache, Juan Forrester concluded, “the fellow that has her is a great villian.”<sup>34</sup>

For many owned people, marriage provided an important route to freedom. When naturalist William Bartram visited Creek headman Boatswain’s plantation on the Apalachicola River in 1774, he noted that Boatswain had about fifteen black captives who waited on him and tended his crops. However, Bartram learned that when they married “they become Indians.” Based on his observations, Bartram believed that marriage was tantamount to citizenship and, once wed, the former slaves enjoyed “equal privileges with the Indians.”<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Henry Timberlake argued that in Cherokee society former captives who married were “generally allowed all the privileges of the natives.”<sup>36</sup> In his study of biculturalism in the Creek-American borderlands, historian Andrew Frank argued, “Although marriage itself did not make a newcomer a Creek, it did provide certain privileges and obligations through

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<sup>34</sup> White to Someruelos, March 13, 1802, PC, legajo 1553, reel 37, f. 1050; Forrester to White, September 7, 1802, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; John B. Collins to unknown, May 11, 1802, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

<sup>35</sup> Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 156.

<sup>36</sup> Timberlake, *Memoirs*, 82.

the clan” of a spouse.<sup>37</sup> While historical evidence does not clarify the extent to which Indian societies embraced clanless spouses, it does seem that the protection afforded by a partner’s clan was sufficient to redeem the unadopted from enslavement.

Some captives who married into Indian societies preferred their new lives. In fact, Euro-American officials were disturbed by the frequency with which white women who had married Indian men evaded attempts to “redeem” them. When Lieutenant Henry Timberlake attempted to recover Mary Hughes from the Cherokees, her new husband “though reluctant, was disposed to comply, but she absolutely refused to return with her countrymen.”<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, when British official David Taitt and his companions tried to find a white woman captive in the Creek town of Tamatley, he discovered that she had “run off with an Indian who is her husband, so that they could not find her.”<sup>39</sup>

The case of Antonia Bonelli, however, demonstrates that captives may have had little choice in whether or not to marry or engage in sexual relationships with their masters. In Native Southern societies, the matrilineal kinship system afforded women a great deal of power, but enslaved women lacked those essential ties.<sup>40</sup> According to historian Kathryn Holland Braund, in Creek society, “a young woman could not be forced to take a husband against her will.” Certainly, Native Southern women had a great deal more sexual freedom in their pre-marital lives as well as more power within their marriages than contemporary Euro-

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<sup>37</sup> Frank, *Creeks & Southerners*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Timberlake, *Memoirs*, 65, 65 n. 33a.

<sup>39</sup> Taitt, “Journal of David Taitt’s Travels from Pensacola,” 558.

<sup>40</sup> For the relationship between the matrilineal kinship system and women’s power, see Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, Chapter 2.

American women.<sup>41</sup> These liberties, like other rights within eighteenth-century Indian societies, stemmed from clan membership. Because a Southern Indian's identity and property came from his or her mother's clan, Native Southerners rejected Europeans' fixation on paternal certainty and patriarchy. Female slaves, however, lacked the clans that gave women such rights. As Tiya Miles demonstrated in *Ties that Bind*, an Indian master might call his female captive both "wife" and "slave."<sup>42</sup> In 1793, trader Timothy Barnard informed Indian Agent James Seagrove that the Upper Creeks exerted great pressure on a young white captive to marry "but she will not agree but says she will dye first."<sup>43</sup> For a young woman like Antonia, the choice may not have been a real one.

Twenty-one months into her captivity, in October 1803, the Conjurer agreed to release Antonia. After refusing ransom offers for so long, the Conjurer finally acquiesced, but stipulated that a male kinsman must redeem Antonia. Accompanied by Chief Payne and one of Payne's slaves, Antonia's brother-in-law Tomas Pacetti traveled to Mikasuki and redeemed her. Antonia was eight months pregnant. Shortly after returning to St. Augustine, on December 19, 1803, Antonia gave birth to a girl. When the infant was christened three weeks later, she was called "Maria Antonia," daughter "of the Indian named Doctor of the Town of Mequisucke and of Antonia Bonelly."<sup>44</sup> Antonia's captivity, marriage, and *mestiza*

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<sup>41</sup> Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, 12; Perdue, 42-44, 56.

<sup>42</sup> Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Miles explored the saga of the Cherokee warrior Shoeboots and his African-American slave Doll, who became his sexual partner and the mother of their five children.

<sup>43</sup> Timothy Barnard to James Seagrove, June 20, 1793, "Creek Indian Letters," Part 1, 325, GA. In her study of white captives, June Namias noted that women's attitude toward sex with Indians was not uniform. Namias, *White Captives*, 111.

<sup>44</sup> White to Dubreuil, draft, October 8, 1803, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Dubreuil to Salcedo, September 4, 1803, PC, legajo 76, reel 250, f. 419, PKY; Records of the Cathedral Parish, St. Augustine. White Baptisms, Vol. 3, Partida 194, PKY; Records of the Cathedral Parish, St. Augustine. White Baptisms, Vol. 3, Partida 260, PKY.

child did not alienate her from Spanish Floridian society, which, like contemporary Southern Indian nations, was relatively fluid and multiethnic. Four years later, Antonia married a fellow Floridian of Italian descent, Bartolome Leonardi. It is tempting to speculate about the life of Maria Antonia, the daughter of Antonia and the Conjuror: How did she fit into colonial St. Augustine? How did she relate to her stepfather? How would she have related to the many half-brothers and -sisters that came after her? Unfortunately, Maria Antonia died at the age of six, so the historical record ends there.<sup>45</sup>

As the story turns out, Maria Antonia lived the entirety of her short life in and around St. Augustine, but had she remained in the village of her father, Maria Antonia would have been free. Among Native Southerners, slave status did not pass from mother to child. The case of Lillian Williams, a settler in the Cumberland Valley, illustrates how Native societies absorbed the children of their slaves. On April 25, 1797, Williams visited Governor John Sevier of Tennessee and pleaded for his help. Nine years earlier, Williams explained, the Creek Indians had taken her captive while she was pregnant. In the Creek Nation, she gave birth to a girl, whom she called Molly. As Molly grew, her mother probably worked in the cornfields with other Creek women. Williams recounted her many trials in Creek country to Governor Sevier and others, claiming that her masters treated her badly, often beating her. Her daughter Molly, however, had quite a different experience. As Williams explained, the Creeks had renamed her daughter “Esnahatchee,” probably meaning “decorated one.” Esnahatchee, unlike her mother, had been adopted into a Creek clan. While Esnahatchee may have differed phenotypically from many of her relatives, they fully accepted her as Creek.

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<sup>45</sup> Records of the Cathedral Parish, St. Augustine. White Marriages, Partida 106, PKY; Records of the Cathedral Parish, St. Augustine. White and Colored Deaths, Partida 313, PKY; “Bonelly Family Genealogy,” comp. Mathews, Saint Augustine Historical Society.

Eventually, the Creeks released Lillian Williams, probably after her relatives ransomed her. Her joy at this news was short-lived; the Creeks informed her that Esnahatchee would remain with them “because [she] was born in their Nation.” Bound and privileged by ties of kinship, Esnahatchee was now a Creek.<sup>46</sup>

Although chattel slavery among Native and Euro-American Southerners was similar in many regards, there were two crucial differences. Beginning in the seventeenth century, Euro-Americans began to practice racialized slavery, targeting those who were not “white.” Southern Indians, on the other hand, rejected categorization based on race; throughout the colonial period, they continued to enslave enemies of all colors, dividing them, instead, according to sex and age. The second important difference between the two practices was duration of enslavement. In the Euro-American South, slavery had become a perpetual state, passing from mother to child, though manumission remained possible. Among Native Southerners, enslavement lasted at most for the lifetime of an individual captive, who could also be freed through adoption or marriage. In Indian communities, the children of slaves were free. In the colonial South, then, slavery among Indians could be brutal but was also a mutable, transitory state without basis in phenotype.

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<sup>46</sup> This Lillian Williams is probably the same Mrs. Williams mentioned in James Ore’s deposition, which describes her rough treatment. Deposition of James Ore, June 16, 1792, *ASP: IA*, I, 274. According to Muskogee linguist Jack B. Martin, “Esnahatchee” is most likely an Anglized pronunciation of “Esnehice.” Jack B. Martin, email to author, September 14, 2005. Governor Sevier recounted his conversation with Lillian Williams in John Sevier to Benjamin Hawkins, April 26, 1797, Governor Sevier Collection, bin 1, folio 3, document t1042, Tennessee State Library and Archives, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia. The historical record does not indicate whether Sevier succeeded in redeeming Esnahatchee.

Based on Caleb Swan’s observations among the Creeks, he concluded that the children of slaves became free, but they “are called, of the slave race, and cannot arrive to much honorary distinction in the country on that account.” Certainly, this may have been true, but it is also possible that in this case “the slave race” referred to with weak or defeated Indian groups which became integrated into the clan system as inferiors. Swan, “Position and State,” 260.

## Part III. The Making of the Plantation South: Captivity and Race

### CHAPTER SIX

#### Violent Intimacy: Warfare on the Southern Frontier

In the spring of 1788, Revolutionary war veteran James Brown, his family, and his slaves traveled down the Tennessee River en route to the Cumberland Valley farm that he had purchased three miles outside of Nashville. On May 9, before the Browns had reached their destination, a group of Indian men flagged them down, and one of them who spoke English told the Browns that they wanted to trade. Soon, however, groups of warriors in canoes surrounded the boats and forced their way on board. Instead of a group of traders, this was an allied party of Creeks and a faction of Cherokees called Chickamaugas, who fought together in an effort to reverse the tide of American expansion. In the battle that ensued, the warriors killed Brown and his eldest sons, and they captured the women, children, and African-American slaves.

Sixteen-year-old Joseph Brown, who was “very small” for his age, became the property of Chickamauga warrior Kiachatala. Leading the boy back to Nickajack, Kiachatala took Joseph to his father-in-law, an Irishman named Tom Turnbridge, who had deserted from the British army and lived among the Cherokees for eighteen years. Although he may have received some initial comfort from speaking English with Turnbridge, Joseph soon perceived

that he was in danger. An old kinswoman of Turnbridge's wife began to shout at Turnbridge and Kiachatala, and though Joseph could not understand her harangue, he knew from her gestures and tone that she was speaking of him in anger. After some arguing, his captor handed Joseph over to Chickamauga warriors, who took him to the nearby village of Running Water. There, "they began to pull my clothes off to keep from bloodying of them. As soon as they got them all of[f] I fell on my knees & began to pray." Joseph, certain of his impending death, anticipated torturous fire at any moment. Quite abruptly, however, the warriors handed a confused Joseph back to Kiachatala. Joseph had been spared not because of prayer (as he sometimes said in later years), nor because of his youth; Kiachatala had threatened to kill the Browns' enslaved woman named Sue, whom the warrior Cutteotoy had taken during the battle, if he did not spare Joseph. Cutteotoy relented, releasing Joseph. Joseph later recalled that other Chickamaugas teased Cutteotoy, saying "he loved me & would not kill me." The warrior responded, "it was the negro he loved it was not me."

Thereafter, Joseph's fortunes improved. Kiachatala's brother, the powerful chief called the Breath of Nickajack, adopted Joseph and made him his nephew. Other Chickamaugas, however, resented the Breath's decision to adopt Joseph, and they often beat the boy and occasionally threatened to kill him. One day, a Creek passing through town traded some bear oil to Joseph's kinsman. Upon seeing Joseph, "he enquired if I was a virginian." Upon receiving an affirmative answer, the man grabbed a switch from the boy's hand and whipped him with it.

After eleven months and fifteen days of captivity, Governor John Sevier redeemed Joseph in exchange for Chickamauga captives taken by the Tennesseans. Although Joseph's later correspondence revealed genuine affection for his Indian family, he remembered his



captivity as a time of great peril and unease. Five years later, in September 1794, General James Robertson chose Joseph Brown to lead an army against the Chickamauga towns, “the place of my Captivity thare being no other person that was acquainted with the situation of the place.” In that campaign, known as the Burnt Corn Expedition, American troops destroyed the towns of Nickajack and Running Water, killing over fifty men, taking some twenty women and children captive, and effectively ending Chickamauga resistance on the Southern frontier. Here, Lieutenant Henry Timberlake’s 1761 warning to the Cherokees seems prophetic: adoption “has been a detriment to the nation; for many of these returning to their countrymen, have made them acquainted with the country-passes, weakness, and haunts of the Cherokees; beside that it gave the enemy greater courage to fight against them.”<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Brown’s revenge on his former captors continued when, in 1814 on his way home from fighting in the Creek War, Brown paid a visit to Cutteotoy, the warrior who had captured his father’s slave Sue. The other enslaved people belonging to the Browns had long since been “sold by the Indians that had them to the french that lived on the other side of Missippy.” Cutteotoy, however, retained Sue and the descendants she had produced during her captivity, which included daughters Lucy and Jenny and their five children. Seeking to recover what he considered his family’s rightful property, Joseph stole Sue and her “issue”—a total of eight people. Cutteotoy tried for years to recover Sue and her descendants, but, in the end, he received only a paltry financial settlement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Brown to Felix Grundy, October 7, 1811, Howell Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, TSLA; Joseph Brown to the President James Monroe, December 9, 1822, Joseph Brown Papers, Folder 9, TSLA; Timberlake, *Memoirs*, 82. The *Knoxville Gazette*’s September 26, 1794 issue includes a fascinating account of the Burnt Corn Expedition. Available in TSLA.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Brown to Felix Grundy, October 7, 1811, Howell Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, TSLA; Talk of Joseph Brown to Chief Cutteotoy and the Cherokee Chiefs, January 11, 1814, Joseph Brown Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, TSLA; Valuation of the Indian Negroes, December 12, 1814, Joseph Brown Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, TSLA.

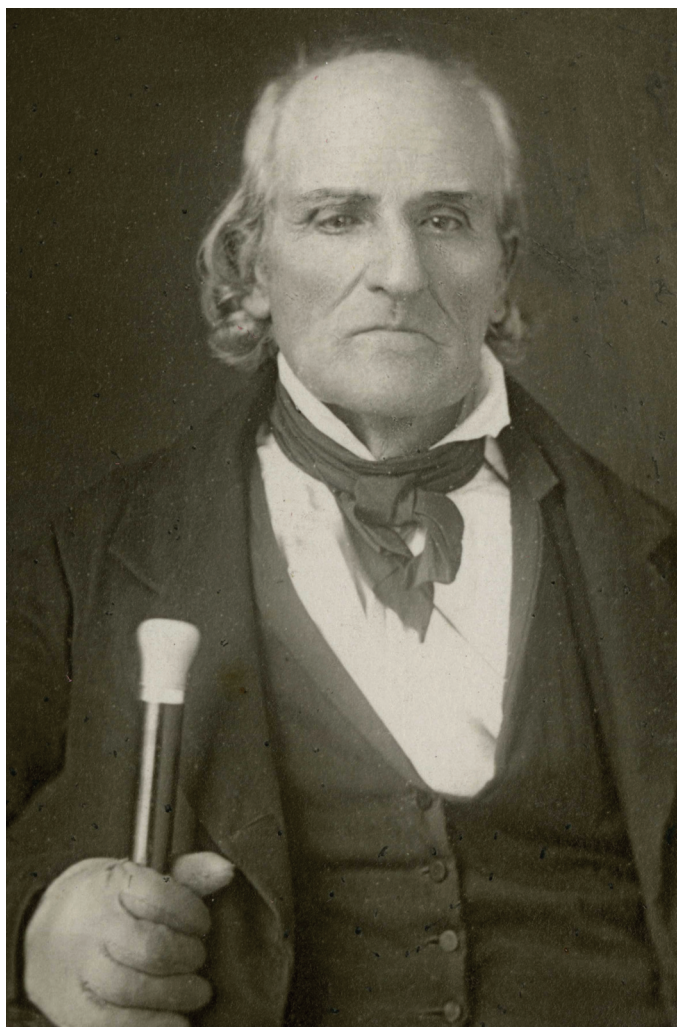


Figure 5. Joseph Brown late in life. Tennessee Historical Society, Picture Collection, Box 2, Folder 35. Courtesy of the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

The Brown family's story contains familiar themes—violent conflict, the killing of adult men in battle, adoption of women and children— but, in many ways, it is emblematic of a new era. Joseph's adoption was not a successful one in the sense that he never came to identify with his captors and, indeed, many (perhaps most) Chickamaugas never embraced him. At sixteen, Joseph was probably too old for adoption, but the evidence indicates that it was not Joseph's maturity that prevented his absorption into Chickamauga society—it was his race. By the time of Joseph's capture in 1788, the Chickamaugas and Tennesseans had

fought for control of the land for over a decade. Chickamaugas, along with other Native Southerners, grew increasingly pessimistic about the possibility of incorporating peoples of European and African descent into their societies. Like the combined Chickamauga-Creek war party that attacked the Browns, Native Southerners largely ceased fighting one another and began to stress their identity as a separate people—the “red people.” Meanwhile, Native Southerners sought out African Americans, such as Sue and her family, as captives to be sold for profit or held in transgenerational bondage. During the years of the early Republic, as Native Southerners confronted the ambitious and rapidly-expanding United States, they once again refashioned the ancient institution of captivity.

When looking for the roots of racism among southern Indians, many scholars correctly point to this era. They find various causes for these evils including the polluting influence of whites in Indian country, the federal government’s civilization policy, and Native nations’ decreasing autonomy.<sup>3</sup> Although all of these factors contributed to the Native practice of chattel slavery, it is important to remember that Southern Indians had treated captives as commodities for centuries. Scholars have overlooked how chattel slavery fit into the broader spectrum of Native captive-holding. Also deserving of greater attention is the degree to which Native culture and history, especially the late-eighteenth-century nativist movement and the concomitant violent battles for regional control, informed their slaveholding practices.

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Saunt, *A New Order of Things*; Miles, *Ties that Bind*; Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*. Kathryn E. Holland Braund explores earlier Creek captivity but argues, “[b]y the beginning of the eighteenth century the Creeks were beginning to assimilate the white view of the black race.” Braund, “The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery,” quotation on 608.

## *Land*

Land was at the core of the crises of the late eighteenth century. On a spring day in 1775, a Cherokee delegation comprised of chiefs, warriors, and women gathered at Sycamore Shoals in the rich ridge and valley country of the eastern Cherokee Nation. There they met Anglo-American representatives of the Transylvania Company, headed by Richard Henderson and his guide Daniel Boone. At the treaty of Sycamore Shoals, the two groups negotiated over the sale of Cherokee land. Ultimately, the Cherokee delegation agreed to cede their claim to much of the modern state of Kentucky in exchange for a houseful of trade goods valued at £ 10,000. However, not all Cherokees found the negotiations satisfactory. The chief of Great Island, Dragging Canoe, repudiated the land sale. He reportedly addressed the conference:

We had hoped that the white men would not be willing to travel beyond the mountains. Now that hope is gone. They have passed the mountains, and have settled upon Cherokee land. They wish to have that usurpation sanctioned by treaty. When that is gained, the same encroaching spirit will lead them upon other land of the Cherokees.<sup>4</sup>

Following the conclusion of the treaty, Dragging Canoe approached Richard Henderson: “You have bought a fair land, but there is a cloud hanging over it. *You will find its settlement dark and bloody.*”<sup>5</sup>

With that famous promise, Dragging Canoe heralded a new era in Southern history. From the Revolutionary War until the conclusion of the Second Seminole War in 1842, white Southerners and Native Southerners fought for control of the American South. Each group legitimized its claim to the land differently, and both Indians and settlers wanted *exclusive* control over that land. During this period, large numbers of Native and non-Native

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<sup>4</sup> Brown, *Old Frontiers*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Southerners moved closer—culturally and geographically—than ever before. But, as the ground drew darker and more bloodied, Natives and settlers highlighted and exaggerated their differences.

Although their conceptions about private property may have differed from white settlers, as historian Nancy Shoemaker phrased it, “there is no doubt that Indian communities saw land as sovereign territory.” Frontier whites and politicians were fond of stating otherwise—a convenient fiction to justify removal. In reality, though, Southern Indian nations had long marked their land holdings with painted posts, scored trees, and rock piles. They maintained very clear understandings of their own boundaries as well as those of others.<sup>6</sup> As trader James Adair reported, nations were “very jealous of encroachments from their christian neighbors.”<sup>7</sup> According to a Creek chief, United States “citizens on our frontier” were “habitual violators of our rights.”<sup>8</sup> In justifying their land claims, Southern Indians stressed their original possession of the soil. Some groups maintained an oral tradition that they had come from under the earth to emerge into their homeland. The Choctaws, for example, recall that they came out of the Nanih Waiya mound in what is now north-central Mississippi. Believing themselves the original inhabitants of the Savannah River Valley, the Yuchi have no migration legend. Other groups asserted that that the Creator of all humans specifically selected Southern Indians to occupy their own ground, and that American settlers should not violate that divine sanction. As Cherokee Chief Old Tassel explained, “the great Being above that made us all *placed us on this Land and gave it to us*

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<sup>6</sup> Nancy Shoemaker, *Strange Likeness*, 15-29, quotation on 17.

<sup>7</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 68.

<sup>8</sup> Talk of Tustunnuggee Hopoie and Tuskegee Tustunnuggee (interpreted by Timothy Barnard) to Benjamin Hawkins, March 14, 1809, “Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard, 1784-1820,” typescript compiled by Lousie F. Hays, 297, GA.

*and it is ours.*”<sup>9</sup> As an agricultural people, Southern Indians nations had long sought to maintain and protect their own territorial bounds, but the need to mark and claim the land took on urgency in the late eighteenth century as Natives confronted an expanding United States.

American settlers, meanwhile, used victory in the American Revolution and their status as a “civilized people” to justify their claim to the interior South. Historian Colin Calloway has argued that the Revolution became America’s “creation story,” explaining, “the winners constructed a national mythology that simplified what had been a complex contest in Indian country, blamed Indians for the bloodletting, and justified subsequent assaults on Indian lands and cultures.” In the early Republic, the American dream was economic independence based on individual land ownership, and settlers sought to realize that dream by moving westward to the land they believed they had won in the war.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, many settlers discounted all Indian claims. As one 1792 editorial in the *Knoxville Gazette* argued: “*the original right of these aborigines to the soil . . . is a right of which I have never thought with much respect. It is like the claim of the children; it is mine, for I first saw it; or what that of the Buffaloe might be, it is mine, for I first ran over it.*” Disregarding Indian women’s long history of farming, the editorial went on to explain that white settlers’ cultivation of the soil gave them a legitimate claim to the land. Echoing European

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<sup>9</sup> Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 122; Speck, *Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians*, 8; Quotation from Talk of Old Tassel to Patrick Henry and Richard Caswell, September 19, 1785, Cherokee Collection, reel 1, Box 1, Folder 20, TSLA. Emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 292-93. See also Alan Taylor, “Land and Liberty on the Post-Revolutionary Frontier,” in *Devising Liberty: Preserving and Creating Freedom in the New American Republic*, ed. David Thomas Konig (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). Eric Hinderaker offers an excellent analysis of Revolutionary ideology and early U.S. Indian policy in *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

philosophers Vattel and John Locke, Americans argued that because Indians did not use land properly, civilized nations could justly claim it.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Red People*

Native Southerners recognized a host of physical and behavioral dissimilarities that separated them from European and African newcomers. Although not of great importance until the late eighteenth century, phenotypical differences did not escape the attention of Natives in the colonial South. As early as the 1720s, Native Southerners began to read their neighbors' black and white bodies as a way to understand the cultural chasm that separated the groups. In 1725, the chief of the Taensas told a Jesuit missionary that "he had learned from his ancestors that the whites were to show them the road." The chief told the missionary that "so long ago that the winters can no longer be counted . . . there were three men in a cave, one white, one red and one black." Independently, each man tried to find his way out of the cave. The white man was the first to succeed "and he took the good road that led him into a fine hunting ground." The red man emerged second. Unfortunately, he could not find that good road, but he located another path that led to a "less abundant" land. Finally, the black man "got entirely lost in a very bad country in which he did not find anything on which to live." The Taensa chief concluded, "Since that time the red man and the black man have been looking for the white man to restore them to the good road."<sup>12</sup> This story, though crafted to flatter the Jesuit father who related it, contains important traces of race-thinking. First, it divides the colonial South's peoples into three categories based on skin color and suggests that these people were separate, each emerging out of the cave independently. The story also

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<sup>11</sup> *Knoxville Gazette*, May 5, 1792, TSLA; Shoemaker, *Strange Likeness*, 100.

<sup>12</sup> Father Raphael to the Abbe Raguét, May 15, 1725, *MPA:FD*, vol. II, 486.

told of a hierarchy of material wealth: the white man went to an abundant hunting ground, while the red man's ground was less rich, and the black man's poorer still.

Roughly contemporaneous stories echo the themes of the Taensa chief's tale. In 1730, a Cherokee conjurer called the English the whitest people "under the sun." He said, "The grate king of heaven has given yow the knowledge of all things[.] Shurely he has a grater love for yow then us and for us then The negrows for . . . he has given a blessing by degrees to Everyone as itt pleased him some more some less."<sup>13</sup> Six years later, a German visitor asked the Yuchis about their beliefs on the hereafter. They told him that they believed in an afterlife. A good hunter went "above to the white man who bestows on him freedom to catch the best game without difficulty." However, a poor hunter traveled "below to the black man," who lived in a deserted country "where nothing but thorns, thickets and underbrush and no game are to be found."<sup>14</sup> From Louisiana to the Atlantic seaboard, Native Southerners engaged in conversations about African and European newcomers: Why were some privileged and others poor? Were these differences divinely directed and thus immutable? By asking questions and telling stories, Native Southerners engaged in that very human activity of categorizing themselves and the others in their midst.

By the eve of the Revolution, nativist spiritual leaders spread a gospel of pan-Indian identity and polygenesis. Crystallizing the race-thinking that had circulated in Indian communities across Eastern North America for decades, the nativists theorized that a Creator had made Africans, Europeans, and Indians separately and had given each people an innate,

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<sup>13</sup> D.H. Corkran, ed., "A Small Postscript of the Ways and Maners [sic] of the Indians called Charikees," *Southern Indian Studies* 21 (1969), 13. As early as 1701, John Lawson noted that Carolina Indians thought that the Creator had been especially generous to his people. They said that the "good Spirit, has been very kind to the *English Men*, to teach them to make Guns, and Ammunition, besides a great many other Necessaries, that are helpful to Man, all which, they say, will be deliver'd to them, when that good Spirit sees fit." Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, 220.

<sup>14</sup> Von Reck, *Drawings and Journal*, 49.



distinct nature. The Creator made white people knowledgeable and greedy; he favored red people and gave to them North America; black people were the least lucky, and their lot was toil and hardship.<sup>15</sup> For Indians to remain spiritually pure, they had to maintain their distinctiveness and avoid the ways of Europeans and Africans.<sup>16</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, Mikasuki chief Neamathla told the governor of Florida a far more elaborate story of race than did his early-eighteenth-century ancestors. According to Neamathla, the Creator had accidentally first made a white man, but felt sorry for him because he was “pale and weak.” The Creator tried again, “but in his endeavor to avoid making another white man, he went into the opposite extreme, and when the second being rose up . . . he was *black!*” According to Neamathla, the Creator “liked the black man less than the white, and he shoved him aside to make room for another trial.” Finally, the Creator succeeded in making his favorite—the red man. Initially, these first men found themselves upon the earth with nothing, but the Creator sent down three boxes of presents to help them. Because He pitied the white man, the Creator let him choose first. The white man picked a box filled with implements of learning including “pens, and ink, and paper, and compasses.” Then the Creator said, “Black man, I made you next, but I do not like you. You may stand aside. The red man is my favorite; he shall come forward and take the next choice: Red man, choose your portion of the things of this world.” The red man, the most masculine of the three, “stepped boldly up and chose a box filled with tomahawks, knives, war clubs, traps, and such things as are useful in war and hunting.” Neamathla recounted how the Creator applauded the decision of his red son. Finally, only one box remained for the black

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<sup>15</sup> See Nancy Shoemaker’s discussion of race in *A Strange Likeness*, 129-140.

<sup>16</sup> Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 21, 30. Dowd argues that many Southern Indians embraced these ideas just before the outbreak of the American Revolution.

son—“That was filled with axes and hoes, with buckets to carry water in, and long whips for driving oxen.” Neamathla explained that this “meant that the negro must work for both the red and white man, and it has been so ever since.”<sup>17</sup> Drawing upon the nativist thinking that had so deeply influenced his people, Neamathla provided a Native Southern view of racial hierarchy, one in which the Creator pitied the clever but weak whites, maintained a special love for the red people, and assigned the black people to servile labor.

By the eve of the American Revolution, the nativist message circulated widely among Southern Indians, who came to see Anglo-American encroachment as their most pressing concern. In what historian Gregory Evans Dowd has called “the Indians’ Great Awakening,” Natives throughout the East seized upon “the idea that, despite all the boundaries defined by politics, language, kinship, and geography, Indians did indeed share much in the way of their pasts and their present.” As Dowd has argued, the movement was at its height from the Revolution until the mid 1790s, during which Indian politicians and prophets joined forces in an attempt to push back the tide of American expansion. At this time, according to Dowd, warriors “trained their guns with more consistency, more unity, and more consequence than did any other Indians in the history of the United States.”<sup>18</sup>

For Southern Indians, this period marked an important departure away from localized modes of self-identification and toward a racialized understanding of themselves and the world around them. As Native Southerners’ ideas about identity shifted, they changed their captivity practices. Those who believed in the nativists’ message argued that red people should not make war on other red people, but that all Indians should be allies. In a talk sent

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Loraine McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America, with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principal Chiefs* (Philadelphia: E.C. Biddle, 1836), I, 82-83.

<sup>18</sup> Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 27, 59-60, 91.

by the Choctaw chiefs to “all their elder brothers the Creeks in general,” they implored their fellow Native Southerners to lay aside ancient differences, saying, “Brothers! . . . The same father made us all red people and desired us to live in peace . . . . [I]f we continue united they can never take [our lands] from us, but if we kill one another, who will be left to defend them?”<sup>19</sup> Many argued that American settlers and slaves who encroached on Indian land were the real enemies.

### *War*

In May 1776, just a few months after Dragging Canoe famously stormed away from treaty negotiations at Sycamore Shoals, he and other Cherokee men met with a delegation of Northern Indians who urged war against the Americans. Although most of the older chiefs favored peace, the message proved popular among younger men. That summer, the militants went to war, successfully pushing most settlers out of eastern Tennessee. The summer campaign, however, was a costly one. Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia all sent retaliatory forces to Cherokee country, where they waged a relentless scorched earth campaign. Together, they destroyed some thirty towns, bringing years of famine and death to the Cherokee Nation. Colonel William Christian of Virginia reported, “The miseries of those People, from what I see and hear seem to exceed Description; here are men, women and

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<sup>19</sup> Talk of the Choctaw Kings, Headmen, and Warriors to Mad Dog, White Lieutenant, Nine Hadjo and Apoyl of the Hickory Ground and all their elder brothers the Creeks in general, June 10, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA. According to Daniel Richter, “During the Revolutionary era, ethnic cleansing was a powerful urge on both sides of a newly deepening racial divide. For many Indians as well as many Euro-Americans, purging the other from the land . . . was integral to the creation of national independence and racial identity.” Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 190.

children almost naked. . . . I see very little to cover either sex, but some old Bear skins, and we are told the Bulk of the Nation, are in the same naked situation.”<sup>20</sup>

By the spring of 1777, most Cherokee chiefs agreed to peace, but those who wished to continue militant resistance followed Dragging Canoe westward to the area that today is Chattanooga, Tennessee. Now remembered as the “Chickamaugas,” they called themselves *Ani-Yuniwiya*—“the Real People.” The Chickamaugas’ five towns were cleverly situated at the crossroads of Eastern North America’s most important trail systems, giving them ready access to the Upper and Lower Creeks, the Spanish at St. Augustine, the British at Detroit, the Ohio country, and the Wilderness Road. There, the Chickamaugas enjoined all Natives of the east to join their campaign of resistance.<sup>21</sup>

Alexander McGillivray emerged as another important leader in the Southern nativist movement. McGillivray, born to Sehoj of the prestigious Wind clan and Scottish trader Lachlan McGillivray, rose to power during the Revolutionary War. Following the 1782 death of Chief Emisteseguo, a fellow townsman from Little Tallasee, McGillivray became a prominent member of the Creek National Council. His Charleston education and bilingualism made McGillivray an invaluable diplomat despite his youth. Following American victory in

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<sup>20</sup> James P. Pate, “The Chickamauga: A Forgotten Segment of Indian Resistance on the Southern Frontier” (Ph.D. diss., Mississippi State University, 1969), 54-73; William Christian to William Harrison, December 16, 1782, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, Folder 412, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky [hereinafter FHS]. Anthropologist Fred Gearing argued that the divide between militant and pacifist Cherokees was a generational one, and this generalization is fair. Chickamauga leader John Watts sent a message to his followers, instructing them “to pay no more attention to the talks of the old Chiefs—that they were not to assist the old chiefs in the restitution of horses or any other property taken from the United States.” Fred Gearing, “Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” Memoir 93, *The American Anthropological Association* 64, no. 5, part 2 (October 1962), 102-5; William Blount to Henry Knox, November 8, 1792, William Blount Letters, FHS.

<sup>21</sup> Pate, “The Chickmauga,” 54, 130-38.

the Revolution, McGillivray, like Indian leaders throughout the East, expressed shock at the British defeat and anger that he had not been invited to treaty negotiations at Paris.<sup>22</sup>

Well versed in the parlance of nativism, McGillivray asserted that sovereignty was one of the Southern Indian Nations' "natural rights . . . which belong[ed] to our ancestors and hath descended from them to us Since the beginning of time."<sup>23</sup>

Employing a deeply-rooted native diplomatic strategy, McGillivray forged a chain of alliances to counter American influence in the region. In Spanish Florida, McGillivray found friends eager to stem the tide of U.S. expansion. McGillivray gained their nominal support as well as more useful arms and ammunition.<sup>24</sup> Significantly, he called upon other Native Nations of the East. McGillivray attempted to forge a "Grand Indian Confederacy of the Northern & Southern Nations." According to McGillivray, this confederacy was to include the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Iroquois, Wyandots, and Shawnees. McGillivray asserted, "[W]e have agreed Jointly to attack the Americans in every place wherever they Shall pass over their own proper Limits, nor never to grant them Lands, nor Suffer Surveyors to roam about the Country."<sup>25</sup>

Although Chickamaugas and Creeks led the Southern nativist movement, others also waved the standard of pan-Indianism on occasion. Their most consistent allies were the

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander McGillivray to unknown, 5 July 1785, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, Vol. 2: 1783-1786, reel 1133, pg. 170, MDAH.

<sup>23</sup> McGillivray's speech on behalf of the Chiefs of the Creek, Chickasaw, and Cherokee Nations, July 10, 1785, in John W. Caughey, ed., *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), 92.

<sup>24</sup> Although Spanish Floridian officials claimed to Americans that they gave Creeks weapons and ammunition only for hunting, they secretly supported Creek attacks against Georgia. Esteban Miró to Arturo O'Neill, April 20, 1786, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, Vol. 2, reel 1133, 296, MDAH; Luis de Bertucat to Arturo O'Neill, November 21, 1787, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, Vol. 3, reel 405, 91, MDAH.

<sup>25</sup> McGillivray to O'Neill, 20 June 1787, in *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 153; McGillivray to Miró, October 4, 1787, in *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 161.

Shawnees, key mediators between Native nations of the North and South who widely circulated the nativist message. Shawnees resided among both the Chickamaugas and the Creeks, and militant Southern warriors returned the favor by sending delegations north of the Ohio River. In fact, Northern and Southern nations sometimes coordinated their attacks, forcing the Americans to fight on several fronts.<sup>26</sup> Less enthusiastic allies were members of the other Southern nations—the Seminoles, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and main body of Cherokees—though these warriors did support the nativists' cause on occasion: Seminoles sometimes aided the Lower Creeks to push back the Oconee settlers; small groups of Chickasaws collaborated with the Chickamaugas; parties of Cherokees continually flowed into Chickamauga towns, especially following clashes with American settlers.<sup>27</sup> Creek militant John Galphin, rather hopefully, stated,

our Nation I beleve is now all one way a thinking . . . the Americans only want to rob us of our rights of this our hole nation is now convinced. The Chacktaws Chikesaws & Cherokees are now all one talk. To those people that has Settled over this side of the ocean, we are now Determined to go in a large Ba[ttle] against them.<sup>28</sup>

Although warriors attacked American encroachers throughout the region, they focused on two critical areas—the Oconee region between the Creek Nation and Georgia and the Cumberland Valley in what is now Tennessee. In the late eighteenth century, most

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<sup>26</sup> Historians Gregory Evans Dowd and Joel Martin both noted the connection between the Shawnees and Southern nations. Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 24; Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 116. See also Pate, “The Chickamaugas,” 96, 129, 190. Combined Shawnee/Southern war parties ranged both north and south of the Ohio, contributing to the continental nativist movement. Henry Knox to Isaac Shelby, July 29, 1790, Isaac Shelby Papers, Folder 2, FHS; Blount to Knox, November 8, 1792, William Blount Letters, FHS; Timothy Barnard to Edward Telfair, August 14, 1786, “Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard,” 61, GA.

<sup>27</sup> McGillivray to O’Neill, March 28, 1786, in *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 106; Thomas Pinckney to the Senate, January 14, 1788, Governors’ Messages, Series S165009, Message 442, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia [hereinafter SCDAH]; Williams, ed., “Bro. Martin Schneider’s Report,” 260; William Davenport to John Sevier, July 28, 1786, “Georgia, East Florida, West Florida, and Yazoo Land Sales: 1764-1850,” typescript compiled by Louise F. Hays, 34-35, GA; Philatouche to Enrique White, October 22, 1795, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; William Blount to The Glass, September 13, 1792, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

<sup>28</sup> John Galphin to unknown, September 18, 1794, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, doc. 1794-59, PKY.

captives came from these two regions. Neha Mekko and Hoboithle Mekko, who represented a minority faction of pro-American Creeks, ceded the Oconee lands to Georgia in a series of treaties in the mid-1780s, but most Creeks considered those treaties illegitimate.<sup>29</sup> During the winter of 1779/80 flotillas of settlers began to arrive near present-day Nashville and founded settlements along the Cumberland River. Four of the five large Southern nations—the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws and Chickasaws—responded to this intrusion with great alarm because all claimed portions of the Cumberland as their hunting ground. According to Southwest Territorial Governor William Blount, “Cherokees and Chickasaws Say the Creek Hunting Ground is bounded on the North, by the Ridge which divides the Waters of Mobile and the Tennessee, and that when General Oglethrope first landed in Georgia, they generally hunted down to the Sea Shore, and did not turn their attention toward Cumberland until they were driven from their Sea Shore Hunting Grounds.” Population pressure from the American east and Gulf Coast south had forced Southern Indians to hunt as far north as the Ohio River. American invasion of the Cumberland country was of concern to all Southern Indians and had the effect of attracting more adherents to the nativist movement.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> These two chiefs, also known as Fat King and Tame King, signed a series of treaties after the American Revolution that ceded lands between the Ogeechee and Oconee Rivers to the Americans. These included the 1783 Treaty of Augusta, the 1785 Treaty of Galphinton, and the 1786 Treaty of Shoulderbone Creek. McGillivray called these two “second class chiefs,” and other prominent Creek leaders flatly asserted, “they have no authority to cede lands.” Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 324-25; McGillivray to Miró, May 1, 1786, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, Vol. 2, reel 1133, 300; Talk of Part of the Creek Indians to the Georgia Legislature, August 3, 1786, in *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 124. See also McGillivray to Zespedes, January 5, 1787, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, Vol. 3, reel 405, 12, MDAH; Philatouche to Governor Enrique White, October 22, 1795, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

<sup>30</sup> Blount to James Seagrove, January 9, 1794, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Pate, “The Chickamaugas,” 100-4, 173. Col. William Christian also asserted that the Cherokees, Creeks, and Chickasaws all claimed portions of the Cumberland “over which neither must pass.” William Christian to Sampson Mathews, December 30, 1782, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, Folder 412, FHS. According to Creek George Stiggins, his people “carried on a marauding and predatory warfare with the new settlers of Cumberland River in Tennessee who, the Indians alleged, were trespassing on their ground.” Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 77.

Militant nativists attempted to use conquest by harrassment to dislodge American settlements in the Oconee and Cumberland country. As Alexander McGillivray explained to Spanish officials, he hoped to “Crush their hopes of possessing our Country” by constantly sending young men to make war in the disputed territory, charging them to destroy crops, houses, and livestock. With this strategy, McGillivray and other nativist leaders attempted to push American settlers closer to the Atlantic seaboard and maintain Indian control of the interior South.<sup>31</sup>

While these strikes were sometimes effective, many settlers refused to be intimidated by Indian violence.<sup>32</sup> In attacking their Indian neighbors, they even incorporated Native practices into their own martial culture. White men of the frontier shared with their Indian counterparts a violent masculine ethos that celebrated individual honor, courage, and brutality. Like Indian men, they collected disarticulated human body parts, such as scalps, eyes, and ears, as trophies of war. These white warriors also reckoned honor and rank in their communities according to achievements in brawls and warfare. Significantly, white men concurred with Native traditions that dictated physical trauma, death, and enslavement as legitimate fates for defeated enemies. Border warfare, therefore, became a mutually understandable language through which Indian men and white American men violently negotiated possession of disputed territory. A pacific Cherokee headman, the Prince of

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<sup>31</sup> McGillivray to Miró, May 1, 1786, Mississippi Provincial Archives: Spanish Dominion, Vol. 2, reel 1133, MDAH; McGillivray to O’Neill, March 4, 1787, in *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 63.

<sup>32</sup> For examples of effective attacks, see Archibald Campbell to unknown, January 9, 1779, Israel Keech Tefft Autograph Collection, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston [hereinafter SCHS]; Affidavit of Jacob Helvenston, October 27, 1791, Thaxton, ed., *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 104; Planters and Inhabitants of Liberty County to Governor George Handley, undated in *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, ed. Donna B. Thaxton (Americas, GA: Thaxton, 1988), 487; Roger Parker Saunders to Governor Walton, March 29, 1789, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 194, GA; James Maxwell to Walton, May 24, 1789, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 204, GA.



Notoly, told South Carolina officials that his people had evacuated several of their towns to avoid warfare: “the Creeks and white people may fight it out themselves as I suppose *they both love fighting.*”<sup>33</sup>

Natives called their enemies—white and black—“Virginians.” In Southern Indians’ eyes, Virginians were their foil: Red people were natives of North America, Virginians were intruders; red people were original owners of the soil, Virginians relentlessly stole that land; the red people sought to protect what was rightfully theirs, the Virginians were a rootless, lawless people. As historian Claudio Saunt has explained, the Virginian appellation seems to have originated in the mid eighteenth century and extended to both Anglo-Americans and their African American slaves who encroached on Native territory. By the late eighteenth century, Creek Chief Alexander McGillivray explained that the term was “a name or an insulting expletive which they give to the Americans.” McGillivray characterized the relationship between his people and the Virginians as one of mutual “hate and rancor.”<sup>34</sup>

As McGillivray pointed out, Southern Indians usually reserved the term “Virginians” for citizens of the United States since they were the most frequent violators of Native territorial sovereignty, but Native Southerners also used the term for others who *acted like Virginians*. “Virginians” also included subjects of the Spanish crown, many of whom were planters of Anglo-American descent who took advantage of liberal land grants in East and West Florida. Lower Creeks and Seminoles could not help but notice how East Florida’s prewar population of some 5,500 settlers and slaves tripled during the Revolution, thanks to a

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<sup>33</sup> Elliott J. Gorn, “‘Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch’: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry,” *The American Historical Review* 90 (1985), 18-43; Prince of Notoly to General Pickens, June 6, 1788, Governors’ Messages, Series S 165009, Message 462, SCDAH. Emphasis mine.

<sup>34</sup> Saunt, *New Order*, 115-16; McGillivray to Vincente Folch, April 22, 1789, in *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 228; McGillivray to Miró, May 1, 1786, Mississippi Provincial Archives: Spanish Dominion, vol. 2, reel 1133, 303, MDAH.

massive influx of Loyalist refugees. After Lower Creeks raided “Virginians” residing south of the St. Mary’s River, East Florida governor Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes wrote to Chief Alexander McGillivray, asking him to tell warriors that these settlers were “not Americans,” but to Creek warriors the distinction was largely meaningless. In 1789, Creeks attacked plantations at the Spanish settlement at New Madrid because the settlers there were all “from Virginia.” In the eyes of nativists, even Indians could be “Virginians.” When Hanging Maw, a Cherokee chief who had urged peace and conciliation with the United States, moved to the Chickamauga village of Will’s Town, he reported that “the Creeks called me Virginiane and stole my Horse.”<sup>35</sup>

In their fight to push back the Americans, warriors killed and captured both black and white “Virginians.” It may seem unfair to modern readers that enslaved African Americans who unwillingly accompanied their white masters to the frontier then suffered alongside them. Nativist militants, however, had little interest in guilt or innocence; they *were* interested in restoring a balance lost due to Virginian encroachment. And enslaved African Americans were equally guilty of trespass. Indeed, as Native observers doubtlessly noted, slaves did more than their fair share of work—burning forests, planting crops, herding cattle—all on Indian land. In 1788, eight warriors emerged from a swamp trail in Liberty County, Georgia, and slaves working in a nearby field spotted them. When the Creeks tried to capture them, the slaves “run and hollowed out to the Guard, which run immediately to their relief.” As a warrior seized one enslaved man, “he made so much resistance that [the

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<sup>35</sup> Population estimate from Bernardo del Campo, June 8, 1783, LC, Group 174, Box 2, PKY; Zéspedes to McGillivray, June 16, 1786, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Enrique Grimarest to Arturo O’Neill, March 14, 1783, PC, legajo 36, reel 184, f. 1137, PKY; Carlos de Grand Pre to Esteban Miró, n.d., Mississippi Provincial Archives: Spanish Dominion, Vol. 3, reel 405, MDAH; Francisco Cruzat to Esteban Miró, June 21, 1789, Mississippi Provincial Archives: Spanish Dominion, Vol. 3, reel 405, MDAH; Tellico Blockhouse Treaty, December 28-January 3, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

Creeks] found the guard would be upon them. [The warriors] shott a ball through him and cut this throat and Scalped him and run off.” Although the warriors might have preferred to capture the man, the threat posed by the plantation guard forced them to flee with only a war trophy. When warriors attacked the Oconee settlements in fall 1794, they surprised two young women, the Euro-American daughter of William Cessna and an enslaved African American woman owned by Bennitt Posey. Both were shot and scalped, though the enslaved woman survived. In another attack a few months later, warriors attacked a household of white and black Americans killing some, taking others prisoner, and scalping a three-year-old boy.<sup>36</sup>

In response, white settlers adopted a sort of racialized blood vengeance. When a white settler was killed, they sought out an Indian—any Indian. During the 1776 retaliatory expeditions against the Cherokees, North Carolina militiaman John Robertson, serving under General Rutherford, killed “an old Indian prisoner” under his guard. According to another soldier, the reason he gave for doing so was “that the Indians had killed his father, or some of his relatives.” When General Rutherford placed Robertson under guard “for such a violent breach of orders and of the rules of war,” the other soldiers “were so incensed against the

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<sup>36</sup> Col. Jacob Weed to Gen. James Jackson, May 27, 1788, Telamon Cuyler Collection, bin 83, folio 7, doc. 3, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereinafter HRB), University of Georgia, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia; Affidavit of John Mikal Wagonman and Davis Starrisson, September 30, 1794, Telamon Cuyler Collection, bin 78, folio 03, doc. 01, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia; Petition of Bennitt Posey, undated, in *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 595; Col. Daniel Stewart to Gen. James Gunn, November 2, 1794, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 2, 420, GA; Affidavit of John Gilbert, September 3, 1821, “Indian Depredations, 1787-1825: Original Claims in the Department of Archives and History of Georgia,” typescript compiled by Louise F. Hays, Vol. 2, Part 3, 709, GA. In another account, a young enslaved girl reportedly told her overseer that while he was absent Creeks raided the farmstead on which she worked. As the sole survivor of the attack, the girl later reported “her Father & Mother & Sister were all Killed by the Indians & the houses all burning—that She Seen the Indians plain by the light of the Burning Houses—that they shot her Father & Tomahaweked her Mother.” Affidavit of John Gilbert, September 3, 1821, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 2, Part 3, 709, GA.

Indians that the thought of seeing Rober[t]son punished seemed rather disgusting.”<sup>37</sup> The old Cherokee man, as a member of the offending race, answered Robertson’s desire for bloody justice, and the other militiamen upheld his course of action. Chief Alexander McGillivray sardonically accused Georgians of carrying out a “savage mode” of warfare. According to McGillivray, Georgians cut infants out of mothers’ wombs and stuffed the mouths of dead women with disarticulated male members.<sup>38</sup> A notorious settler named Benjamin Harrison, who had lost an eye in a gouging competition, organized an attack on the Creek town of Padjeeligau, near the Georgia border. There, his gang killed and dismembered sixteen men. He later bragged to another white man “that there Sould Never be a peace with the Indians whilst his Nam was Ben Harrison for he was abel to raise men enough to kill half the Indians that might cum to aney Treaty and observed that he had began the Business.”<sup>39</sup>

### *White Southerners’ Captivity Practices*

Contested and unclear, the bounds that separated Southern Indian nations from the United States were permeable. During the late eighteenth century, Americans did not have the power to force their notions of slavery and race onto Native Southerners; rather, the two groups exchanged ideas and people even as they fought over the land. In fact, white Southerners borrowed some Native captivity practices. One Georgian explained the nature of his state’s border war with the Creeks: “The Upper part of this state is thick settled and

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<sup>37</sup> Memoir of William Lenoir, June 1835, Lenoir Family Papers, ms. 426, Folder 239, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina [hereinafter SHC].

<sup>38</sup> Alexander McGillivray to General Andrew Pickens, February 15, 1788, Governors’ Messages, Series S165009, Message 462, SCDAH.

<sup>39</sup> Affidavit of William Scarborough, January 9, 1796, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 2, 462, GA; Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 64, 218-19. The attack on Padjeeligau was not the only of its kind. For the Georgia militia’s attack on Little Oakfuskee, see James Seagrove to Edward Telfair, October 3, 1793, *ASP:IA*, I, 412-13.

strong and will kill Indians every chance and are not afraid. At the same time they may as well come down and kill the poor women and children. Every Injury don the Indians they come strait hear for satisfisfaction.”<sup>40</sup> By the time the Red Stick War began in 1813, white Southerners had so absorbed Native martial culture that Andrew Jackson spoke of a need to fulfill “lex taliones”—blood vengeance.<sup>41</sup>

As settlers drew closer, geographically and culturally, to Southern Indians, they adopted another central objective of Native warfare—the capture of enemy women and children. For decades, the English colonies had used Indian slaves to finance military expeditions. The Southern colonies auctioned the slaves domestically, sold them to planters in the West Indies or New England, or granted the prisoners of war to soldiers as pay for service.<sup>42</sup> By the Revolutionary War, however, Americans began to specifically target women and children after the Native Southern fashion. This practice marked a significant departure from prescribed norms of European warfare, which preferred to exclude non-combatants from the theater of war.<sup>43</sup>

An account of the 1776 retaliatory expedition against the Cherokees dramatizes the shift toward this Native-style warfare on the Southern frontier. Punishing all the Cherokees for the 1776 Chickamauga attacks, patriot forces from several Southern colonies set out on a scorched earth campaign designed to bring the whole nation to its knees. Serving under Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford, Captain William Moore commanded a portion of the North Carolina soldiers. In early November, the expedition captured two Cherokee women

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<sup>40</sup> Lemuel Lanier to Gov. Walton, April 21, 1789, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 200, GA.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Jackson to Governor Holmes, April 18, 1814, “Mrs. Dunbar Rowland Papers: Correspondence and Papers Concerning the Mississippi Territory in the War of 1812,” typescript, Vol. 1, 462, MDAH.

<sup>42</sup> Lauber, *Indian Slavery in Colonial Times*, 387-98.

<sup>43</sup> Lee, “Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge.”

and a boy. Clearly uneasy about the capture of non-combatants, Moore and some other officers said that the three should be held in prison until the Continental Congress could decide their fate. The soldiers disagreed; “the Greater Part Swore Bloodily that if they were no Sold for Slaves upon the Spot, they would kill and Scalp them Immediately.” Moore conceded to the demands of the mob, and the women and boy were auctioned off to the soldiers.<sup>44</sup>

As Natives and settlers fought over the land, what had originally been Native rules of captivity became an accepted part of Southern warfare. In 1792, Governor of the Southwest Territory, William Blount, advised Brigadier General James Robertson, who was then fighting Native militants, “You may give orders to all excursive parties, to consider all Creeks and Cherokees found North of the [treaty] line as enemies but women and children on all occasions are to be spared *except that they may be made prisoners.*” Similarly, Winthrop Sargent, first territorial governor of Mississippi, threatened the Choctaws, “If you wage war with the People of our Territories . . . we will destroy your Fields, and little Stock, and make Captives your Wives and Children.”<sup>45</sup> Native Southerners knew that Blount and Sargent had not made hollow threats. Creek warrior John Galphin, no stranger to captive-taking, explained that Creek men were afraid to leave their villages because “the Americans mite take the oportunity of Cuming into our towns & Carry of[f] our Wom[e]n & Children.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Captain William Moore to Brigadier General Rutherford, November 18, 1776, Griffith Rutherford Collection, SHC, ms. 2188z, Folder 1. Another fascinating account of the 1776 expeditions is the journal of William Dells, a soldier under Colonel William Christian. According to Dells, his party took over fifty captives among the Cherokees, including “One Hicks one Sc[ott] their Squaws and Children, 4 Wite men, 4 Negroes.” William Dells Journal, August 29-September 30, 1776, 1776, FHS. Quotation in September 22 entry.

<sup>45</sup> William Blount to James Robertson, Oct 7, 1792, JRP, reel 801, TSLA (emphasis mine); Winthrop Sargent to Timothy Pickering, February 10, 1800, in *The Mississippi Territorial Archives, 1798-1803*, ed. Dunbar Rowland (Nashville: Brandon Printing, 1905), 206.

<sup>46</sup> John Galphin to unknown, September 18, 1794, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, doc. 1794-59, PKY.

Indian headmen complained that their women and children were held as slaves by Euro-Americans throughout the region. Both Indian and American politicians attempted to secure the release of captives through treaty negotiations or ransom.<sup>47</sup> In 1786, Cherokee chiefs protested to South Carolina officials that Brigadier General Andrew Williamson of the Ninety Six district held two Cherokee children “in Slavery.” Several years later, William Blount discovered that a company of Tennessee soldiers held two Creek girls captive. Seeking a diplomatic parlay with the Creeks, Blount attempted to bribe the soldiers to bring in the girls. At the Tellico Blockhouse treaty in 1795, a Chickamauga warrior, the Crier of Nickajack, brought a young African American slave girl to negotiations “expressly for the purpose of recovering in exchange his daughter now a Prisoner at Kentucky.”<sup>48</sup>

In 1801, when Cherokee leaders pressed Agent Return J. Meigs to recover their people held as slaves by white Southerners, Meigs reported that “those persons or some of them are unwilling to be given up, that they are unwilling to live with the Indians.” Among these Cherokee captives was a woman taken from the Holston River five years earlier.

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<sup>47</sup> For examples, see Blount to Robertson, November 12, 1794, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Tellico Blockhouse Treaty, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Address of Governor Blount to Cherokee chiefs, May 23, 1792, *ASP:IA*, Vol. 1, 268-69; Governor Blount to the Little Turkey and other Cherokee chiefs, June 4, 1792, *ASP:IA*, Vol. 1, 275.

In a letter to Creek John Galphin, trader William Panton suggested a bloodier path to recovering Creek women: “If [U.S. Indian Agent] Seagrove brings up your Women & Children who were carried into Captivity . . . so much the better: but if he does not, desire your country men to have patience untill they make their hunts, when if by that time they are not restored to them, it will be an easy matter for them, to turn out & take as many women of the Georgians, as will serve to exchange for their own.” William Panton to John Galphin, November 9, 1793, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, doc. 793-12, PKY.

<sup>48</sup> “Report of the Committee Respecting . . . the Cherokee orphans,” 1786, Governors’ Messages, Series S165009, Item 173, SCDAH; Andrew Pickens to William Moultrie, January 6, 1786, Series S165009, Message 378, SCDAH; Journal of the proceedings of the commissioners appointed to treat with the southern Indians, Telamon Cuyler Collection, bin 61, folio 6, doc. 1, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia; Blount to Robertson, March 8, 1794, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Blount to Robertson, April 15, 1794, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Tellico Blockhouse Treaty, December 28, 1794-January 3, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

Other examples include an Indian girl aged between ten and twelve supposedly held by a William Whitesides in Kentucky and “two young Indian lads or rather young men held as slaves by a Colonel Davies in the Neighborhood of Knoxville.” Benjamin Logan to Governor Randolph, September 24, 1787, Bullitt Family Papers, Benjamin Logan Correspondence, Folder 515, FHS; Return J. Meigs to John Sevier, July 14, 1801, John Sevier Papers, First Administration, Governor’s Papers, MF 2, no. 2, TSLA.

Apparently, this Cherokee woman became the wife of a wheelwright named Fulton and had several children by him. While it is impossible to divine the nature of these sorts of relationships, at least some white Southerners did adopt the Indian custom of incorporating captives into their families. As Governor John Sevier attempted to round up Cherokee and Chickamauga captives to satisfy the Treaty of Tellico Blockhouse, a captor named Allen Gillespie contacted him: "I do confess that there is an Indian boy in my possession now but I do not consider him a prisoner." Gillespie continued, "I have had the boy at school almost two years now and he is so attached to me." Loath to give up his adopted Cherokee son, Gillespie concluded that he would turn the boy over "if nothing else would please the Indians." An Alabama planter objected vehemently to the accusation that he held a Creek girl in slavery: "As to her treatment, I can assure you, that so far from being regarded as a *Slave*, she is not permitted to associate with my negroes, more than my own children." In another case, a Tennessee man named Findleston married a captive Cherokee woman and they had a son together. Although the Cherokee Nation initially attempted to redeem the woman, they ultimately concluded that she wished to remain with her new husband. According to Governor Blount, "the Nation are content she should stay with him."<sup>49</sup>

During this violent era, settlers and Natives could not help but exchange ideas across the hazy cultural and political lines that divided them. Cultural exchange was a two-way

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<sup>49</sup> Return J. Meigs to John Sevier, July 14, 1801, John Sevier Papers, First Administration, Governor's Papers, MF 2, no. 2, TSLA; Allen Gillespie to John Sevier, December 14, 1796, John Sevier Papers, First Administration, Governor's Papers, no. 2, Oversize Letterbook Q-39, TSLA; John P. Booth to John Bell, May 30, 1841, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, M234, reel 240, 137-39; Blount to Robertson, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

John Haywood's Papers contain another account of a Cherokee boy adopted by John Shannon in 1793. Along with other militiamen, Shannon attacked a camp, killing some and taking others prisoner. The boy, then a teenager, lived with Shannon for several years. After he was redeemed, he sometimes visited his former captor. John Haywood Papers, Folder 4, doc. 3, MF 1723, TSLA. In another episode during the Patriot War, an officer requested to adopt an Alachua Seminole boy after troops killed the boy's father. Smith to Flournoy, February 24, 1813, T. Frederick Davis Collection, Box 14, Smith Letters, PKY. See also John Thaddeus Ellisor, "The Second Creek War: The Unexplored Conflict," (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1996), 363-64.



street. As they fought over the Southern borderlands, white Southerners incorporated Native ideas about captivity, sometimes going so far as to welcome Indian women and children into their families.

### *The End of Adoption*

Since the Mississippian era, Native Southerners had maintained a broad captivity spectrum, one that included torture, adoption, and enslavement, but by the late eighteenth century that spectrum had narrowed considerably. While their white neighbors occasionally extended the bonds of kinship to Indian captives, Native Southerners grew increasingly pessimistic about the possibility of incorporating Euro- and African Americans into their families. In fact, an employee of Panton, Leslie & Company claimed that the only “white people” Indians tolerated “in their Land” were traders—useful men under the protection of their wives’ clans.<sup>50</sup>

Although they still took white women and children captive, Native Southerners usually commodified these Virginians, selling them back to their families, traders, or Indian agents. As a visitor to the Creek Nation noted, “they set the price of ransom upon them according to the rank and estimation in which they may be held among their countrymen.”<sup>51</sup> Taken from Georgia in 1788, Mary Walker claimed that the Creeks held her captive from March to August, when her family paid seventy-five dollars for her return. In 1793, warriors broke into John Franklin’s house in the disputed territory and took a great deal of valuable property, including Franklin’s wife whom they valued at one-hundred-fifty dollars in ransom. When Lower Creek Chief Thomas Perryman returned several white captives to Spanish

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<sup>50</sup> Obediah Lowe to William Panton, May 25, 1797, Cruzat Papers, Box 1, PKY.

<sup>51</sup> Swan, “Position and State,” 280.

Floridians, the commanding officer at San Marco de Apalache gave him only fifty dollars for each captive. Perryman grumbled that “fifty dollars . . . is just about the sum I paid for them,” plus he fed, housed, and provided guides for the captives. He thought sixty dollars per head more appropriate compensation.<sup>52</sup>

In a letter to Pensacola Commandant Vincente Folch, Thomas Perryman related another illuminating story regarding the changing nature of captivity. According to Perryman, Lower Creeks captured and enslaved a white woman from Georgia. Perryman claimed that she was “used so cruelly by the Indians that I bought her for upwards of seven hundred dollars.” Together, Perryman and the white woman had three children. Over time, however, Perryman claimed that his wife was made to feel uncomfortable in Creek country, and he began to fear for her safety. So, Perryman returned his wife and the three children back to Georgia. This action, however, aroused the ire of his fellow countrymen, who pointed out that they could have received a great deal of money for the white woman’s ransom. According to Perryman, some Creeks on the Lower Chattahoochee would not pay their debt, which amounted to 3,740 deerskins, saying, “that the white pepoel I have sent back come to

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<sup>52</sup> Affidavit of Mary Walker, January 7, 1822, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 258, GA; Affidavit of John Pesnell Franklin, October 25, 1802, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 2, Part 1, 211, GA; Affidavit of Cytha Smith, July 30, 1802, Thaxton, ed., *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 478; Patrick Carr to Governor John Martin, December 13, 1782, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 40-41, GA. “Journal of the commissioners of the United States, for holding conferences with Indian nations, south of the Ohio,” in *ASP: IA*, I, 681; “A return of persons killed, wounded, and taken prisoners, from Miro District, since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 1791,” in *ASP: IA*, I, 330; Albert V. Goodpasture, “Indian Wars and Warriors of the Old Southwest, 1730-1807,” *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 4 (1918), 180; Thomas Perryman to Vincente Folch, n.d., Group 174, Box 10, LC, PKY. In 1792, Cherokee interpreter James Carey bought a white boy captive from the Creeks “for two hundred and fifty pounds of leather, (equal to eighty-three dollars and thirty-three cents) and a fifteen pounds sterling horse.” *Knoxville Gazette*, October 6, 1792, TSLA. Two years later, a white trader purchased Alice Thompson from the Creeks “for 800 wt. of deer leather equal to 266 dollars and 66 2/3 cents.” *Knoxville Gazette*, October 11, 1794, TSLA.

more than these debts.” Increasingly ostracized from Creek families, “the white pepoel,” became commodities.<sup>53</sup>

### *Centralized Authority*

In the late eighteenth century, as the nativist movement intensified and Southern Indians became increasingly anxious over retaining their political autonomy and territorial integrity, chiefs began to assume powers formerly enjoyed by the clans, including control of warfare and punishment of enemies. Clan and village affiliations, which had been of paramount importance during the colonial era, became less important to nativists who stressed their collective identity as *red people*. For the sake of good foreign policy, Indian statesmen attempted to control some of the old duties of the clan, including warfare.

Working through the Creek National Council, a congress of all the nation’s chiefs, Alexander McGillivray attempted to centralize his nation’s government. Through his partnership in the Pensacola trading house, Panton, Leslie and Company, McGillivray strong-armed other Creek leaders through his control of trade and gifting. He also set up a police force composed of his Wind clan relatives, which, as biographer Michael Green has noted, was “an unprecedented institution in Creek life.” Formerly, clans had maintained social order and executed justice, but the national police force usurped that duty. In another breach of clan power, McGillivray himself directed Creek war parties on the Oconee and Cumberland, supplying them with the Spanish arms he had procured in Pensacola.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Thomas Perryman to Vincente Folch, n.d., Group 174, Box 10, LC, PKY.

<sup>54</sup> Michael D. Green, “Alexander McGillivray,” in *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity*, ed. R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 41-63. Quotation on 52.

McGillivray died at the age of forty-three in 1793, but his successor Efau Hadjo attempted to continue his legacy. In a talk to the Seminoles, Efau Hadjo said that each Southern Nation should police its own warriors, especially along their borders with the United States and Spanish Florida. Most significantly, Efau Hadjo determined to put an end to the border war between Creeks and Americans. To secure a peace, Efau Hadjo attempted to collect all the white and black captives taken by the Creeks. Although a logical political maneuver, Efau Hadjo's ploy angered those who believed that captive-taking was a prerogative of all successful warriors. In a conversation with the commanding officer at San Marco de Apalache, Lower Creek Chief Jack Kinnard revealed how the issue divided the Creeks. When Efau Hadjo invited Kinnard to a council meeting regarding the return of captives, Kinnard "replied that being informed of what was to be discussed he did not find it convenient to attend." Kinnard explained, "it was useless to do so, since for each one of these [old men who support return of captives] there were a hundred of the opposing party of mad youths . . . he was quite certain by the common voice that the result of the assembly would be to arm and to man the frontiers in order to oppose the operations of the Americans."<sup>55</sup>

Cherokee leaders also took on the task of regulating warriors' behavior. Fearing that clans' execution of Americans would lead to gross retaliation or the cessation of trade, all-male Cherokee councils tried to usurp clan authority. Like Jack Kinnard, many Cherokees resented the national governments' intrusion into clan life. As Theda Perdue has

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<sup>55</sup> "Efau Hadjo," an honorary war title, literally means "Mad Dog." Mad Dog to James Burgess and the Seminoles, August 2, 1798, Marie Taylor Greenslade Papers, courtesy of the Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, Florida, Box 1, PKY; James Durouzseaux to Enrique White, January 18, 1794, PC, legajo 208s, reel 286, f. 566, PKY; Diego de Vegas to Enrique White, January 29, 1795, Elizabeth Howard West Collection, Box 5, PKY.

Chickamauga leader John Watts sent a message to his followers, instructing them "to pay no more attention to the talks of the old Chiefs—that they were not to assist the old chiefs in the restitution of horses or any other property taken from the United States." William Blount to Henry Knox, November 8, 1792, William Blount Letters, FHS. See also Gearing, "Priests and Warriors."

demonstrated, non-elite Cherokees “continued to attach considerable significance to clans, and they looked to clans rather than the national government to provide order and protection.”<sup>56</sup>

Many Native Southern men probably thought chiefly meddling in warfare and captive-taking presumptuous and irritating, but they could not escape it entirely. Seeking to control violence in their communities, chiefs stepped in to mediate murder disputes, especially those involving Americans. Most significantly, chiefs sought an end to public torture. As they attempted to deal with an increasingly powerful American government and weave meaningful alliances with other Native nations, Indian leaders wrested the execution of justice away from the clans.

Warriors perpetuated violent killing of enemy men and occasional torture, but they did so away from village blood poles and beyond the watchful eyes of their leaders. In 1789, Creek warriors took a Mr. Clark near the St. Mary’s River. Some African American slaves who witnessed the episode said that the Creeks “carried him about two miles,” and then “they burnt his eyes out first and tortured him to death.” According to the witnesses, “the reason as they give for doing so they said he was a Virginia man and it was good to kill him.”<sup>57</sup> By the 1790s, torture was no longer a prominent component of Native Southern warfare. A few isolated cases were reported during the Patriot War and Second Seminole War, but, like the torture of Mr. Clark, they occurred outside of Native communities at or near the site of the victim’s capture. During the Patriot War, Seminoles waylaid and killed a postrider, one Mr.

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<sup>56</sup> Theda Perdue, “Clan and Court: Another Look at the Early Cherokee Republic,” *The American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2000), 562-69. Quotation on p. 566.

<sup>57</sup> My thanks to Claudio Saunt for pointing out this reference. Richard Lang to Vincente Manual de Zéspedes, July 13, 1789, EFP, reel 46, doc. 1789-145, PKY.

Maxwell. According to those who recovered his body, they found Maxwell naked “dreadfully tortured and murdered having his nose ears and privities cut off scalped and otherwise barbarously used.” During the Second Seminole War, Jane Murray Sheldon, whose husband was a plantation overseer on Florida’s east coast, accused the Seminoles of capturing a Mr. Gould whom they “tortured to death in their most fiendish manner.”<sup>58</sup>

In the South, the militant nativist movement declined markedly in the mid 1790s due to the loss of important chiefs and the eruption of old tensions between Indian nations. The most capable and effective Southern nativist leaders, Dragging Canoe and Alexander McGillivray, died in 1792 and 1793, respectively. John Watts (alias New Tassel), Dragging Canoe’s nephew, became the new Chickamauga chief, but he lacked the military genius and leadership skills of his famous uncle. In September 1794, Major James Ore and his Tennessee volunteers destroyed the main Chickamauga towns of Running Water and Nickajack. Thereafter, Cherokees developed non-violent ways of resisting American expansion. Efau Hadjo, speaker of the Creek National Council, attempted to fill Alexander McGillivray’s shoes. While he urged reconciliation with the Americans, Efau Hadjo continued to champion cooperation and kinship among all Southern Indians. Unfortunately, he lacked the education and broad political connections that made McGillivray such an effective cultural mediator, and the Spanish cut off their arms supply to the Creeks in 1795.

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<sup>58</sup> William Kinnear to John Kinnear, n.d. [1812?], in “Letters from the Invaders of East Florida,” ed. Rembert Patrick, in *Florida Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1949), 62, quoted in James Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003), 218; Col. Thomas Smith to Gov. Mitchell, August 21, 1812, Davis Collection, Box 14, PKY. In nearly identical fashion, Seminoles killed and mutilated another postrider during the Second Seminole War. See W.B. Armistead to Edwin Wright Morgan, April 9, 1838, Edwin Wright Morgan Collection, ms. 3035z, SHC. “Life and Times of Mrs. Jane Murray Sheldon Written at her Dictation in 1889,” typescript in PKY.

Lacking a popular leader and unsure about how to deal with an increasingly powerful and intrusive American state, the Creeks were a deeply divided people.<sup>59</sup>

Chickasaw leaders resisted Creek attempts to draw them into an anti-American alliance, and tensions between the two groups flared for a decade before reaching a head in 1795. Skirmishes between hunters began in the borderland that separated the two nations. After discovering the dead body of one of their warriors, the Chickasaws assumed the Creeks were to blame, and they killed a Creek fanemingo who lived amongst them. Creek warriors invaded the Chickasaw Nation, but privy Chickasaws surprised and routed them.<sup>60</sup> The Chickasaws went so far as to take captives, and rumors circulated that they sold their fellow red people as slaves “to the white people of New Cumberland.”<sup>61</sup> Although the two sides came to an uneasy peace by early 1796, but the spirit of nativism declined in the wake of such bloodshed.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> For other discussions about the end of militant Indian resistance during this period, see Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 112; Pate, “The Chickamauga,” 191.

<sup>60</sup> Both the Chickasaws and the Creeks blamed one another for beginning the conflict. Trader John Forbes harbored a suspicion that pro-American Chief Piomingo and his allies began the conflict, and, indeed, Americans may have been involved in the plot since Southwest Territorial Governor William Blount wrote that he encouraged the Chickasaws to begin the war. A Talk from the Hallowing King of the Cowetas and Little Warrior of the Broken Arrow to Enrique White, April 19, 1795, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, doc. 1795-20, PKY; A Talk from the Dog Warrior to William Panton, February 25, 1795, PC, legajo 203, reel 282a, f. 1052, PKY; Talk of Alex Cornells to Chickasaw chiefs Billy Colbert, George Colbert, Piolata, Piomingo, and Mylyacabe Mingo, July 27, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Benjamin James to Enrique White, September 12, 1795, PC, legajo 31, reel 418, f. 1199, PKY; John Forbes to Enrique White, March 29, 1795, PC, legajo 31, reel 428, f. 1200, PKY; Blount to Robertson, January 20, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Blount to Robertson, March 29, 1796, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 80-90.

<sup>61</sup> Quotation in A Talk from Dog Warrior to William Panton, February 25, 1795, PC, legajo 203, reel 282a, f. 1052, PKY. See also Blount to Robertson, August 11, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Talk of Little Turkey and the Black Fox to Robertson, April 10, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Talk of Alex Cornells to Chickasaw chiefs Billy Colbert, George Colbert, Piolata, Piomingo, and Mylyacabe Mingo, July 27, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Blount to Robertson, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

<sup>62</sup> As Gibson pointed out, horse theft between the two nations continued for years. Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 90.

Although the late-eighteenth-century nativist movement did not stop American expansion in the South, it left important legacies among Southern Indians. Most significantly, Native peoples of the South increasingly began to think of themselves as “red people,” as a distinct, inherently different people who owned their native ground by right of divine sanction. The Native South remained fractious, as the Chickasaw/Creek War of 1795 demonstrated, but those who believed in the nativists’ message agreed that Indians should not fight, kill, or capture one another. As Efaú Hadjo once said to a Seminole audience, “The four Nations of red people ought to be as one.”<sup>63</sup> A related result of the movement was the downplay of clan power in favor of a stronger national governments. Seeing the United States as their most dangerous threat, Indian politicians attempted to build up the levies around their own nations to weather the onslaught of settlers that seemed ceaseless.

As chiefs prevented villagers from torturing and clans grew pessimistic about incorporating non-Indians, the once-broad spectrum of captivity narrowed considerably. Instances of torture and adoption declined as captive-taking became a largely economic pursuit. As Native Southerners embraced a collective identity as red people, they began to focus on black and white Americans as the common enemy, and largely ceased taking one another captive. Although torture was no longer common, white men still suffered beatings, scalping, and death. Clans rejected white women and children as potential family members, but sought ransom for them instead. African Americans of both sexes and all ages became the prime targets for captive-takers, for they had the highest value.

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<sup>63</sup> Talk of Efaú Hadjo to James Burgess and the Seminoles, August 2, 1798, Greenslade Papers, Box 1, PKY. Efaú Hadjo, like other Creek leaders, considered the Seminoles as part of their own nation, and thus he referred to four rather than five nations of Southern Indians.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Race in Creek Country

One summer morning in 1787, a Creek war party crossed the Oconee River into the disputed lands. The party approached the farmstead of John Lang and seized his twelve-year-old African-American slave, Lucy. She was Lang's most valuable possession, not only for domestic and agrarian labor but also for the children Lang expected her to bear in a few years. Lang immediately notified his nearest neighbors, the McMichaels, who agreed to help him search for Lucy. Ezekieh McMichael followed the trail near his home, which led to the Oconee River. Lang and Ezekieh's brother heard three gunshots ring out and then saw Ezekieh's horse approach without its master. Lang and McMichael followed the trail to the river where they saw Ezekieh's body and "found 3 guns 5 shotbags and 4 pairs of Mocasons and in one of the shot bags was found 2 scalps which was proved to be taken off the head of the Decest Ezekieh McMichael by putting the same scalps on his head." As for Lucy, her captors forced her across the Oconee and into Creek country, where she would live and labor, bear children and survive to see her grandchildren born, and remain enslaved under Indian masters.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Affidavit of John Lang, October 27, 1802, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 1, Part 1, 25, GA; Affidavit of John McMichael Jr, July 2, 1787, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 1, Part 1, 104, GA; Affidavit of David McMichael, July 2, 1787, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 1, Part 1, 104-5, quotation on 105, GA; Major Robert Fullwood to General David Adams, January 24, 1833, Thaxton, ed., *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 198-99; Affidavit of John Lang, October 27, 1802, File II, Record Group 4-2-46, Unit 78, Doc. 1517, GA. The warriors must have bemoaned the loss of McMichael's scalp, which would have been a valuable war trophy; it is possible that the Creeks dropped them in their haste to recross the river with Lucy, their most prized spoil.

Although white captives sometimes served as commodities, Creek warriors of the late eighteenth century began to single out people of African descent as preeminent captives. When they served as British allies during the American Revolution, Creeks recalled that they had been “told by the General [Prevost] before they went into Carolina that whatever plunder they got should be their own property and that they saw the King’s Army Seize upon all the Negroes they could get upon which they did the same and intend to carry them into the Nation.”<sup>2</sup> Several historians have pointed to the American Revolution as a turning point in Creek attitudes about racial slavery.<sup>3</sup> As the war drew to a close along the Southern frontier, patriot officials urged Creek headmen to restore American slaves, but most Creeks proved unwilling to relinquish their spoils of war. Residents of Coweta “refused to give up the Negroes in that town because the[y] Said they were given to them as a present by the White people [the British] . . . and wou’d not deliver the Negroes but drove them into the woods.”<sup>4</sup>

Contemporaries confirmed that Creek militants preferred to take African American captives over others. When settlers near Nashville experienced several attacks including the theft of a “mulatto boy” Governor William Blount figured that the aggressors were Creeks, rather than Chickamaugas or Cherokees, since they specifically targeted African Americans. Reportedly, settlers recovered “a War Club, with the Marks and Figures of the Wind Family of the Creeks,” confirming Blount’s suspicions. Chief Payne, leader of the Alachua

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<sup>2</sup> Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 27; Foster, ed., *Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 66s.

<sup>3</sup> Searcy, “Introduction of African Slavery”; Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 27; Braund, “The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery,” 618; Leslie Hall, *Land & Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 145-46.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Henderson to Governor John Martin, September 23, 1782, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 33, GA. In this passage, “White people” most likely refers exclusively to the British; Creeks usually identified Americans as “Virginians.”

Seminoles, was even more revealing in a conversation with Juan Forrester. After Forrester told Payne about a livestock theft in East Florida, Payne replied that white vagabonds—not Mikasukis or Lower Creeks—were to blame. He explained, “had it of been Indians they would of taken negroes in preference to horses.”<sup>5</sup>

Though difficult to come by, extant figures for this period bear out the assertions of contemporary observers.<sup>6</sup> During a two-year period in the war over the Oconee, Creek warriors captured at least 140 Georgians, eighty percent of whom were enslaved African Americans.<sup>7</sup> A 1794 tally featured in the *Knoxville Gazette* listed a total of 96 people recently killed or captured by combined Creek/Chickamauga war parties in middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky. Within a six month period, the 69 recorded casualties were all white, and women and children represented 35 percent of the dead. Meanwhile, African American men, women, and children accounted for 93 percent of all captives—25 out of a total of 27.<sup>8</sup> Included in this tally was a June 1794 strike in which a party of Chickamaugas led by White Man Killer attacked a boat of settlers and slaves on the Tennessee River. The Chickasaws killed the thirteen whites on board and took all twenty-two

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<sup>5</sup> Blount to Seagrove, January 9, 1794, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Forrester to Enrique White, July 7, 1801, LC, Group 174, Box 9, PKY.

<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to secure reliable data for this period. Several documents once had attachments listing captive numbers, names, and personal descriptions, but many of those attachments are no longer extant. See, for example, Blount to Seagrove, January 9, 1794, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Andrew Jackson to Governor Holmes, April 18, 1814, Mrs. Dunbar Rowland Papers, Vol. 1, 461, MDAH; John Jay to William Moultrie, October 23, 1786, Governors’ Messages, Series S165009, Message 411, Bundle C, SCDAH.

<sup>7</sup> “Return of depredations committed by the Creek Indians since the commencement of hostilities in the State of Georgia,” *ASP:IA*, I, 77. The period covered is from 1787 to October 1789; “Return of Persons Killed, Wounded, and taken Prisoners . . .”, Miscellaneous Creek Indian documents, File II, Record Group 4-2-46, Box 76, Document 1988, Folder 1, GA.

<sup>8</sup> “A list of the names of persons killed, murdered, and captured sine the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1794,” *Knoxville Gazette*, October 11, 1794, TSLA. The list chronicles attacks from March 9 to September 18, 1794.

African-American slaves captive.<sup>9</sup> In determining an enemy's fate, race had clearly eclipsed factors of sex and age.

In contrast to white captives, whose only buyers were family members or U.S. government officials, black captives fetched much higher bids from a wider variety of buyers. In the waning years of the deerskin trade, these captives began to replace deerskins as the most valuable commodity on the southern frontier. In exchange for livestock, cash, or dry goods, captors exchanged African Americans to Spanish Floridians, government agents or traders, and other Indians.<sup>10</sup> Those unconcerned with legal titles found ready slave traders among the Creeks. In his testimony against fellow trader Charles Weatherford, John Fitzpatrick asserted that Weatherford's friends "publicly offer[ed] half price for Negroes and Horses which should be Stolen or brought to him from and out of the Limites of the United States."<sup>11</sup> Seventy years after the collapse of the Indian slave trade, some Creeks had chosen to revive their traffic in humans.

Captors engaged in a bustling slave trade at Pensacola with the Spanish, who had captured the port city in 1781 from the British. According to Spanish governor Arturo O'Neill, the Creeks initiated this commerce. In March 1783, O'Neill explained, "some of the Talapuche Indians have brought here Negros for sale, [and] I have offered to continue this

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<sup>9</sup> *Knoxville Gazette*, July 17, 1794, TSLA; James Bolls to David Henley, June 18, 1801, David Henley Papers, Reel 625, TSLA; Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*, 77.

<sup>10</sup> Searcy, "Introduction of African Slavery," 29; Affidavit of Samuel Parker, October 27, 1821, Thaxton, ed., *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 445; Affidavit of John Bohun Girardeau, July 30, 1791, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 2, Part 2, 626, GA; Samuel Cole Williams, ed., "Bro. Martin Schneider's Report of his Journey to the Upper Cherokee Towns, 1783-84," *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540-1800* (Johnson City, 1928), 262. In another example, five African American captives were taken by the Chickamaugas from southern Kentucky: two went to different towns in the Cherokee Nation, two to the Creeks, "and one was purchased by a frenchman and carried to the Spaniards." Tellico Blockhouse Treaty, December 28-January 3, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

<sup>11</sup> Affidavit of John Fitzpatrick, October 7, 1791, "Indian Letters, 1782-1839," typescript by Louise F. Hays, 15, GA.

practice.”<sup>12</sup> The Creeks told O’Neill that they had captured the African Americans, along with horses and cattle, from the Americans. O’Neill deemed these black captives legitimate spoils of war, and proclaimed that they would be sold legally in Pensacola. That June, O’Neill reported, “The chiefs of the Talapuches have arrived with cattle, skins, and Negroes. I have exchanged them for dry-goods from the stores in this town, and I am left loaded with them.”<sup>13</sup> In addition to trade goods, O’Neill and other Spanish officials heaped accolades upon Creek warriors who devastated the frontier plantations of Georgia and transferred capital into Florida. A deserter from the British navy told Agent Patrick Carr that while in Pensacola he discovered “Indians and White Peple is Constantly Carying Drovers of Negroes to that place & that the Spanish Govener buyes the Chief of them & Encourages them to fetch the Rest & tell them the[y] scall Receive the Cash for all the[y] fetch.”<sup>14</sup> Many Pensacola buyers turned a profit by reselling these captives on the more competitive Havana slave market. If Creeks were willing to run their black captives to West Florida, they found welcome buyers, ready to reward their efforts with cash, rum, and trade goods.

So enticing was the Pensacola trade that some Creeks stole black captives from their fellow countrymen. Tiger King, a chief among the Chehaws, complained that Sambo “his famely Property” ran away with some other Creeks who later sold him for rum in Pensacola. The chief angrily proclaimed, “no man had any right to sell his Negros without his

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<sup>12</sup> Arturo O’Neill to Bernardo de Galvez, March 24, 1783, PC, legajo 36, reel 183, f. 556, PKY.

<sup>13</sup> Quotation from O’Neill to Galvez, June 10, 1783, Mississippi Provincial Archives: Spanish Dominion, reel 3311, Vol. 2, 10, MDAH. See also Richard Henderson to Governor Martin, December 23, 1782, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 42, GA; O’Neill to Galvez, February 1, 1783, PC, legajo 36, reel 183, f. 514, PKY; O’Neill to Josef de Ezpeleta, July 31, 1783, PC, legajo 36, reel 185, folio 1244, PKY; Miró to O’Neill, August 19, 1783, PC, legajo 40, reel 193, f. 19, PKY; Saunt, *New Order*, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Carr to Governor John Martin, December 13, 1782, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 40, GA.

Consent.”<sup>15</sup> Another Creek, Captain Yellow Hair, alleged that one of the Durants stole a slave boy from him “just as he was ready to start himself for Pensacola where he took him & sold him.” Yellow Hair expressed some concern because “he has no titals to show for the negro he purchased him of another Indian & writing is a thing not used among themselves in such cases.”<sup>16</sup>

Disputes over black captives also led to conflicts between Southern Indian nations. In 1795, as tensions flared between Creeks and Chickamaugas on one side and Chickasaws on the other, a prominent Chickasaw family, the Colberts, accused Cherokees of stealing some of their African-American slaves. Denying that his people took the Colbert slaves, the Cherokee chief Little Turkey claimed that the black captives had run away and that Cherokees were merely holding them temporarily. Little Turkey complained, “It is not the first time the Chickasaws has served us so . . . I suppose they do it out of madness for their Negroes.”<sup>17</sup>

Those who sold African-American captives engaged in shrewd bargaining. In the fall of 1788, Upper Creeks stole a free black soldier, Juan Gros, who was serving in a Louisiana Company near Pensacola. Shortly thereafter, the captors sold Gros to a white trader who, in turn, resold Gros to the Mikasuki Chief Kinache. While passing through Mikasuki, a Spanish trader spotted Gros and attempted to ransom him. Kinache demurred, saying that he had bought the man for eight cows, and was not interested in selling. Determined to redeem Gros, the commanding officer at San Marco de Apalache, Captain Diego de Vegas, invited Kinache to discuss the matter. Kinache drove a hard bargain. Claiming that “on account of

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<sup>15</sup> John Millar to Arturo O’Neill, September 1, 1788, LC, Group 174, Box 6, PKY.

<sup>16</sup> John Hambly to Innerarity, October 29, 1816, Cruzat Papers, Box 3, PKY.

<sup>17</sup> Little Turkey to William Blount, April 10, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA.

his being a rich Indian, and having a great deal of affection for the Negro,” Kinache originally wanted 600 *libras*—the value of 600 deerskins at the Panton, Leslie & Company store—for Gros. Eventually, Vegas talked Kinache down to 400 *libras*, but Kinache grumbled “that he bought the Negro in wartime, when the cattle fetched a high price, and that he [Gros] was very expensive.” When Kinache got around to delivering Juan Gros almost a year later, the chief claimed that he would need at least fifty more *libras* plus several kegs of brandy. The Spaniards agreed.<sup>18</sup>

Other Creek warriors chose to sell their black captives in the Nation. Buyers were usually chiefs or resident traders, both of Creek and non-Creek descent. The fortunes of a party of five black captives taken in 1788 illustrate typical buyers and demonstrate how such captives became rapidly dispersed within the Creek Nation and beyond. After killing a fifty-year-old man named Will, Chehaw warriors took the five slaves from John Whitehead’s plantation in Liberty County, Georgia, and sold them to others living among the Chehaws. A white trader named Neah Harreal purchased Dido and Chole, two women in their twenties. By 1803, Dido and Chole had produced a total of five children, also retained by Harreal. A Creek headman named Humlathluchee or Big Eater bought Hector and Daffney, and later sold Daffney’s two daughters to Jack Kinnard. Finally, a woman named Rose was resold more than once in the Creek Nation before eventually being traded to Panton, Leslie, and Company in Pensacola.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Officer corps of Louisiana Companies of Free Blacks and Mulattos to Governor, October 18, 1788, PC, legajo 38, reel 192, f. 1670, PKY; Diego de Vegas to Arturo O’Neill, December 18, 1788, PC, legajo 40, reel 194, f. 1295, PKY; Diego de Vegas to Arturo O’Neill, January 2, 1789, PC, legajo 38, reel 192, f. 1684, PKY; Luis de Bertucat to Arturo O’Neill, November 14, 1791, PC, legajo 40, reel 194, f. 1153. At this time, according to Diego de Vegas’ estimates, one peso fetched about 2 ¼ *libras*. In the end, Kinache received 200 pesos (452 *libras*) worth of credit at Panton, Leslie & Co.—plus the kegs of brandy.

<sup>19</sup> Affidavit of John Whitehead, September 5, 1791, *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 277; Affidavit of David Garvin, February 4, 1803, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 2, Part 1, 89, GA; John Whitehead to John Clark,

Indeed, it was not unusual for Creeks to resell slaves casually and quickly when they needed to pay debts or obtain cash for goods. Because citizens of the Creek Nation did not bother with the legal deeds required by colonial or American law, they readily purchased slaves taken from American settlers. When Euro-American officials pressed Creeks to return slaves, they often responded like a Lower Creek chief, “who refused to give [the slaves] up, alledging that the negroes had passed thru several hands, and finally now was his.”<sup>20</sup>

Continuing an ancient practice, Creeks traded their captives to Indian allies. As a missionary traversed Cherokee country during the latter years of the American Revolution, he saw Shawnees en route to buy black captives from the Creeks. In 1795, Chickamauga Chief John Watts reported that some years earlier Shawnee warriors had taken an African American girl captive upon the Cumberland, then traded her to a Chickamauga ally. Watts said the girl had “passed from the Shawaneese warriors to the Flea & from him to the five Killer.” When the governor of East Florida sought to recover African Americans taken from his province by the Mikasukis, he asked Lower Creek Chief Jack Kinnard for advice. Kinnard told the governor to attend to the matter swiftly, for if he did not hurry “they [the

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January 26, 1820, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, reel 2, 164-168. Creeks sometimes paid their debts to the Panton, Leslie, and Company trading house in African American slaves. See, for example, William Laurence to William Panton, August 15, 1798, Cruzat Papers, Box 1, PKY; Manuel Juan de Salcedo to Vincente Folch, August 18, 1801, PC, legajo 58, reel 388, f. 75, PKY. In this case, Jack Kinnard paid William Panton in black captives who claimed that they were free men from Granada who had been shipwrecked while headed for Cuba.

<sup>20</sup> On the home states of captive African Americans, see Patrick Carr to Governor John Martin, December 13, 1782, *Creek Indian Letters*, Part 1, 40, GA; on Jack Kinnard’s response to Andrew Watthour’s request to restore his slaves, see Daniel Stewart to Governor John Milledge, January 18, 1805, *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 615.



slaves] will be Scattered so as they cannot be Collected.”<sup>21</sup> Once taken, black captives were passed quickly along well-worn routes of exchange between allies.

For most of the eighteenth century, Creeks had relied on the deerskin trade to supply them with European manufactured goods including guns, clothing, and metal tools, but by the 1790s the trade was clearly in decline, and Creeks would have to look elsewhere for the manufactured goods on which they had come to depend.<sup>22</sup> Seeking to recover from the stress associated with land loss and game depletion, some Creeks used their African American captives to launch new economic ventures such as planting and ranching.<sup>23</sup> Creeks who pursued new economic strategies believed that they could best preserve their nation’s autonomy by retaining their economic independence. Even though Creek men faced decreasing opportunities to prove themselves as hunters, they need not take up women’s task of farming; instead, they used enslaved laborers to do this work for them.<sup>24</sup> As Joel Martin has argued, “since we are greatly influenced by a historiography that depicts (to far too great a degree) an antebellum South without Native Americans, we are inclined to think that the southeastern Native Americans and the Cotton Kingdom were absolutely incompatible, that the Muskogees and all other Native Americans really had no future in the South and must

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<sup>21</sup> Williams, ed., “Bro. Martin Schneider’s Report,” 262; Tellico Blockhouse Treaty, December 28, 1794–January 3, 1795, JRP, reel 801, TSLA; Jack Kinnard to Enrique White, October 2, 1801, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

<sup>22</sup> Kathryn E. Holland Braund provides an excellent history of the Creek/Anglo skin trade in *Deerskins & Duffels*.

<sup>23</sup> Nathaniel J. Sheidley noted that Cherokee men used their spoils of war—including slaves and livestock—for upstart capital. Nathaniel Sheidley, “Unruly Men: Indians, Settlers, and the Ethos of Frontier Patriarchy in the Upper Tennessee Watershed, 1763-1815,” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton, 1999), 239-242.

<sup>24</sup> Theda Perdue noted this in “Women, Men and American Indian Policy: The Cherokee Response to ‘Civilization,’” in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), 97.

have felt completely desperate.”<sup>25</sup> In reality, Southern Indians could and did succeed as planters and ranchers. Historian Daniel Usner has pointed out that by the early nineteenth century, Indians throughout the deep South had greatly diversified their economies, which by that time included growing and selling cotton.<sup>26</sup> In 1804, a trader among the Seminoles reported, “they are planting cotton and is now gott to Spining and Waeving Within them Selves and Will in a Short time be very industrious.”<sup>27</sup>

Far from deploring slave labor as alien and deriding the wealth it wrought, Creeks who looked could find deep roots for the practice in their own history. By the turn of the eighteenth century, some Creek masters began to demand more intense, profit-oriented labor. Agent Benjamin Hawkins noted that residents of Eufala held stock and planted large corn and rice crops. He noted, “Several of the Indians have negroes, taken during the revolutionary war, *and where they are, there is more industry and better farms.*”<sup>28</sup> An unnamed Lower Creek chief (probably Thomas Perryman) boasted that his black captives were not only saleable commodities, but they also “Could Cut well and make Corn for him.”<sup>29</sup>

Lower Creek chief Jack Kinnard managed to accumulate wealth and power through working and selling his black captives. He led many successful raids against encroaching

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<sup>25</sup> Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 173.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel H. Usner, Jr., “American Indians on the Cotton Frontier: Changing Economic Relations with Citizens and Slaves in the Mississippi Territory,” *The Journal of American History* 72, no. 2 (1985), 297-317.

<sup>27</sup> Jamie Durouzeaux to Vincente Folch, April 16, 1804, PC, legajo 2372, reel 426, f. 17, PKY.

<sup>28</sup> Foster, ed., *Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 66s.

<sup>29</sup> Cornet of Horse to Major John King, October 16, 1800, “Land Sales,” 134, GA. Here, “Cornet of Horse” is a title, referring to a low-ranking cavalry officer; in this case, the Cornet was almost certainly a Bahamian. The Lower Creek chief involved in the conversation was identified as an ally of William Augustus Bowles, leading me to identify him as Thomas Perryman.

settlers; by 1791, he had accumulated forty African American captives and fifteen hundred head of livestock.<sup>30</sup> Kinnard used this property to become a rancher, planter, and trader in the region. Selling his cattle for rum and cloth at Pensacola, he exchanged the latter to other Creeks for profit. Meanwhile, Kinnard carried on a trade in black captives with other Lower Creeks. In a letter to Indian agent James Seagrove, Kinnard dispassionately described his role in human trafficking: “when the Negroes came the red people wanted to buy [them].” Kinnard also assisted East Floridians in recovering runaway and stolen slaves in the region—for a fee.<sup>31</sup> Euro-American traveler Caleb Swan explained that Kinnard’s newfound wealth “raised him to the dignity of a chief, and enabled him to go largely into trade, by which he supplies all the Indians around him.”<sup>32</sup>

As a planter, Kinnard helped supply the fort at San Marco de Apalache with produce. He kept a jealous watch on the African American captives who worked his fields. Complaining to Spanish Floridians that the Americans always attempted to steal his slaves, Kinnard said that he would have to remove to a more remote area “where his negroes might work usefully.” For conspiring with the rebel William Augustus Bowles, the Spanish imprisoned a black man named Billy who was owned jointly by Jack Kinnard and brother William. When Kinnard wrote to the commanding officer holding Billy, he received word “that he was a bad Negro and he would not turn him out.” Attempting to reason with Billy’s guards, Kinnard pointed out that his slave’s labor produced food, which he then traded to the

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<sup>30</sup> Swan, “Position and State,” 261.

<sup>31</sup> Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, 174; John Kinnard (Jack Kinnard) to James Seagrove, June 5, 1803, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 2, 675, 679, GA. Jack Kinnard to James Seagrove, June 5, 1803, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 2, 679, GA; Wiley Thompson to Enrique White, April 20, 1803, EFP, Section 32, reel 43, doc. 1803-63, PKY.

<sup>32</sup> Swan, “Position and State,” 261.

men at Apalache: “I wish you would let him out and Send him to the plantation to his work for as Long as he is in the fort he is no use to you nor me.” Eventually, Kinnard did secure Billy’s release, a testament to the power he wielded on the Creek-Spanish frontier and the success of his appeal for his slave’s labor.<sup>33</sup>

Jack Kinnard was not the only warrior who used plunder to transform his economic fortune. Menawa, a Creek from Oakfuskee, participated in raids upon the Cumberland settlements in his youth, and he became a famous horse rustler. Using the capital he accumulated from raids, Menawa established a plantation and a trading house and took on a prominent role in national politics. Like Menawa, men who raided the Cumberland settlements as young Chickamauga warriors took African American slaves and livestock, and later used these spoils to become respectable planters.<sup>34</sup>

### *Treatment*

While scholars generally have focused on the lenient nature of slavery among Southern Indians, the actions of some black captives suggest otherwise. Indeed, a number of African Americans fled their bondage in the Creek Nation to explore other opportunities. After the Spanish seized Pensacola in 1781, African Americans from other parts of the South started to trickle in, seeking freedom under the banner of religious sanctuary. In December of that year, a group of four runaway slaves arrived in Pensacola, asking for Spanish liberty papers from West Florida governor Arturo O’Neill. Three of the four had come from the

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<sup>33</sup> Jack Kinnard to Commandant at San Marco, March 8, 1801, LC, Group 174, Box 9, PKY; Diego de Vegas to Enrique White, January 29, 1795, West Collection, Box 5, PKY; Jack Kinnard to Enrique White, October 2, 1801, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Salcedo to Someruelos, January 18, 1803, PC, legajo 1555, reel 41, f. 71, PKY. Billy was captured during the fall of 1801 and released in early 1803.

<sup>34</sup> McKenney and Hall, *History of the Indian tribes of North America*, 97-105; Theda Perdue, “Mixed Blood” *Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 60-61.

Upper Creeks, and they reported that these Indians had stolen them from Anglo-American masters some years earlier. O'Neill decided to give the men paying jobs at the town's docks. In part because of African Americans' demand, the Spanish revived their policy of religious sanctuary until 1790, when Americans pressured them to stop. Even after 1790, however, enslaved African Americans from Creek country continued to see Florida as their land of freedom. In 1795, John Galphin tried to recover his man Jean, whom he believed was living in East Florida under the alias "Simon." Seeking her freedom, Lucy, an enslaved woman belonging to Jack Kinnard, trekked from Kinchafoone on the Lower Chattahoochee to San Marco de Apalache on the Gulf Coast.<sup>35</sup>

Other African American captives among the Creeks voluntarily returned to their former white masters. When Creeks attacked a southern Georgia plantation in May of 1793, they took ten slaves, "one of whom made his escape after killing as he says the Indian who had him in [his] possession." An enslaved boy named John White undertook a long and dangerous journey to return to his former master in Savannah. After being taken by the Creeks in 1797, he escaped and headed west to the Mississippi River, where he found passage on a boat bound for New Orleans. During his meeting there with the Spanish governor, White said that he purposely escaped from the Creeks and told the governor the name of his master. Ned and Sam, two young men taken from the Oconee region, became slaves in the Creek Nation. Trader Timothy Barnett related that the men "told him to whom they belonged and were desirous of returning to their master."<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, these

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<sup>35</sup> O'Neill to Galvez, December 11, 1781, PC, legajo 36, reel 183, f. 373, PKY; O'Neill to Josef de Ezpeleta, July 31, 1783, PC, legajo 36, reel 185, f. 1244, PKY; O'Neill to Navarro, August 8, 1783, PC, legajo 614A, reel 211, d. 88; John Galphin [alias "Tusekia Mickco"] to Enrique White, November 14, 1795, EFP, section 29, Reel 43, PKY; Jack Kinnard to James Seagrove, June 5, 1803, "Creek Indian Letters," Part 2, 675, GA.

<sup>36</sup> James Jackson to James Seagrove, May 9, 1793, in *The Papers of James Jackson*, ed. Lilla M. Hawes (Savannah: The Georgia Historical Society, 1955), 61; William E. Hulings to James Jackson, Telamon Cuyler

documents do not explain why enslaved people sought to return to their former lives: Perhaps ties of kinship pulled them back to the families they had left behind; perhaps they found the Creek country, with relatively fewer African Americans, an isolating place. In the Creek Nation or in Georgia, slavery was slavery, dehumanizing and unpredictable, and African Americans in the contested South made the best out of the options they had.

In the late eighteenth century, Creeks singled out African American captives as uniquely valuable, but blackness did not necessarily imply enslavement in Creek country. In the early nineteenth century, Moravian missionaries met Mrs. Randall, whom they described as a “mulatto.” She had likely been taken captive from Georgia some decades earlier. Mrs. Randall had married a Creek man, and together they had five daughters. For a lucky few African American captives, marriage remained a path to freedom. To the missionaries, Mrs. Randall certainly seemed free, though she may have missed the company of fellow Christians, few and far between in Creek country. According to the missionaries, “She gladly consented [to a service] and added that she would like to hear the Word of God.”<sup>37</sup>

The Creeks’ long history of maintaining a broad captivity spectrum may have mitigated the severity of bondage for some African Americans. Indian agent Benjamin

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Collection, bin 44, f. 5, d. 5, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia; Deposition of Nathaniel Howell and Ann Howell, C. Mildred Thompson Collection, bin 1, f. 15, d. 1, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia.

<sup>37</sup> Carl Mauelshagen and Gerald H. Davis, trans. and eds., “May 21-29, 1812, Burckhard's Travel Diary Across the Chattahoochee River Among the Creek Indians for the Residence of Alexander Cornells,” in *Partners in the Lord's Work: The Diary of Two Moravian Missionaries in the Creek Indian Country, 1807-1813* (Atlanta, 1969), 71-72. Mr. Randall, the woman's husband, was likely John, who took a number of enslaved people from Georgia. Affidavit of John Green, July 27, 1835, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 4, 271, GA; Affidavit of MacKeen Green, July 11, 1823, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 2, Part 3, 915, GA; Affidavit of Thomas Duffel, July 4, 1835, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 4, 289, GA.

Beginning in the 1770s, many African Americans living in Georgia converted to Christianity, embracing evangelical Protestantism. Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 80-117.

Hawkins chided Creeks for not taking full advantage of the labor their African American slaves could provide. He complained that some elite Creeks, such as Efau Hadjo and Alexander McGillivray's two sisters, allowed their slaves to idle. Hawkins approached the situation with a narrow, Anglo-American understanding of slavery, but these Creeks had long understood that captives could serve a wide variety of purposes, and that captives had value as prestige goods even if they did not work.<sup>38</sup>

The actions of a 1793 war party also speak to the diversity that still existed in Creek country. Headed by John Galphin and Ninnywageechee, a group of Lower Creeks set out against settlers living along the St. Mary's River, a border settlement bounded by Georgia to the north, Florida to the south, and the Creek Nation to the west. They first captured sixteen-year-old John Mizell, the son of a local planter. The boy had probably been out hunting, since his captors confiscated a gun and horse from him. Keeping Mizell under guard, the warriors followed the river west, toward outlying Anglo-American farms. All the while, "they questioned him very particularly who had the most property in this province" and asked him where they could find the wealthy planters. The warriors instructed Mizell that no one should live farther up the river than his father. On approaching the plantation of Edward Turner, Mizell's captors informed him that it must be destroyed because it lay too close to Creek country.

Tying Mizell to a tree, Galphin, Ninnywageechee, and the other warriors charged Turner's plantation. Spotting Turner at the plow's helm, they ran to him, cut the plow horses' harnesses and took the animals. Frightened, Turner gathered his three smallest children and fled for cover. Turner soon realized, however, that his attackers did not want his life or that

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<sup>38</sup> Foster, ed., "Sketch of the Creek Country," in *Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 30s, 40s.

of his children, for “the Indians did not attempt to pursue” him. As the warriors approached his house, they “ordered the wimmon away,” saying “that if the[y] did not go that when the[y] come again the[y] wood kill them.” In the excitement, John Mizell also managed to loosen his bonds and escape. The warriors concentrated solely on Turner’s “property.” Splitting up, some warriors seized “Everything that was in his house,” and in the fields they took “twenty three head of cattle, two horses.” Others ran to the slave quarters, capturing “the likes of Seven Negroes a fine fellow called Isaac, a wench called Sarah, a boy called Charles, boy called Tom, Gearle [sic] called Judge, boy called Ben, boy called tony.”<sup>39</sup>

This particular episode follows a familiar turn-of-the-century pattern: In making war on encroaching settlers, Creek men showed no interest in taking white captives, but focused instead on plunder and especially African American slaves. What is most interesting about this story is that one of the ringleaders, well-to-do Lower Creek trader and chief Ninnywageechee, was “half Negro.”<sup>40</sup>

Since the mid 1780s, Ninnywageechee had made war on the encroaching Americans. Like other leading warriors of the Creek Nation, Ninnywageechee organized strikes against settlers in the Oconee region. In the 1790s, he collaborated with fellow Creek John Galphin in plundering Anglo-American plantations along the St. Mary’s river. Lower Creeks and Spanish Floridians reported that Ninnywageechee and Galphin carried their spoils—African American captives, horses, and cattle—to Ninnywageechee’s trading house on the lower

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<sup>39</sup> Richard Lang to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, April 19, 1793, EFP, Section 32, reel 48, PKY; Juan Forrester to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, April 23, 1793, EFP, reel 48, PKY.

<sup>40</sup> Lang to Quesada, April 19, 1793, EFP, Section 32, reel 48, PKY. In this letter, Lang incorrectly identified Ninnywageechee as Philatouche, another Creek of African descent. See John Hambly to Carlos Howard, May 8, 1793, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.



Flint River. The trader then sold African American captives to others in the region or put them to work on his own plantation.<sup>41</sup>

Residents of the Floridas sometimes confused Ninnywageechee with Philatouche, another prominent Creek of African descent. In fact, they called both men “the Black Factor.” Philatouche was a trader and a chief at Chehaw, a Creek town on the Lower Chattahoochee. Like Ninnywageechee, Philatouche made war on the Oconee settlers, and he attempted to persuade neighboring Seminoles to join his campaign. As Philatouche once explained to the governor of East Florida, “we Expect to loose our land if we dont turn out & fight[.] the virginians has run [out] my people and taken all there hunts & horses.” As historian Claudio Saunt has noted, both Ninnywageechee and Philatouche were of partial African ancestry, yet they were among the most prominent Creek leaders of their time.<sup>42</sup>

As in Creek country, other Native Southerners grafted ideas about race onto their captivity practices, but the process was piecemeal and contested, leaving those of African descent in an ambiguous position. The case of Molly, an African American, illustrates how the Cherokees dealt with changing ideas about identity. Just before the Revolution, Sam Dent, a white trader, beat his Cherokee wife to death. Fearing retaliation by her Deer clan kin, Dent fled. In Augusta, Georgia, Dent purchased an African American slave named Molly, and offered her to the Deer clan in his wife’s stead. Fortunately for Dent, the Deer

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<sup>41</sup> Diego Burgess to Robert Leslie, July 1, 1793, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, doc. 1793-32, PKY; Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Jack Kinnard, January 18, 1794, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, doc. 1794-5, PKY; Arturo O’Neill to Josef de Ezpeleta, November 10, 1787, PC, legajo 1393, reel 329, f. 178, PKY; Jack Kinnard to the Cuseta King, Hallowing King, Young Prince, and Chiefs of the Lower Creeks, May 25, 1793, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, doc. 1793-24, PKY; John Forrester to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, 23 April 1793, EFP, Section 32, reel 48, PKY; Jack Kinnard to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, May 25, 1793, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, doc. 1793-23, PKY.

<sup>42</sup> For Saunt’s discussion of Ninnywageechee and Philatouche, see *A New Order of Things*, 130-35. See also Lord Dunmore to Philatouche, February 5, 1793, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Philatouche to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, October 22, 1795, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

clan accepted his proposal and adopted Molly, calling her “Chickaw.” Molly settled into Cherokee society, married, and bore two sons. Several decades later, however, a white American woman brought a legal suit, claiming Chickaw and her sons as slaves. The increasing importance of race and the decreasing power of clans left the family vulnerable. However, Deer clan kin accompanied Chickaw and her sons to the Cherokee Supreme Court, which recognized their membership in the nation and granted them protection. As this case demonstrates, people of African descent drew upon more traditional, inclusive elements of Native culture, such as kinship, as they attempted to retain their status in changing Indian societies.<sup>43</sup>

### *Runaways*

Black slaves in the colonial South consistently sought greater freedom, and some went so far as to risk their lives by running away. In early America, those who chose to run were overwhelmingly African-born. As in the Native South, many of these Africans had been taken captive in wars; in North America, African runaways attempted to use their military experience to fight and evade capture. Runaways most often left their masters during times of upheaval, and the continuous colonial wars in the region offered plenty of opportunity to do so. In the South, these runaways chose one of three destinations: the Atlantic seaboard, Spanish Florida, or Indian nations. Those with maritime skills often sought passage aboard ships that called at Charleston or Savannah. As early as 1687, runaways seeking to take advantage of the colonial rivalry between the English and Spanish presented themselves at St. Augustine, and five years later Charles II officially granted freedom to such individuals through religious sanctuary. In Florida, former slaves joined others of African descent from

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<sup>43</sup> Theda Perdue, “Clan and Court,” 562-69.

throughout the Atlantic world, where they enjoyed more political power, legal rights, and an easier path to freedom than their contemporaries in British colonies. Finally, runaway slaves sought freedom in Indian country, where they met with varying degrees of success.<sup>44</sup>

In seeking admission to Indian nations, some runaways attempted to enjoin their Native neighbors to fight against Euro-American domination of the region. In the early nineteenth century, a planter in the Mississippi Territory complained that many slaves “have gone off with arms.” He thought they left after hearing “many unwary fools who are in the habit of speaking of [conflict with Indians] before their own slaves, acknowledging an inferiority on the whites, to withstand the blacks and reds, that they have been long under a belief that some dreadful calamity was to fall on the whole of this country.” Indeed, African Americans had long attempted to persuade Natives in joining them to fight the threat they saw in the Anglo-American plantation economy. In 1751, some runaway slaves from South Carolina told the Cherokees that “the white People was coming up to destroy them all.” One of the slaves added, “that there was in all Plantations many Negroes more than white People, and that for the Sake of Liberty they would join them.” In applying to Jack Kinnard for sanctuary, a group of black men tried to shed their former status as slaves, saying “they did not know how to work but give them guns and go to war they knowed how to do that.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> David Richardson, “The British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina,” *Slavery and Abolition* 12 (1991), 125-71; Wood, *Black Majority*, 248-263; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 219-20; Hall, *Land & Allegiance*, 139; Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, 283-91. Charles II offered sanctuary in 1693 and the policy continued until British takeover in 1763 and briefly revived from 1784-1790. Jane Landers has produced insightful histories of African Americans in Spanish Florida. See *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); “Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida,” in *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (1990), 9-30. See also Lathan A. Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), Vol. 4, 31-32, 36, 40, 182.

<sup>45</sup> W.C. Mead to F.L. Claiborne, 20 September 1813, Claiborne Collection, Book F, reel 36013, MDAH; Edmund Gray to John Fallowfield, May 15, 1751, *DRIA*, 83; Deposition of Richard Smith, July 12, 1751, *DRIA*, 103; John Karnard (Jack Kinnard) to James Seagrove, June 5, 1803, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 2, 675, GA.

Some slaves did realize their dream of freedom by fleeing to the Creek Nation. Three enslaved men, Isaac, Pearo, and Orange, freed themselves in 1788. Luckily for them, the men found refuge in a Creek community and became warriors. Seven weeks after their initial escape, they returned to their old plantation with a Creek war party; together, they killed three enslaved African Americans and captured six more. Isaac, Pearo, and Orange had now become the captors, and they joined Creek society as free men.<sup>46</sup>

### *Conflict*

Not all southern Indians embraced the nativist theory of separate creations; those who had adopted or married white or black Americans probably disregarded this new gospel and continued to define identity in terms of kinship. Indeed, some Creeks found the trend toward black chattel slavery disturbing. At the close of the Revolution, trader Patrick Carr exclaimed that the introduction of a large number of black captives created “a terrible uprore” in the Creek Nation. According to Carr, one party favored returning the African Americans to their masters, while others threatened “to kill the White Women Prisoners” if they did so.<sup>47</sup> Headman Efau Hadjo also advocated the return of black captives; in 1794, he gave speeches to headmen throughout the nation and organized a company of warriors to enforce his policy.

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<sup>46</sup> Affidavit of John Elliott, August 1789, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 234, GA.

<sup>47</sup> Patrick Carr to Governor Martin, December 13, 1782, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 1, 41, GA. Trader Daniel McGillivray reported another conflict involving possession of black captives between the Wind clan and other members of the Nation. Daniel McGillivray to William Panton, October 13, 1800, Greenslade Papers, Box 1, PKY.

Reacting to Efau Hadjo's message, the Chehaws threatened to greet his police company with violence.<sup>48</sup>

Some dissatisfied Creeks voted with their feet. Many Lower Creeks, weary from years of war with encroaching Americans and displeased with changes in their nation, chose to move southward to Florida. There, they joined other dissatisfied Creeks and fugitive slaves to form a new society—the Seminoles.<sup>49</sup>

At the same time, however, tensions emanating from American encroachment led some Creeks to highlight the differences between themselves and the other. Those who listened to the prophets' story of polygenesis used phenotypical differences between themselves and encroaching white and black settlers to explain the cultural chasm that separated the groups. By the late eighteenth century, Creeks had developed three racially descriptive terms to classify the South's people: *Este cate* were "red people" or "Indians"; *este hvtk* were "white people"; *este lvste* were "black people."<sup>50</sup> As phenotypical traits eclipsed other modes of self-understanding, Creeks developed a concomitant vocabulary.

In his study of racism among the Catawbas, James Merrell argued, "Racism was not simply foisted upon natives by domineering whites or by farsighted Indian leaders eager to

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<sup>48</sup> Timothy Barnard to James Seagrove, December 18, 1794, "Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard," 241, GA; James Jackson to Timothy Pickering, October 16, 1795, *Papers of James Jackson*, 88.

<sup>49</sup> Timothy Barnard to the Georgia House, October 17, 1786, "Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard," 66-69, GA.

<sup>50</sup> In his 1791 tour of Creek country, John Pope made a short dictionary that included these terms. Among Muskogee speakers, these same terms are still in use today. Pope, *A Tour through the Southern and Western Territories*, 66; Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, 33-34. The Cherokees also used the theory of separate creations to inform their identity. See William G. McLoughlin and Walter H. Conser, Jr., " 'The First Man was Red': Cherokee Responses to the Debate Over Indian Origins, 1760-1860," *American Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1989), 243-64.

ensure the survival of their society.”<sup>51</sup> In constructing their ideas about race, Indians combined what they observed in Euro-American society with their own theories, new and old, about identity and belonging. Southern Indians had long considered unadopted captives less than fully human. In the late eighteenth century, some Natives grafted ideas about polygenesis and European racism onto older captivity practices. These Southern Indians designated people of African descent as innately different from themselves, unadoptable people uniquely suited to labor.

Those who adopted this ideology of race began to hold black captives in transgenerational bondage.<sup>52</sup> Lucy, whose saga began this chapter, suffered a youth of bondage in Georgia and an adulthood of enslavement in the Creek Nation: her surroundings changed, but her condition did not.<sup>53</sup> Shortly after her 1787 capture, Lucy was sold to the Sullivan household. Stephen Sullivan, a white trader, lived with his Creek wife and their children at Tuckabatchee. Lucy probably spent her days tending to the Sullivans’ fields and domestic chores. Within the Sullivan household, she lived and worked alongside other African American captives including Dinah, who had been taken from the Oconee borderlands a decade earlier than Lucy, and an unnamed man, “a likely Virginia Country born negro fellow” captured in 1791.<sup>54</sup> By 1802, Stephen Sullivan had died, but his Creek

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<sup>51</sup> James Merrell, “The Racial Education of the Catawba Indians,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 50 (1984), 363-384, quotation on 382.

<sup>52</sup> Formerly, Creeks had considered the children of unadopted captives to be free people. Bartram, *Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 52, 156.

<sup>53</sup> Affidavit of John Lang, October 27, 1802, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 25, GA; Affidavit of John McMichael Jr, July 2, 1787, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 104, GA; Affidavit of David McMichael, July 2, 1787, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 104-5, quotation on 105, GA; Major Robert Fullwood to General David Adams, January 24, 1833, *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 198-99; Affidavit of John Lang, October 27, 1802, File II, Record Group 4-2-46, Unit 78, doc. 1517, GA.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph Heard testified that the Creeks stole Dinah from his family’s house during the Revolutionary War. When passing through the nation many years later, he recognized Dinah, who was in the possession of “an

family kept Lucy and her children. For decades, Lucy's former master tried repeatedly to retrieve his slave, her five children, and sixteen grandchildren, but Mrs. Sullivan refused to give up Lucy.<sup>55</sup> Lucy's ancestors inherited her fate. By the turn of the century, African American captives could no longer expect freedom for their children. During the border war with Georgia, Creek warrior Mopligie took a seventeen-year-old black woman named Bette. Mopligie also retained the three sons that Bette bore over the next several years. From a fellow Lower Creek, Jack Kinnard bought two African American sisters, daughters of an enslaved woman taken from Georgia. Over the next few decades, the sisters had a total of six children, whom Kinnard also kept.<sup>56</sup> Transgenerational bondage based on African ancestry was the most radical innovation in late-eighteenth-century Creek captivity practices.

While some lucky runaways secured freedom in Indian country, fear and uncertainty often accompanied encounters between Indians and African Americans in the late-eighteenth-century Southern borderlands. In 1795, a Yuchi man camped near Tensaw shot and killed a slave of that town owned by Miguel Melton. A Tensaw boy asked the Yuchi

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Indian woman Called the widow Sullivan." Mrs. Sullivan, by then a widow, refused to release Dinah to Heard. Affidavit of Joseph Heard, September 1821, *Georgia Indian Depredations*, 453-54. When visiting the Sullivans in August of 1791, trader John Fitzpatrick saw "a likely Virginia Country born negro fellow taken some time last spring out from the district of Holstein." This enslaved man was a driver who was captured along with a team of horses and a wagon. Affidavit of John Fitzpatrick, October 7, 1791, "Indian Letters," 15-16, GA.

<sup>55</sup> Affidavit of John Lang, October 27, 1802, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 1, Part 1, 25, GA; Affidavit of John McMichael Jr, July 2, 1787, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 1, Part 1, 104, GA; Affidavit of David McMichael, July 2, 1787, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 1, Part 1, 104-5, quotation on 105, GA; Major Robert Fullwood to General David Adams, January 24, 1833, *Georgia Indian Depredation Claims*, 198-99; Affidavit of John Lang, October 27, 1802, File II, Record Group 4-2-46, Unit 78, Doc. 1517.

<sup>56</sup> For Bette, see Affidavit of Stephen Corker, November 5, 1820, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 2, Part 1, 58-59, GA. For the sisters, see John Whitehead to John Clark, January 26, 1820, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, reel 2, 164-68. For other examples, see also Affidavit of Alice Cole, October 26, 1820, "Indian Depredations," Vol. 2, Part 1, 173, GA; Affidavit of Joseph Heard, March 23, 1835, *Indian Depredation Claims*, 459; Affidavit of Amos Stewart, March 23, 1835, *Indian Depredation Claims*, 459; Inventory of Losses of William Girardeau by the Creek Indians, April 1788, "Indian Depredations," Part 1, Vol. 1, 226, GA. James Smith to General [Preston?], Captain Isaac Vincent Papers, bin MS617, doc. 2, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 135, n. 129-30.

“why he had he killed the Negro.” The Yuchi responded “that he had killed him because he is the same as a dog.”<sup>57</sup> After an African American couple fled Tomas Comir’s Mobile plantation, they encountered a Creek man near Tensaw. For unknown reasons—perhaps because the couple feared capture—they killed him. In retaliation, the Creek man’s wife managed to grab a long knife and decapitate the male runaway. She nearly succeeded in doing the same to the woman, but another resident of the town restrained her.<sup>58</sup> Although this episode represents an extreme, this was a time and place of great instability and frequent violence; Southern Indians and African Americans did not necessarily see themselves as natural allies against white Southerners.

Runaways who took their chances in Creek country faced an uncertain future. There, Indians, resident Euro-Americans, and runaways themselves negotiated over the status and position of these voluntary captives. In 1803, Spanish Florida resident Wiley Thompson journeyed to the house of William Kinnard, brother of Jack Kinnard, who resided on the lower Chattahoochee River. There, Thompson sought to recover black captives on behalf of his government. At Kinnard’s house, he unexpectedly met several Mikasukis as well as William Augustus Bowles, who was passing through on his way back from the Upper Creeks. Bowles was an Anglo-American who attempted to place himself at the head of an independent state populated by Creeks, Seminoles, African American runaways, and loyalists. Expressing anger over Thompson’s mission, Bowles “said that he had denied that any should go into the Indian Land, he assured me that I run the risque of losing my hair on

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<sup>57</sup> Manuel de Lanzos to Enrique White, February 19, 1795, PC, legajo 31, reel 418, f. 1163, PKY.

<sup>58</sup> Manuel de Lanzos to Arturo O’Neill, March 21, 1793, PC, legajo 64, reel 440, f. 50, PKY. Panton, Leslie, & Company owned Jack Philips, and he may be Panton’s slave referred to in a July 1798 letter. The letter details how an unnamed slave persuaded a Creek man who “was very Drunk” to help him escape. Daniel McGillivray to William Panton, July 13, 1798, Cruzat Papers, Box 1, PKY.



presenting myself there on such business.” Bowles had overestimated his influence among the Lower Creeks, for Jack Kinnard quickly called him down, saying “if he meddled with [Thompson] his hair should pay for it.” Furthermore, Jack Kinnard pointed out that “Bowles’s waiting man,” Jack Philips, had himself run away from the Pensacola trading firm that owned him. Jack Kinnard ordered his kinsmen to seize Philips, and Bowles attempted to hold onto his man even while the Kinnards beat him. When Bowles appealed to visiting Mikasuki warriors to help him, “they sat still and did not say a word and the Canards took the negro and put him in Irons.”<sup>59</sup> Like other unadopted captives in Indian country, runaways lived under constant fear of death or enslavement.

Many of those seeking freedom in Creek country would be sorely disappointed. As John Thornton noted in his history of Africans in the Atlantic world, Indians with their own captive-holding traditions commonly *reenslaved* runaways.<sup>60</sup> One absconded slave, Cooper, a “prime likely young negro boy, 19 or 20 years old, bread to Cooking, washing, and Ironing, of Clothes,” ran away to Creek country in 1793. Like Isaac, Pearo, and Orange, Cooper hoped to live as a free man among the Creeks. Cooper’s efforts did not meet with success. At some point during the next three years, a group of Creeks captured Cooper and attempted to return him over to U.S. officials in exchange for a ransom. Lashing out against his captors, Cooper stabbed one of them with a piece of wood; shortly thereafter, the Creeks “put him to death by beating or otherwise.”<sup>61</sup> The Creeks seem to have regarded many runaways as

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<sup>59</sup> Wiley Thompson to Enrique White, April 20, 1803, EFP, Section 32, reel 43, PKY.

<sup>60</sup> Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, 288-91.

<sup>61</sup> Affidavit of Thomas Flournoy, September 3, 1831, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 2, 290, GA; Affidavit of George Reeds, February 4, 1796, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 2, Part 1, GA; Robert Flournoy, November 11, 1802, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 4, 200, GA; Affidavit of Robert Flournoy, September 3, 1821, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 2, Part 2, 434, GA.

easily won captives. By the late eighteenth century, they and other peoples of African descent faced dwindling possibilities for inclusion in Creek society. Like Cooper, most were captured and resold to residents of the Creek Nation or ransomed to federal Indian agents.<sup>62</sup>

Although white Southerners tried to cultivate in their slaves a fear of Indians, those who had lived at the frontiers had seen violence levied against master and slave alike, and they may not have need convincing.<sup>63</sup> In 1788, eight warriors emerged from a swamp trail in Liberty County, Georgia, and slaves working in a nearby field spotted them. When the Creeks tried to capture them, the slaves “run and hollowed out to the Guard, which run immediately to their relief.” As a warrior seized one enslaved man, “he made so much resistance that [the Creeks] found the guard would be upon them. [The warriors] shott a ball through him and cut this throat and Scalped him and run off.”<sup>64</sup> That same year, on a plantation just miles away, a war party took captive a young African American boy named Billy, described as seven years, three months old and of a dark complexion. Seeking to retrieve their lost boy, Billy’s parents provided the Liberty County justice of the peace with information on the attack. Those seeking Billy met with no luck: he passed through several hands in the Creek Nation before being sold at a slave auction in Havana.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> For other examples, see Petition of Martin Palao and Jose Monroy, November 3, 1788, PC, legajo 38, reel 191, f. 600, PKY; Affidavit of Isaac Bush, October 16, 1824, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 3, 976, GA; James Jackson to the Chehaw King, March 5, 1799, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part 2, 522, A; Affidavit of Nathan Brewer, July 6, 1802, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 2, Part 2, 318, GA; Benjamin Hawkins to Captain Cook, Telamon Cuyler Collection, bin 76, folder 25, doc. 4, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia; Florette Henri, *The Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1816* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 150.

<sup>63</sup> For planters’ attempts to foment fear between Indians and African Americans, see William S. Willis, “Divide and Rule: Red, White and Black in the Southeast,” *Journal of Negro History* 48 (1963), 157-76.

<sup>64</sup> Col. Jacob Weed to Gen. James Jackson, May 27, 1788, Telamon Cuyler Collection, bin 83, folio 7, doc. 3, HRB, University of Georgia, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia.

<sup>65</sup> Affidavit of Thomas Quarterman, August 8, 1789, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 222, GA; Affidavit of John B. Girardeau, October 26, 1802, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 223-24, GA; U.S. Justices John

In late-eighteenth-century Creek society, race-thinking was clearly present, but it was also tempered by more inclusive aspects of captivity—including adoption and marriage. As this chapter suggests, captives among the Creeks endured a diversity of fates determined both by the Creeks’ unique past as well as their contemporary needs. The Creeks’ ambivalent attitudes towards black captives arose precisely because their captivity continuum had, for centuries, been so broad and allowed for great flexibility in the treatment of the captured. The complicated legacies of Creek captive-holding endure even to the present as the nation continues to struggle over the citizenship of Creek freedpeople’s ancestors: Were they chattel slaves? Relatives? Both?<sup>66</sup>

Though contested, the racialization of captivity in Creek country proceeded nonetheless. Drawing upon decades worth of conversations about physical differences and identity, Creeks chose to codify their new beliefs about race in 1818. These eleven laws were the first written ones in Creek history. Significantly, one of the laws stated that “if a Negro kill an Indian, the Negro shall suffer death; however, “if an Indian kill a Negro he shall pay the owner the value.” As other scholars have noted, the law presumed that every “Negro” was a slave, and it commodified those of African—but not European or Indian—descent. Other laws stated that guilty *individuals* would be punished by the Nation, and that accidental deaths would be forgiven. Continuing a trend toward centralized control of punishment, these

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Stevens, J.S. Bradwell, Thomas Mallard, and Thomas Bacon to the estate of Thomas Quarterman, September 3, 1821, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 245-46, GA; Affidavit of Samuel Spencer, 2 Aug [year missing], “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 1, Part 1, 224, GA See also Affidavit of Mikeal Hindsman, September 3, 1821, “Indian Depredations,” Vol. 2, Part 3, 959-60, GA; James Maxwell to Governor Walton, May 24, 1789, “Creek Indian Letters,” Vol. 1, 203-4, GA; Howard to Morales, May 17, 1795, EFP, Section 32, reel 51, doc. 1795-282, PKY.

<sup>66</sup> Claudio Saunt explores the complicated nature of race and racism in Creek society from the late eighteenth century to the present in *Black, White, and Indian*.

laws undermined clan justice.<sup>67</sup> Whereas once the captivity spectrum had been broad and targeted a wide range of enemy peoples, it now focused solely on African Americans and subjected them to a very narrow range of fates. These changes were also underway in other Southern Indian nations. The Cherokee state began to assume clan duties in 1808, and emerged as a constitutional republic with slave codes in 1827. The Choctaws and Chickasaws followed suit in 1826 and 1829.<sup>68</sup> The Seminoles' retention of a wider range of captivity practices and willingness to embrace people of African descent increasingly isolated them from the rest of the region—including other Native Southerners.

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<sup>67</sup> Laws of the Creek Nation proclaimed at Broken Arrow, June 12, 1818, Letters Received by the Secretary of War Relating to Indian Affairs, 1800-23, Vol. 2, 772-775. See also Green, *Politics of Indian Removal*, 69-71; Saunt, *White, Black, and Indian*, 23-24.

<sup>68</sup> For more on these legal codes, see Perdue, *Slavery and Cherokee Society*, 55-60; Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 106-10; O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age*, 111-13; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 153-54. Duane Champagne discussed the origin and evolution of constitutional republics among Southern Indians in *Social Order and Political Change: Constitutional Governments Among the Cherokee, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, and the Creek* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A People Apart: Seminoles and their African American Tributaries

As other Southern Indians began to hold black captives in transgenerational bondage, the Seminoles took another path. In Florida, they created a pluralistic society, welcoming immigrant Indians as well as African-American refugees. Although Seminoles targeted and held black captives, they did not codify racial slavery. Instead, they looked to the Native Southern past to provide a different social model—a more inclusive way of absorbing others. Drawing upon the chiefly political organization of their ancestors, Seminole chiefs incorporated African-American towns as subordinates, granting them protection in exchange for tribute. The relative freedom that this system afforded African Americans, however, increasingly isolated the Seminoles from the rest of the South—including Indian nations—leading outsiders to see them as a major threat to the burgeoning plantation economy.

#### *Seminoles*

Most of those who came to be called Seminoles were from Creek country. Following the destruction of the Florida mission system in the first decade of the eighteenth century, some residents of the Flint and Chattahoochee watersheds moved farther south. They did so with the enthusiastic approval of Spanish Florida officials who correctly anticipated that these Indian pioneers could afford the colony military protection from the region's other

imperial and Native powers.<sup>1</sup> Creek emigrants began to occupy land vacated by the defeated Apalachees, calling the place *talwa leske* (now Tallahassee) meaning “old fields.”<sup>2</sup> They also founded settlements along the Apalachicola and Suwannee Rivers, Lake Miccosukee, and the Alachua Prairie. When John Pope traversed the Creek nation in 1791, he recounted an oral tradition about the settlement of Florida still current among the people: “the *Creeks* after a long and bloody Contest of 20 Years, exterminated, and repeopled the deserted Villages by slow Emigrations from their own victorious Tribes.” Indeed, when the British arrived in 1763 to occupy the province and began to buy tracts of land from surviving mission groups, the Creeks objected, “deny[ing] that these Indians had any right to the lands.”<sup>3</sup> By right of conquest, the Creeks claimed the land as their own.

The earliest Creek emigrants to Florida were an ethnic minority within the nation. Residents of what is today southern and central Georgia, most of them spoke the Hitchiti dialect and were derogatorily called *istinko* by Muskogee-proper speakers.<sup>4</sup> Within a few decades, these wayward Hitichitis became increasingly independent. The main body of Creeks began to call them *isti semoli* or “wild men.”<sup>5</sup> Just as untamed others could be

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<sup>1</sup> Brent Richards Weisman, *Unconquered People: Florida's Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 14. Patrick Riordan provided an excellent synthesis of early Seminole history in “Seminole Genesis: Native Americans, African Americans, and Colonists on the Southern Frontier from Prehistory through the Colonial Era,” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1996). See especially 168-229. Riordan's assertion that Muskogean people began to move into the area in the sixteenth century, however, is not sustainable. They probably did not move into the area until after the destruction of the Florida missions in the early eighteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, 336, 279, 180.

<sup>3</sup> Pope, *Tour through the Southern and Western Territories*, 53; Robertson's Report of Florida in 1763, in *The British Meet the Seminoles*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 14; John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors*, 398-99. For a discussion of *istinko*, see Chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup> William C. Sturtevant, “Creek into Seminole,” in *North American Indians in Historical Perspective*, eds. Eleanor Leacock and Nancy Oestreich Lurie (New York: Random House), 105.

incorporated into the Creek nation through adoptive ritual and acculturation, so too could those who refused to participate in Creek government and ceremonies become “wild.” Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins explained, “They are called *wild*, because they left their old towns and made irregular settlements in this country to which they were invited by the plenty of game, the mildness of the climate, the richness of the soil, and the abundance of food for cattle and horses.” George Stiggins, a Creek of Natchez descent, wrote that a Seminole was “a stray”: “Any beast that has strayed from the original flock or fold is called a Seminola.”<sup>6</sup>

Chief Cowkeeper was a central figure in Seminole ethnogenesis. A Hitichiti-speaker from the Lower Creek town of Oconee, Cowkeeper moved to the Alachua Prairie near modern Gainesville in the 1750s. There, the aptly named chief enjoyed the lifestyle of a prosperous cattle rancher, which included the service of both Indian and black slaves. The chief once hosted naturalist William Bartram, treating his guest to “excellently well barbecued” beef ribs. Bartram described Cowkeeper as “a tall well made man, very affable and cheerful . . . his eyes lively and full of fire, his countenance manly and placid, yet ferocious.”<sup>7</sup> Flush with wealth and success, Cowkeeper began to assert Seminole independence from the Creek Nation. At the 1765 Treaty of Picolata, which inaugurated Britain’s brief tenure in Florida, Cowkeeper informed Governor James Grant that the Creeks could not speak for him or his people.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Foster, ed., *Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 26s; George Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 46. See also Woodward, *Reminiscences of the Creek*, 25; Tuskegee Tustunneege to Benjamin Hawkins, September 20, 1812, LC, Group 174, Box 11, PKY.

<sup>7</sup> Riordan, “Seminole Genesis,” 195-98; Bartram, *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 50-53. Quotation on 51.

<sup>8</sup> Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 14.

From the 1750s through the 1830s, Creeks continued to migrate to Seminole country. Emigration accelerated during periods of strife—the Creek-Georgia Border Wars of the 1780s, the Redstick War, and removal in the 1830s—when Creeks sought refuge from American aggression or the partisan politics of their own nation. Attempting to find the peace and prosperity that had become increasingly elusive in the Creek Nation, the emigrants formed an ethnically heterogeneous and politically decentralized nation further south. By the nineteenth century, Seminoles included the Hitchiti-speaking Mikasukis, Upper Creek refugees, Yuchis, and what Americans called “Spanish Indians.”<sup>9</sup> This last group probably included Calusas and Tekestras, people whose ancestors had anciently occupied the southern peninsula of Florida. These Spanish Indians had intermarried with Cubans, and they often worked on Gulf Coast fishing boats.

### *African Americans*

War-weary Creeks were not the only people seeking asylum in Florida. Concurrently, African Americans living throughout the Lower South looked not northward for their freedom, but farther south. Freedom-seeking slaves began to arrive in the late seventeenth century, and in 1693, Spain’s King Charles II issued a royal proclamation offering freedom to Catholic converts. Word of the proclamation spread quickly throughout Carolina plantations, and African runaways trickled into the colony, where they established the free black town and militia post Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose. As Georgia governor

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<sup>9</sup> For more on ethnic diversity and the emigrants, see William H. Simmons, *Notices of East Florida, with an account of the Seminole Nation of Indians* (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1822), 59; Timothy Barnard to the Georgia House, October 17, 1786, “Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard,” 66-69, GA; Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 24-27; Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People*, revised and edited by Alcione M. Amos and Thomas P. Senter (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 36; Ellisor, “The Second Creek War,” 196-201.



James Wright complained, the Spanish protected “run away Slaves, who as soon as they get there throw themselves into the hands & protection of the Priests, and are deem’d by them as Freemen.” Although the policy was discontinued when the English took possession of Florida in 1763, the Spaniards revived sanctuary from 1781 to 1790. As historian Jane Landers has argued, African Americans “repeatedly created viable communities in Florida when conditions permitted.”<sup>10</sup>

Under pressure from the United States and attempting to protect the growing plantation economy in East Florida, the Spaniards rescinded sanctuary in 1790. African Americans continued to arrive in Florida, but the Spanish government cooperated with American slaveholders by catching and returning fugitive slaves.<sup>11</sup> After 1790, African Americans sought their freedom among the Seminoles. East Floridian Jesse Dupont declared that his slaves began to escape around 1791, when two men ran away to Seminole country “and an Indian Negro Stole a wench and Child and since She has been amongst the Indians she has had a Second.” In 1808, a resident of St. Augustine petitioned the governor to pressure the Seminoles into giving up his man Ysidoro, whom he felt sure was living among the Alachuas. Slaves from South Carolina and Georgia also attempted to join the Seminoles, though the Creeks sometimes caught the fugitives en route; an enslaved man belonging to Georgian Elijah Walkers was twice apprehended in the Creek Nation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Landers, “Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose,” 9-30; “Answers to queries sent by the Lords of Trade [in] 1761, 1762, by James Wright,” James Wright Collection, document 1, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia; Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Enrique White to Jared Irwin, April 26, 1797, “Georgia Land Sales,” 104, GA.

<sup>12</sup> Jesse [Josiah] Dupont to Enrique White, January 24, 1802, EFP, Section 45, reel 83, doc. 1802-7, PKY; Juan Luis Martineau Florienter to Enrique White, May 9, 1808, EFP, Section 44, reel 80, doc. 1808-13, PKY; Benjamin Hawkins to David Mitchell, December 7, 1812, Telamon Cuyler Collection, bin 76, folio 25, document 3, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia.

Not all people of African descent in Seminole communities were runaways seeking refuge; others were war captives or property by sale. As General Thomas Jesup enumerated the origins of African Americans among the Seminoles to the Secretary of War in 1841, he began with “descendants of negroes taken from citizens of Georgia by the Creek or Muskogee confederacy in former wars.”<sup>13</sup> As former residents of the Creek nation, some Seminoles or their descendants had fought the Americans during the Revolution and ongoing border wars with Southern states, and they continued to target people of African descent during their nineteenth century conflicts against American expansion. Like other Native Southerners of that time, Seminoles grew pessimistic about incorporating non-Indians into their families as adoptees, so they focused on the capture of African Americans.<sup>14</sup> When a group of Seminole warriors pledged to join the British in the American Revolution, they stipulated that “Whatever horses or slaves or cattle we take we expect to be our own.”<sup>15</sup> In the Mikasuki War, African Americans accounted for about ninety percent of all captives.<sup>16</sup>

Chief Payne, Cowkeeper’s nephew and successor, attempted to work with East Florida governor Enrique White to recover black captives taken during the Mikasuki War,

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<sup>13</sup> Jesup to J.C. Spencer, 28 December 1841, H.D. Doc. No. 55, 27<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess. (402), p. 2-3. According to Jesup, Seminoles had also purchased slaves or captured them from Florida plantations. Jesup pointed out that though Americans had stolen many African Seminoles, some managed to return to Seminole country.

<sup>14</sup> During the First Seminole War, Seminoles took Eunice Barber, a white woman living along the St. Marys River, but that was an isolated incident. The Seminoles committed few aggressive acts during that war; mostly, they played defense, fleeing from Jackson’s army. Barber, *Captivity and Sufferings*. At the time of the First Seminole War, a “mulatto” man [Jay Renis?] who formerly resided at the fort at Prospect Bluff did take captive some kinswomen of William Hambly, a former Panton, Leslie & Company employee who joined American forces at Ft. Gaines. Edward Brett Randolph Diary, March 1818, ms. 619z, SHC.

<sup>15</sup> Copy of a Talk from the Seminolle Indians, September 3, 1777, quoted in Riordan, “Seminole Genesis,” 198.

<sup>16</sup> Petition to Governor White from Citizens of East Florida, January 27, 1803, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Petition to Governor White, January 27, 1803, PC, legajo 1555, reel 41, f. 122, PKY; Citizens of St. Augustine to White, July 1, 1802, PC, legajo 1554B, reel 39, f. 67, PKY. These documents mention the capture of 68 people, 61 of whom were African American.

but others were not so helpful. William Augustus Bowles, a protagonist of the war, enjoyed the protection of his father-in-law Chief Kinache at Mikasuki.<sup>17</sup> Bowles attempted to capture and retain African Americans who would aid him in his fight to establish an independent “State of Muskogee.” Bowles envisioned himself at the helm of this state, which would be populated by Indians, loyalist-leaning whites, and African Americans, both slave and free.<sup>18</sup> African Americans aided Bowles’ cause as couriers, soldiers, and sailors; on account of Bowles, according to one Georgian, “many negroes have allredy made an attmpt to run from the Overseer.” In 1800, a motley group of African Americans, Mikasukis, and renegade whites under Bowles’ command succeeded in briefly taking the Spanish fort at San Marco de Apalache and hoisting the flag of State of Muskogee flag.<sup>19</sup> However, when it became obvious that Bowles could not revive a golden age of Muskogee/British trade as he had promised, Creek and Seminole headmen began to tire of the pompous and often delusional fellow. Efau Hadjo, speaker of the Creek National Council, denounced him, saying, “The four Nations have their own kings and Chiefs. We never had a White Chief. This man says he is a chief of our land, he is our director General, he lies.”<sup>20</sup> Even Kinache decided that Bowles was more trouble than he was worth. William Augustus Bowles’ adventures came to end when Creek and Seminole warriors captured him in 1803 and turned him over to the

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<sup>17</sup> J. Leitch Wright, *William Augustus Bowles: Director General of the Creek Nation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967), 124-25.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-49.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Lang to James Jackson, June 26, 1800, “Georgia Land Sales,” 119, GA; White to Someruelos, May 29, 1802, PC, legajo 1553, reel 37, f. 1274, PKY; Forrester to White, September 16, 1801, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; White to Chief Payne, July 18, 1800, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY. Quotation from John King to James Jackson, July 12, 1800, “Georgia Land Sales,” 127, GA.

<sup>20</sup> Talk of Efau Hadjo to Benjamin Hawkins, November 25, 1799, Greenslade Papers, Box 1, PKY.

Spanish. Despite the attempts of Payne and Lower Creek chief Jack Kinnard to repatriate Florida slaves taken during the Mikasuki War, some of them remained among the Seminoles.

Seminoles also purchased African-American captives. As chiefs began to accumulate wealth through ranching, they used cattle as a medium of exchange. Around 1810 in the town of Picolata, Reading Blunt sold Sarah, an African American woman, to the family of Chief Bowlegs for forty steers, the equivalent of eight hundred dollars. Edward Wanton, longtime trader among the Seminoles, explained, “At that period it was usual for the Indians to rate all negroes on sale at this rate of forty head of beef cattle.”<sup>21</sup> If Wanton’s recollection of forty steers is accurate, then Seminoles thought African-American women captives were much more valuable than Euro-American ones; just seven years earlier, chiefs Payne and Kinache deemed ten cows an appropriate payment for a teenaged white woman.<sup>22</sup> An 1802 bill of sale records Chief Kinache’s purchase of an African American man named Catalina from Bahamian trader Richard Powers “in consideration of the sum of four Hundred Spanish Milld Dollars.”<sup>23</sup> After Anglo-Americans planters tried to overthrow the colony of East Florida during the Rebellion of 1795 and the Patriot War of 1812-13, Spanish officials confiscated much of the dissidents’ property, including slaves, and sold it at auction; Seminoles were among the buyers.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Affidavit of Edward M. Wanton, 14 January 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 461. See also Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 75. Simmons asserts that the Seminoles were “in the habit of purchasing slaves with cattle, when they were rich in the latter species of property.”

<sup>22</sup> Dubreuil to Salcedo, September 4, 1803, PC, reel 250, legajo 76, f. 419, PKY.

<sup>23</sup> Bill of Sale, Richard Powers to Kinegee [Kinache], September 20, 1802, PC, legajo 219, f. 599, PKY.

<sup>24</sup> Affidavit of James Hall, June 11, 1818, “Georgia Land Sales,” 221, GA; Jesup to J.C. Spencer, 28 December 1841, H.D. Doc. No. 55, 27<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess. (402), p. 2-3. For the Rebellion of 1795, see Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 49-51.

Seminole chiefs passed down enslaved African Americans and their descendants to relatives. Upon his death around 1790, Falehigee willed his slaves, Sally, Hannah, Tyler, and Tom, to his brother Will. When Will died ten years later, his nephew Econchattamicco inherited the Africans. By the late 1830s, Econchattamicco owned twenty-one African Americans, most of whom descended from Falehigee's original four.<sup>25</sup> Harriet Bowlegs, granddaughter of Cowkeeper and daughter of Chief Bowlegs, inherited black captives from her father and from her sister, Sanathlaih-Kee. By the time she moved to Indian Territory in 1838, she owned sixteen African Americans.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Tributary System*

Within Seminole country, chiefs created a distinctive form of social organization. Typically, a detached village or villages of African Americans was affiliated with a particular Seminole chief; in exchange for land and a great deal of liberty, they owed the chief tribute in the form of agricultural produce. In general, the Seminoles maintained a dispersed settlement plan because that form of spatial organization was most conducive to cattle ranching. African American towns lay at a distance of one to three miles from chiefs' towns, often in less accessible areas like swamps or high hammocks.

U.S. army officer George McCall, who visited the black town of Pelahlikaha during the fall of 1826, called it "one of the most prosperous negro towns in the Indian territory."

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<sup>25</sup> John Milton v. Econchattamicco, District of West Florida, 12 April 1831, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 467-68; Petition of Econchattamicco, 2 April 1836, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 462.

<sup>26</sup> John Casey to Isaac Clark, July 11, 1838, H.D. No. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., Vol. 5, 119-21; "Negroes, &c., Captured from Indians in Florida," H.D. No. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., Vol. 5, *passim*; Affidavit of Edward M. Wanton, 14 January 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 461. The sixteen slaves were Amy, Davy, Jack, Jim, John, Juba, Maria, Ned, Noble, Polly, Rophile, Rose, Sam, Sarah, Scipio, and Ormond.

McCall continued, “We found these negroes in possession of large fields of the finest land, producing large crops of corn, beans, melons, pumpkins, and other esculent [sic] vegetables.”

Horatio Dexter, who traversed Seminole country a few years before McCall, observed that African Seminoles also grew rice, peanuts, and tropical fruits. In fact, by the early years of the nineteenth century, some Seminole towns had taken to growing and spinning that most Southern of crops—cotton.<sup>27</sup> Dexter thought Pelahlikaha a rich land: “The hammocks are very numerous and contain from 20 to 300 acres each, all of which are surrounded by Savannahs, which afford coverage and sufficient range for innumeral [sic] cattle.”

Pelahlikaha was subject to a nephew of Payne, Chief Micanopy, believed by McCall to receive “a tribute of one-third of the produce of the land, and one-third of the horses, cattle, and fowls they may raise” Dexter thought that African Americans owed their chiefs a bit more—“half what the lands produce.”<sup>28</sup>

Beyond agricultural produce, Seminole chiefs expected little from their tributaries, leaving them “at liberty to employ themselves as they please.”<sup>29</sup> Under such conditions, African American villages thrived. Experienced agriculturalists, the tributaries produced enough food to feed their own village as well as the chief, his household, and his guests.<sup>30</sup> An 1822 visitor to Seminole country noted that all the African American men owned guns.

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<sup>27</sup> James Durozeaux to Vincente Folch, April 16, 1804, PC, legajo 2372, bx. 24, reel 426, doc. 17, PKY.

<sup>28</sup> Jordan Thomas Herron, “The Black Seminole Settlement Pattern, 1813-1842” (M.A. Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1994), 41-42; George A. McCall, September 25, 1826, in *Letters from the Frontiers: Written during a Thirty Years' Service in the Army of the United States* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1868), 160; Report of Horatio Dexter to William DuVal, Observations on the Seminole Indians, submitted August 26, 1823, typescript in Edward T. Keenan Collection, Box 3, PKY. See also Wiley Thompson to Lewis Cass, April 27, 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 533-34; Wright, *Creeks & Seminoles*, 87-88. Seminoles maintained this settlement pattern even during the tumult of the Second Seminole War. See Testimony of Lieutenant Mitchell, February 2, 1837, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 7, 387.

<sup>29</sup> Report of Dexter, Keenan Collection, PKY.

<sup>30</sup> Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 75.

Like Seminole men, they hunted deer, wild turkey, geese, and cranes to supplement their diet.<sup>31</sup> No passes were required to move about the country and the tributaries were “free to go and come at pleasure.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, many owned “stocks of horses, cows, and hogs, with which the Indian owner never assumes the right to intermeddle.”<sup>33</sup> Historian Ira Berlin has stressed the importance of African American community-building as a determinant of quality of life.<sup>34</sup> In the case of African Seminoles, they had almost complete freedom to fashion their separate communities.

Observers thought that the tributaries enjoyed about the same material conditions as their masters. Some thought they lived even better, probably because many of the African Seminoles had picked up recognizable aspects of Euro-American culture from their former masters. One Tennessean, for example, remarked that Pelahlikaha “was laid out like the towns in a *civilized country*, the houses were small and built of pine.”<sup>35</sup> Another Euro-American traveler was impressed with his quarters—“a new and excellent house, which the Negroes had built to dance in on Christmas.”<sup>36</sup> Liberty and economic prosperity seemed to endow the tributaries with good health. One observer noted “The Indian Negroes are a fine formed athletic race,” while another added that they were “the finest looking people I have ever seen.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 76, 48.

<sup>32</sup> McCall, *Letters from the Frontiers*, 160.

<sup>33</sup> Wiley Thompson to Lewis Cass, April 27, 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 533-34.

<sup>34</sup> Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 5-6.

<sup>35</sup> John Erwin Memoir, 1836, ms. 262, reel 1002, TSLA. Emphasis added. See also McCall, *Letters from the Frontiers*, 160.

<sup>36</sup> Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 44.

<sup>37</sup> Report of Dexter, Keenan Collection, PKY; Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 76.

Few African Seminoles were actually “free.” The emigration rolls of the late 1830s list only 18 free people out of a total of 390 African Seminoles, about 5 percent of the total. Seminole chiefs freed some, while others bought their freedom or that of their relatives. For example, when Polly became King Bowlegs’ sexual partner, he freed her and, later, the children they had together. Plenty, who lived under Chief Micanopy, purchased the freedom of his eldest sons, Juan and Jack, from Halleck Hadjo, while Plenty himself remained a tributary of Micanopy.<sup>38</sup> In this history, however, using “slave” and “free” as absolute categories often obscures rather than illuminates. In semblance, the lifestyle of Seminole elites had much in common with white planters, yet the Seminoles managed to achieve this lifestyle without overseers, whips, brands, centralized government, property laws, or slave codes. Because moving elsewhere would almost certainly result in less freedom, circumstance alone tied African Seminoles to the land. They found their responsibilities among the Seminoles a light burden. According to traveler William Simmons, “The Negroes uniformly testify to the kind treatment they received from their Indian masters, who are indulgent, and require but little labour from them.” In a conversation with Juan, formerly a translator and aid to Chief Payne, he “assured [Simmons], that his old master, as he called him, had always treated him with the utmost humanity and kindness.”<sup>39</sup> African Seminoles enjoyed far greater autonomy than their contemporaries who labored under other Southern

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<sup>38</sup> “Negroes, &c., Captured from Indians in Florida” H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 66-69, 74-80, 83-89, 95-96, 122-23.

<sup>39</sup> Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 76-77.



slaveholders, both whites and Indians. Thus, it is not surprising that African Americans were “violently opposed to leaving the [Seminole] country.”<sup>40</sup>

The labor of African Seminoles provided chiefs with a comfortable life. Payne, chief of the Alachua Seminoles and master of twenty African Americans in 1793, owned a plantation with 1,500 head of cattle, 400 horses, and some sheep and goats.<sup>41</sup> When American Horatio Dexter visited Tolokichopko in 1823, he found the recently-deceased chief of that town had possessed a peach orchard, potato fields, a stable, a dairy, and a two-story wooden house. Two miles east of Opauney’s residence was a village of some 40 African Americans who tended to crops of rice and corn. Dexter concluded that “in all respect the place resembled the residence of a substantial planter.” If Seminole chiefs accumulated much, they also gave much away. As traveler Horatio Dexter attested, “I feel myself bound to acknowledge the extraordinary & uniform hospitality I met with from these people in the course of the journey. At every village I was compelled to spend the night and partake of an entertainment, & was freely furnished with every supply I wanted for my journey.”<sup>42</sup>

In return for tribute, Seminole chiefs offered their tributaries, who constantly found their lives, property, and comparative liberty in danger, much-needed protection. Chiefs and warriors protected African Americans from would-be slaveraiders, a common species of criminal in Seminole country. They also dealt with foreign governments on behalf of their tributaries. In 1800, Spanish authorities in St. Augustine accused one of Payne’s tributaries of murder. Wrote Governor Enrique White, “Some of your people with a negro in company

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<sup>40</sup> R.K. Call to Andrew Jackson, March 22, 1835, reprinted in *The Philanthropist*, July 15, 1836, Goza Historical Newspaper Collection, PKY.

<sup>41</sup> James Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 29.

<sup>42</sup> Report of Dexter, Keenan Collection, PKY.

killed one of my people near town. The Negro is suspected to be the murderer.” White demanded that Payne give up the man. Payne expressed a willingness “to keep Peace and a Clean path,” but was unable to produce the suspect, explaining “it [is] said by the Negroes that he is dead for the[y] found his gun and where [he] had gone into a Large pond and never Could find where he came out.” After offering this excuse, Payne advised Governor White to consider the man dead and drop the matter.<sup>43</sup>

Though ultimately subject to a Seminole chief, each tributary village had an internal political structure complete with its own headmen. Perhaps the most famous of these headmen was Abraham. Born a slave in Pensacola, Abraham fled as a young man to join the British during the War of 1812. He survived the American attack on the fort at Prospect Bluff in 1815, then sought refuge in Seminole country. Ultimately, Abraham settled in Pelahlikaha, where he became a community leader and advisor to Chief Micanopy. Colonel William Foster, who met the headman during the Second Seminole War, called him “Abraham the Prophet & Prime Minister of Micanopy.” Foster deemed Abraham a true politician: “He is a perfect noncommittal [sic] man & is compared to Martin Van Buren in our camp.”<sup>44</sup> To the Seminoles, Abraham’s intelligence and diplomatic skills were evidence of the considerable spiritual power he obviously possessed; thus, they sometimes referred to him as a “Prophet.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Enrique White to Payne, July 18, 1800, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY; Chief Payne to Enrique White, July 29, 1800, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

<sup>44</sup> John and Mary Lou Missall, eds., *This Miserable Pride of a Soldier: The Letters and Journals of Col. William S. Foster in the Second Seminole War* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2005), 118.

<sup>45</sup> Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journey into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon’s Account of Life in Camp and Field during the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836-38*, ed. James F. Sunderman (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1953), 211. For more on Abraham, see Kenneth Wiggins Porter, “The Negro Abraham,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (1946), 1-43.

Their linguistic skills and knowledge of Euro-American culture often elevated African Seminole leaders to positions of power within the Seminole nation. Because many of these leaders were born outside the nation, they typically knew several European, Indian, and sometimes African tongues. In the early American South, many people of African descent were renowned translators and, as one scholar phrased it, “expert in borderlands diplomacy.”<sup>46</sup> Thomas Woodward, a planter in early Alabama, owned some African American slaves who formerly belonged to Yuchi masters. These slaves, Woodward recalled, spoke Yuchi, Muskogee, Hitchiti, passable Shawnee, and some English. Woodward harbored some fear of the power that linguistic skills afforded African Americans raised among Indians: “Nearly all of them, at some time or other, are used as interpreters, which affords them an opportunity to gather information that many of their owners never have, as they speak but one language.”<sup>47</sup> Because most Seminole chiefs did not feel comfortable conversing in European languages, they typically used trusted African Seminole leaders as translators.<sup>48</sup> A select few African Americans among the Seminoles, such as Louis Pacheco, could also read and write.<sup>49</sup> African Seminole headmen also ran errands for their chiefs to St. Augustine and acted as couriers throughout the region.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), 2-3.

<sup>47</sup> Woodward, *Reminiscences of the Creek*, 41, 108.

<sup>48</sup> Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 76; James Gadsden to Lewis Cass, July 6, 1833, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume XXIV: The Territory of Florida, 1828-1834*, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter (Washington: The National Archives, 1959), Vol. 24, 858-61.

<sup>49</sup> John C. Casey to Major Isaac Clark, 11 July 1838, H.D. Doc. No. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 120.

<sup>50</sup> White to Someruelos, March 13, 1802, PC, legajo 1553, reel 37, f. 1050, PKY; Bowlegs to José Coppinger, September 18, 1816, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY.

Because they commonly saw African Americans in the company of chiefs, many white Americans feared that black tributaries actually ruled the Seminoles. In 1832, the acting governor of Florida declared, “Those negroes have great influence over them and in fact it is said control their chiefs and councils.”<sup>51</sup> Of Joe, Coacoochee’s “right hand man,” one army officer concluded that he “no doubt exercises great influence, as he possesses considerable shrewdness, and carries in his countenance the marks of a villain.”<sup>52</sup> One Charlestonian expressed shock and outrage at the comportment of African Seminole leaders, who seemed to think themselves equal to white men: “They had none of the servility of our northern blacks, but were constantly offering their dirty paws with as much hauteur, and nonchalance, as if they were conferring a vast deal of honour, of which we should have been proud.”<sup>53</sup>

Contemporary observers and present-day scholars have had great difficulty in describing the African Americans who lived among the Seminoles: they have been dubbed “maroons,”<sup>54</sup> “partners,” “subordinates,” “allies,”<sup>55</sup> “half slaves,”<sup>56</sup> and “rather masters than slaves.”<sup>57</sup> The difficulty in categorizing this group of African Americans wells from the unique nature of their relationship to the Seminoles. By the nineteenth century, the liberty

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<sup>51</sup> Acting Governor Westcott to Abraham Bellamy, February 2, 1832, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 24, 669. See also Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 27.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from anonymous army officer, May 1, 1841, printed in *The Globe*, May 24, 1841, Goza Historical Newspaper Collection, PKY.

<sup>53</sup> Motte, *Journey into Wilderness*, 210. In this case, I assume that Motte’s use of “northern” refers to “north of Florida,” presumably Charleston.

<sup>54</sup> Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 47. Weisman uses all three terms in his description.

<sup>56</sup> Jedidiah Morse, “A report to the Secretary of War,” quoted in Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians*, 404.

<sup>57</sup> George Brooke to Gad Humphreys, May 6, 1828, Keenan Collection, Box 4, Humphrey’s Letters, PKY.

that Seminole society afforded to people of African descent had isolated them from others in the South, including Indian neighbors. Readers may find Seminole social organization strikingly similar to vassalage as practiced in medieval Europe, and that estimation is not far off the mark. The Seminoles, however, drew not upon the annals of European history in crafting their relationship with African Americans, but rather their own culture and history. Most accurately, the relationship between African Americans and Seminole leaders was that of tributary to chief. The satellite African towns that surrounded chiefs' towns and their payments of agricultural produce are elements strongly reminiscent of the chiefly social and political organization that pervaded the American South from roughly 1000-1600 A.D. As they set about crafting their motley society in peninsular Florida, the Seminoles revived and reinvented the chiefdoms of their ancestors. Like other Southern Indian nations, the Seminoles were a collection of disparate groups with unequal access to power. Although the Seminoles' society afforded people of African descent a great deal of freedom, theirs was not an egalitarian one. Whether they came voluntarily, as war captives, or as chattel, all African Americans in Seminole country entered into a similar relationship with a Seminole chief; they were junior members, tributaries, of the chiefdoms that harbored them.

Scholars have long debated just how close Seminoles and their black tributaries were. Joshua Giddings, an abolitionist and early scholar of the Seminole wars, was the first to argue that the African Americans were "maroons" harbored by Seminole allies.<sup>58</sup> Historian J. Leitch Wright disagreed, asserting that they were actually Indians—"black Muscogees."<sup>59</sup> In

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<sup>58</sup> Joshua R. Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida, or The Crimes Committed by our Government against the Maroons, who fled from South Carolina and other slave states, seeking protection under Spanish Laws* (1858; reprint, Baltimore: Black Classics Press, 1997).

<sup>59</sup> Wright, *Creeks & Seminoles*, 277-79.

his careful study, Kevin Mulroy most accurately captured the relationship between the two groups when he argued, “The maroons’ primary motivation remained the prospect for liberty and self-determination. Their association with the Seminoles was but one means toward achieving that end.”<sup>60</sup>

Historical and archaeological evidence shows that the African Seminoles preserved a physical and cultural distance from mainstream Seminole society. As mentioned earlier, the tributaries lived in separate towns, and at least some celebrated Christmas in an era when many Seminoles were hostile to Christianity. In marriage, African Seminoles almost exclusively married other people of African descent. Most had partners living in the same village. John and Flora, for example, lived as tributaries of Micanopy for decades, becoming patriarch and matriarch of a large family. By the time the couple removed to Indian Territory, twelve children and five grandchildren joined them.<sup>61</sup> Others took partners from other villages and a few, including interpreter John Caesar, had spouses who labored and lived on white plantations. Kinship thus created a vast web of African connectedness within the Seminole Nation and, significantly, beyond.<sup>62</sup> Traders like free black Felipe Embara, who moved cattle between the Seminole nation and East Florida, also carried news and maintained connections between the two communities.<sup>63</sup> One archaeological study of

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<sup>60</sup> Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 4.

<sup>61</sup> “Negroes, &c., Captured from Indians in Florida” H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 66-69, 74-80, 83-89, 95-96, 122-23.

<sup>62</sup> Discussion based on lists of “Negroes, &c., Captured from Indians in Florida” H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 66-69, 74-80, 83-89, 95-96, 122-23. Out of the 390 documented Africans among the Seminoles for this time period, only 2 married Seminoles. Toney Barnett, a free man, married an unnamed Seminole woman and Pamilla, a slave belonging to Colonel Humphreys, ran away to join an Indian husband. Earlier, Chief Bowlegs took an African American woman named Polly as a wife, and they had several children together. Bowlegs freed Polly and their children, but not Polly’s children by other partners. John Casey to Isaac Clark, July 11, 1838, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., Vol. 5, 119-21.

<sup>63</sup> Enrique White to Damaso Yglesias, August 24, 1808, EFP, Section 32, reel 59, PKY.

Pelahlikaha revealed that the black town lacked the large amount of Native pottery usually found in Seminole towns, suggesting that the tributaries also maintained a distinct material culture.<sup>64</sup>

Although their society was not egalitarian, the Seminoles and their African American tributaries maintained a mutually beneficial relationship. Chiefs found that the agricultural goods paid by their African-American tributaries provided them with a comfortable lifestyle. Moreover, the linguistic and diplomatic skills of the tributaries made them ideal cultural brokers. As residents among the Seminoles, African Americans enjoyed rights to own property, bear arms, and live in their own towns. Because many of these African Seminoles had either personal or acquired knowledge about Anglo-America, they were aware of its harsh slave codes, grueling physical labor, and dehumanization of enslaved Africans. Seminole Agent Wiley Thompson explained, “The negroes in the nation dread the idea of being transferred from their present state of ease and comparative liberty to bondage and hard labor under overseers, on sugar and cotton plantations.”<sup>65</sup> As the United States threatened to consume their homeland and their autonomy, both Seminoles and African American tributaries would fight to defend their way of life.

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<sup>64</sup> Herron, “The Black Seminole Settlement Pattern,” 47, 52-72.

<sup>65</sup> Wiley Thompson to Lewis Cass, April 27, 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 533-34.

## CHAPTER 9

### Allies in War: The Fight for the Seminole Homeland

Unlike in the four other major Southern Indian nations—the Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Choctaws—a system of racial slavery did not develop among the Seminoles. By the nineteenth century, their distinctive tributary system and the freedom it afforded African Americans increasingly isolated the Seminoles from other Southerners, both white and Native. The Seminoles' rejection of racial slavery welled from two sources: their cultural conservatism and the almost constant warfare of the early to mid-nineteenth century that prevented successful commercial planting and ranching in Seminole country.

Most of those who emigrated to Seminole country were dissident Creeks. When Cowkeeper left the Oconee River to raise cattle on the Alachua Prairie, he was probably motivated more by economic possibilities than political or cultural concerns, but sheer distance from other Creek kin, over time, made the Seminoles a people apart. Following Cowkeeper's initial emigration, three groups followed. In the 1780s and 1790s, as citizens of the newly created state of Georgia clamored for Creek land, discontent Creeks sought refuge from their American antagonists in the decidedly more placid land of the Seminoles. The second wave was composed of Redsticks, who, after defeat, wished to settle beyond the reach of rival Creek leaders who had made the peace with the United States. Finally, the third wave arrived in the 1830s as the Creeks faced forced removal from their homeland. Each of



latter three emigrant groups had deep grievances with the United States, and they brought to Seminole country a distrust of all things American.<sup>1</sup> These successive waves of new Seminoles renewed their countrymen's commitment to remaining a people apart.

The second source for Seminole exceptionalism derived from their militant stand against American expansion. In the early to mid-nineteenth century, the Seminoles repeatedly took up arms to defend their land, in four named conflicts—the Patriot War, the First Seminole War, the Second Seminole War, and the Third Seminole War—and in countless other skirmishes against squatters and slavecatchers.<sup>2</sup> By the opening shots of the Second Seminole War in 1835, the young people could not recall a time of peace. While the Seminoles proved formidable foes, they did not escape these many wars unscathed: enemies repeatedly put Seminole fields to the torch, forced families to flee their villages, and stole stores of food and livestock. Although the Seminoles continued to relocate and rebuild, they found great difficulty in sustaining economic growth, in producing and carrying goods to market. Although many among the other four Southern Nations had found commercial slavery a viable economic path, constant warfare prevented a similar development among the Seminoles.

### *A Generation of War*

In his early twentieth-century history of American nationalism, K.C. Babcock proclaimed, “The persistent desire of the United States to possess the Floridas . . . amounted

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars have estimated that by the early 1820s, two-thirds of Seminoles were Upper Creek refugees. Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 36; Riordan, “Seminole Genesis,” 115.

<sup>2</sup> Because the Third Seminole War did not involve captive-taking, it is beyond the scope of this work. For more information, see James W. Covington, *The Billy Bowlegs War, 1855-1858: The Final Stand of the Seminoles against the Whites* (Clulota, FL: Mickler House, 1982).

almost to a disease, corrupting the moral sense of each succeeding administration.”<sup>3</sup> Since the early years of the American republic, advocates of expansion spoke of possessing the entire continent.<sup>4</sup> As Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton have argued, the history of the United States may be viewed as that of an empire which has aggressively sought to extend its dominion, often through war.<sup>5</sup> The most active phase of American expansion took place in the nineteenth century at great cost to the land’s Native peoples.

In 1812, Americans of the South directed their grievances mostly at Spanish Floridians, Indians, and the African Americans who lived among those two groups.<sup>6</sup> Many reserved a particular loathing for the free black militia troops in East Florida, and propagandists fomented fear of a racial revolution. One James Black swore that the East Florida “Negroes . . . would slap any white man’s jaws who would dare to say anything not pleasing to them.” Another added, “the Negroes Publicly say they will rule the Countrey and also that the Negroes are ordered to range in scouts Between St. Marys river & the St. Johns.”<sup>7</sup> Many Southerners, especially those in neighboring Georgia, wished to expel the Spanish from St. Augustine and claim East Florida for themselves. Thus began the Patriot

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<sup>3</sup> Kendrick Charles Babcock, *Rise of American Nationality* (New York: Harper, 1906), 22. Cited in Kenneth Porter, “Negroes and the East Florida Annexation Plot, 1811-1813,” *The Journal of Negro History* 30, no. 1 (1945), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 87.

<sup>5</sup> Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America* (New York: Viking, 2005), xv.

<sup>6</sup> James Cusick provides the most comprehensive account of the Patriot War in *The Other War of 1812*. Cusick argues, “A central tenet of this book is that expansionist ambitions, fear of Indians and blacks, and resentment of Spanish political and commercial policies in East Florida played a much greater role in inciting trouble at the Georgia border in 1812 than did grievances against Great Britain,” p. 11. See also Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-21* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama Press, 1997), 83.

<sup>7</sup> Affidavit of James Black, June 11, 1813, “Georgia Land Sales,” 222, GA; Affidavit of Jacob Summelin, June 16, 1813, Buckner Harris Papers, File II, Record Group 4-2-46, GA.

War, an attempt by Georgians and some Florida planters to annex the province to the United States. On March 12, 1812, the Patriots invaded Florida, quickly capturing Fernandina and then heading south toward St. Augustine. They camped two miles outside of the city at Fort Mose, formerly garrisoned by free black troops. From Mose, they looted plantations, using a combination of persuasion and threats to lure planters—many of them of English descent—to their cause.<sup>8</sup> The Patriots laid siege to St. Augustine, prompting the governor to petition the Seminoles for help.

In the Patriot War, African Americans played highly visible roles from the beginning. In July of 1812, Georgia governor George Mathews and other Patriots kidnapped Tony Proctor, a locally famous linguist and slave of Panton, Leslie, and Company.<sup>9</sup> The rebels brought Proctor to a meeting with Chief Payne, his nephew Bowlegs, and the Alachua Seminoles, whom the patriots wished to remain neutral during the war. The gist of Mathews' talk was "mind your business and I will be your friend." While pretending to translate, however, Proctor informed the Seminoles that

these fine talks are to amuse and deceive you. They are going to take your country beyond St. Johns [River]. The old people will be put to sweep the yards of the white people, the young ones to work for them and the young females to spin and weave for them.<sup>10</sup>

An unnamed African American man (perhaps Proctor again) added that when he went among the patriots at St. Augustine, one "young officer" said that they would soon clear the Indians off of the land. The group's commander added that he looked forward to feasting on

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<sup>8</sup> Several planters later stated that the rebels forced them to join. See Petition of Zephaniah Kingsley, n.d., Philip May Collection of Zephaniah Kingsley, Folder 4, Miscellaneous Ms. Collection, PKY.

<sup>9</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 215-16.

<sup>10</sup> Tuskegee Tustunneggee to Benjamin Hawkins, September 20, 1812, LC, Group 174, Box 11, PKY.

Seminole beef soon.<sup>11</sup> The Seminoles believed what the African American men said and vowed to fight the Patriots.

Following Tony Proctor's revelation, Seminole warriors under the command of Payne's nephew Bowlegs quickly prepared for combat. They first attacked Patriot-owned plantations along the St. Johns River, which had the intended effect of cutting off their provisions as well as drawing rebels away from St. Augustine and back to defend their property.<sup>12</sup> During July and August, Bowlegs and his warriors burned houses, took cattle, and captured African American slaves. Near Picolata, they captured some eighty African Americans. Moving north, they took thirty-two more from Francis Fatio's New Switzerland plantation and forty-one from Zephaniah Kingsley's Laurel Grove.<sup>13</sup> Because free black families feared capture, many of them removed from their outlying plantations and homesteads into the relative safety of St. Augustine.<sup>14</sup> More African Americans were either captured by Seminole warriors or voluntarily joined them as families throughout East Florida abandoned their plantations.<sup>15</sup> Planter Francis Fatio protested that his property was under constant attack "first from Indians, next from negroes—sometime from both."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Alexander Cornelis to Benjamin Hawkins, September 19, 1812, LC, Group 174, Box 11, PKY.

<sup>12</sup> Tuskegee Tustunneggee to Benjamin Hawkins, September 20, 1812, LC, Group 174, Box 11, PKY; Petition of Zephaniah Kingsley, n.d., Phillip May Collection of Zephaniah Kingsley, Folder 4, Miscellaneous Ms. Collection, PKY.

<sup>13</sup> Cusick discusses the capture of African Americans in *The Other War of 1812*, 218-19. He states that thirteen slaves were taken from Fatio, but Fatio claimed the number was thirty-two. See F.S. Fatio to Peter Early, December 11, 1813, "Creek Indian Letters," Part III, 843, GA; Abrahma Befsent to David Mitchell, August 15, 1812, "Creek Indian Letters," Part III, 757, GA; Thomas Smith to Thomas Pickney, July 30, 1812, Davis Collection, Box 14, Letters of Thomas Adam Smith, PKY.

<sup>14</sup> Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 96-102.

<sup>15</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 205.

<sup>16</sup> F.S. Fatio to Peter Early, December 11, 1813, "Creek Indian Letters," Part III, 843, GA.

In September of 1812, a combined force of Seminoles and African Americans under the command of free black militia lieutenant Juan Bautista Witten ambushed the Patriots and effectively lifted the siege of St. Augustine.<sup>17</sup> African Seminoles played an important role in this ambush and the earlier raids against Patriot plantations. Troops commanded by Bowlegs included about 200 Indian warriors and 40 African American warriors.<sup>18</sup> Governor Sebastian Kindelan issued several orders during September and October of 1812 to provide African-American warriors serving under Bowlegs with munitions, provisions, and supplies.<sup>19</sup>

Retaliating against the Seminoles and African Americans in February 1813, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Smith commanded a rebel force against the Alachua towns in February 1813. The Patriots wanted to destroy Seminole towns but also to capture African Americans; “plunder,” explained one contemporary critic of the war, “being the only object of those revolutionaries.”<sup>20</sup> Part of the reason that Americans were so eager to take Florida was the possibility to acquire, at little or no cost, the African Americans who lived among the Seminoles.<sup>21</sup> Smith claimed that “several hundred fugitive slaves from the Carolinas and Georgia at present [are] in their towns and unless they are checked soon they will be so strengthened by desertions from Georgia and Florida that it will be found troublesome to reduce them.”<sup>22</sup> Another added that Mikasuki was “an assailom for negroes.”<sup>23</sup> Throughout

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<sup>17</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 231-35.

<sup>18</sup> Tuskgee Tustunneggee to Benjamin Hawkins, September 20, 1812, LC, Group 172, Box 11, PKY.

<sup>19</sup> Kindelan to Justo Lopez, September 9, 1812, EFP, Section 15, reel 27, PKY; Kindelan to Ignacio Salens, October 2, 1812, EFP, Section 15, reel 72, PKY.

<sup>20</sup> Edmund Andrews to his uncle, September 19, 1813, Andrews Family Papers, Folder Z, 876F, MDAH.

<sup>21</sup> Joshua Giddings pointed this out in *The Exiles of Florida*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Smith to Thomas Pickney, July 30, 1812, Davis Collection, Box 14, Letters of Thomas Adam Smith, PKY.

the war, kidnapping of free and enslaved people of African descent had been rampant; even those who maintained no pretension of being Patriots used the war's upheaval as an occasion to launch slave-stealing ventures.<sup>24</sup> Hopeful slavecatchers, however, met with little success in the Alachua towns, where most inhabitants had been forewarned and fled. The Patriots only managed to kill about twenty residents, capture nine, and mortally wound the elderly Chief Payne; they then put the Alachua towns to the torch.<sup>25</sup>

One East Florida resident recalled bitterly how the Patriot War transformed his province, "The country was in a very flourishing state when the revolution commenced. . . . It never was so prosperous before or since. It was left by the patriots a perfect desert."<sup>26</sup> Certainly, the Seminoles bore more than their fair share of the devastation. Col. Smith boasted:

We burnt three hundred and eighty-six houses; consumed and destroyed from fifteen hundred to two thousand bushels of corn; three hundred horses & and about four hundred cattle were collected, many of which were lost in attempting to drive them in. Two thousand deer skins were found in Bolegg's magazine; part were used by the troops, the others destroyed.<sup>27</sup>

Although President Madison recalled American troops from East Florida in March 1813, some rebels lingered in the province. Meanwhile the Alachua Seminoles buried their beloved

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<sup>23</sup> Buckner Harris to David B. Mitchell, November 8, 1810, Buckner Harris Papers, File II, Record Group 4-2-46, GA.

<sup>24</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 281-82; Edward Nicolls to Benjamin Hawkins, April 28, 1815, Lockey Collection (being processed), from PRO:FO 5/139.

<sup>25</sup> Smith to Fournoy, February 24, 1813, Davis Collection, Box 14, Letters of Thomas Adam Smith, PKY; Smith to Abrahma Massias, February 24, 1813, *ibid.*.

<sup>26</sup> Testimony of Zephaniah Kingsley, November 1846, Phillip May Collection of Zephaniah Kingsley, Folder 7, PKY.

<sup>27</sup> Smith to Fournoy, February 24, 1813, Davis Collection, Box 14, Letters of Thomas Adam Smith, PKY.

leader Payne and moved from their charred villages west to the Suwannee River.<sup>28</sup>

Relocating farther away from American aggressors was a pattern repeated several times over the next few decades.

As their Seminole cousins defended themselves against invading Americans, the Creeks fought a civil war. Tecumseh and the prophet Seekaboo, both sons of Creek mothers, visited the Upper Creeks during the fall of 1811, spreading their message of pan-Indianism and resistance against American culture and expansion. While the chiefs rejected the message, many Upper Creeks listened to the visitors and, in the words of one historian, “resolved to cast out American influence in order to reinvigorate their culture and maintain their autonomy.”<sup>29</sup> According to Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins, “The declaration of the Prophets is, to destroy every thing received from the Americans; all the chiefs and their adherents who are friendly to the customs and ways of the white people; to put to death every man who will not join them; and, by those means, to unite the nation in aid of the British, and Indians of the lakes, against their white neighbors.”<sup>30</sup> Rebels who took up the fight were called “Redsticks” after the traditional war clubs they used in combat. For the Redsticks, “white” was a derogatory epithet hurled at enemies, including the Choctaws who would not join their fight.<sup>31</sup> The militants did not wage a race war; rather, they targeted elements of

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<sup>28</sup> Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 24; Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 257.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Davis, “‘Remember Fort Mims’: Reinterpreting the Origins of the Creek War,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (2002), 627.

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin Hawkins to John Armstrong, July 28, 1813, *ASP:IA*, Vol. 1, 850.

<sup>31</sup> Redsticks warned Choctaws living at Turkey Town, who were friendly to the Americans, that the Redsticks considered them “whites and enemies.” Emphasis in original. Harry Toulmin to David Holmes, August 27, 1813, Claiborne Collection, Book F, reel 36013, MDAH. According to Halbert and Ball, Turkey Town was in the vicinity of modern Coffeetown, Alabama; the Choctaws called it *Fakit Chipunta* or “Little Turkeys.” Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, 112-13. Another group of Redsticks proclaimed, “we mean to kill Cherokees, as well as whites.” Benjamin Hawkins to John Floyd, October 12, 1813, “Creek Indian Letters,” Part III, 833, GA.

American culture that they considered especially polluting, focusing specifically on Creeks who seemed too friendly to the United States.<sup>32</sup>

Trekking down to Pensacola in July 1813, Redstick leaders pressured their old friends the Spanish to give them ammunition. On their way back home, a militia force composed of Tensaw Creeks and white residents of the Mississippi Territory ambushed them at Burnt Corn Creek, site of the war's first battle. Initially, the militia succeeded in surprising and dispersing the Redsticks, but the warriors regrouped and sent their attackers fleeing.<sup>33</sup>

A turning point in the war came just over a month later, on August 30, 1813, when Redsticks attacked Fort Mims, a hastily constructed redoubt which housed most of settlers and slaves living near the confluence of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers. Historian Karl Davis interpreted the Redsticks' attack on Mims as a strike against American intruders and, more importantly, errant Tensaw Creeks whose cultural values and economy had wandered too far from the national fold.<sup>34</sup> Their resounding success was in part due to the incompetence of the fort's commander, Major Daniel Beasley. Despite rumors of a forthcoming attack, Beasley and his soldiers enjoyed a drunken frolic on August 29, when a shipment of whiskey arrived at the fort. When some slaves returned from tending cattle outside of the fort, they told Beasley "that they saw a great number of Indians painted, running and hallowing, on towards Mr. Pierce's mill." On the day that would prove to be his last, Beasley sent a letter detailing these "False reports" to General Ferdinand L. Claiborne.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For more on the Redstick War, see Martin, *Sacred Revolt*; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 167-90; Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, *Creek War*, 125-29.

<sup>34</sup> Davis, "Remember Fort Mims," 611-36.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Beasley to Ferdinand L. Claiborne, August 30, 1813, Claiborne Collection, Book F, reel 36013, MDAH. See also Woodward, *Reminiscences of the Creek*, 98.



Soon thereafter, the beat of drums called soldiers to supper, and when the gates opened to admit those outside, Redsticks stormed in, killing around 250 Creeks, white settlers, and black slaves.<sup>36</sup>

At Fort Mims and thereafter, Redsticks took African American captives. Affidavits filed by residents living along the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers list a total of 55 slaves taken or “destroyed” during the war.<sup>37</sup> A month after Mims, General Ferdinand Claiborne estimated that the Redsticks had taken 150 slaves thus far.<sup>38</sup> As white families abandoned their plantations, other slaves undoubtedly fled. As others have pointed out, African Americans fought on both sides of the Redstick War.<sup>39</sup> However, the rebels encouraged African American men to fight on their behalf. According to one Creek contemporary, the black warriors expected that their “freedom would come about when the Negroes and the Indians would conquer and destroy the white people, according to the say of the prophets.”<sup>40</sup> African Americans were credited with shooting fire-tipped arrows and igniting the Mims smokehouse, a blaze that eventually destroyed much of the fort. Among the thirty-five rebels killed at the Battle of Holy Ground, twelve were African-American men. Moreover, African Americans voluntarily joined the Redsticks, providing them with valuable intelligence about

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<sup>36</sup> Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, 148-53; Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 62.

<sup>37</sup> Richard S. Lackey, ed. and comp., *Frontier Claims in the Lower South: Records of Claims Filed by Citizens of the Alabama and Tombigbee River Settlements in the Mississippi Territory for Depredations by the Creek Indians during the War of 1812* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977), xiv, *passim*.

<sup>38</sup> Claiborne to David Holmes, September 4, 1813, Claiborne Collection, Book F, reel 36013, MDAH. Claudio Saunt calculated that the Redsticks took 243 African Americans at and near Mims. Saunt, *New Order*, 269.

<sup>39</sup> Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 61; Wright, *Creeks & Seminoles*, 173-74.

<sup>40</sup> Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 120.

the movement of troops and supplies.<sup>41</sup> Just as they had during the Patriot War, African Americans played important roles in challenging American hegemony in the region.

Because Americans died at Mims, the federal government stepped in to protect its citizens and simultaneously expand the nation. As David Holmes, governor of Mississippi Territory (which then included the modern state of Alabama), declared

altho' we have to regret the loss of many valuable citizens, yet ultimately the Creek war will render us secure against future aggressions from that savage nation, the only tribe of Southern Indians who have shewn towards us a hostile disposition . . . which must ultimately end in their own destruction.<sup>42</sup>

Enflamed by the expansionist spirit that so motivated Americans during the War of 1812, white Southerners were thrilled to find a seemingly legitimate cause for armed action and economic aggrandizement. Thereafter, federal troops stepped into the war on behalf of the “friendly Creeks,” and they aggressively pursued the Redsticks. Colonel Gilbert C. Russell stated his desire for U.S. troops to act “like the Goths and Vandals ‘lay their country under waste and make it a wilderness.’”<sup>43</sup> The Redsticks’ power was finally broken at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, so-called because the Tallapoosa River bordered the site on three sides. General Andrew Jackson’s army of white Americans, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Creeks succeeded in busting through the Redsticks’ breastwork covering the fourth side, penning the rebels in and slaughtering about 800 of them. Thereafter, Jackson imposed an iniquitous

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 98-99, 101, 104-5, 108, 112, 116-19; Woodward, *Reminiscences of the Creek*, 99.

<sup>42</sup> David Holmes to Lt. Col. Nixon, November 25, 1813, in typescript by Mrs. [Eron] Dunbar Rowland, “Correspondence and Papers Concerning the Mississippi Territory in the War of 1812: 1812-1817,” Vol. 1, 360, MDAH.

<sup>43</sup> Gilbert Russell to Ferdinand Claiborne, January 12, 1814, *ibid.*, 390.

treaty that punished even the friendly Creeks, forcing the nation to give up some 20 million acres and leaving their land, in the words of one historian, “a scarred and smoking ruin.”<sup>44</sup>

Contrary to the hopes of territorial governor David Holmes and other white Southerners, militant resistance against American expansion did not die at Horseshoe Bend. After the war, many Redsticks—including a teenaged Osceola—sought refuge in Florida.<sup>45</sup> Some 2,000 regrouped near the mouth of Apalachicola River. During the spring of 1814, the British had launched a southern strategy of attracting enslaved African Americans and dissident Indians to fight the Americans. Together, the British and Seminoles constructed a fort at Prospect Bluff, then under the command of Jamaican trader and honorary British captain George Woodbine.<sup>46</sup> Alexander Cochrane, recently named Commander of the North American Squadron, issued a proclamation that circulated throughout the South’s enslaved population beckoning those who “may be disposed to emigrate from the United States” to the British standard: “they will have their choice of either entering into His Majesty’s Sea or Land forces or of being sent as **FREE** settlers to the British possessions in North America or the West Indies where they will meet with all due encouragement.”<sup>47</sup> Former Redstick leaders Josiah Francis and Peter McQueen pledged to support the project, saying, “We will get all the Black Men we can to join your Warriors . . . we will do our best to unite all our

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<sup>44</sup> Quotation from Green, *Politics of Indian Removal*, 42. See also Halbert and Ball, *The Creek War*, 275-80; Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 163-66.

<sup>45</sup> Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 48.

<sup>46</sup> Nathaniel Millett, “Britain’s Occupation of Pensacola and America’s Response: An Episode of the War of 1812 in the Southeastern Borderlands,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2005), 232-33.

<sup>47</sup> Proclamation of Alexander Cochrane, April 2, 1814, Papers of Vicente Sebastian Pintado, reel 3, PKY.



where they made houses and farms along the banks of the Apalachicola and traded with Seminoles at Mikasuki and on the Suwannee. Americans now faced a large, armed maroon population at their doorstep, and General Andrew Jackson, for one, could not brook such a threat. Following ineffective ground attacks, American gunboats ascended the Apalachicola on July 27, 1816 with orders to destroy the “Negro Fort.” When a lucky shot, purposely heated red-hot, hit the fort’s powder magazine, an explosion destroyed the fort.<sup>53</sup>

Many and probably most of the fort’s 300 inhabitants were not inside at the time of the explosion, and those who escaped the ensuing slaveraiding sought refuge with Chief Bowlegs on the Suwannee River.<sup>54</sup> Thus, between the Redstick defeat at Horseshoe Bend in March 1814 and the destruction of the Prospect Bluff fort in July 1816, the Seminoles had absorbed some two thousand Creeks and several hundred African Americans. Under pressure from the United States, Spanish officials pressed Bowlegs to give up the black refugees, but the chief shifted blame to the British: “I know that you think hard of your black people but I did not fetch them here they came here by the persuasion of the British so if you can makeout with the English you are welcome to them.”<sup>55</sup> After Prospect Bluff, freedom-seeking slaves of the Lower South had shifted their focus back to the Seminoles. Just one month later, in

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<sup>53</sup> Saunt provides an excellent account of Prospect Bluff in *New Order*, 273-88. Some African Americans from Prospect Bluff clearly joined the Seminoles prior to the fort’s destruction. José de Soto to Carlos Reggio, February 20, 1816, Cruzat Papers, Box 2, PKY.

<sup>54</sup> Claudio Saunt has estimated that only about forty people actually died in the explosion. Saunt, *New Order*, 288, 288 n. 90. Although it is impossible to know the actual number, subsequent reports do make it clear that many of the maroons were outside of the fort at the time of the blast, and that they later successfully make the trek to the Suwannee. See note 54.

<sup>55</sup> Bowlegs to Coppinger, September 10, 1816, EFP, Section 29, reel 43, PKY. See also Coppinger to Bowlegs, September 26, 1816, LC, Box 12, Group 174, PKY. Several years later, William Simmons noted “many of these Negroes were refugee slaves, and some had been soldiers under Woodbine, and fought against the Americans.” Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 44.

The previous year Bowlegs had returned some 27 East Florida slaves headed for Prospect Bluff. See Juan Ruiz de Apodaca to Miguel de Lardizabal y Uribe, August 19, 1815, LC, Group 174, Box 12, PKY. An additional 63 runaway East Florida slaves remained unaccounted for.

April 1816, a Georgia slaveholder living along the St. Mary's River reported a recent rash of escapees heading south, presumably to the Seminole country.<sup>56</sup>

Periodic violence punctuated the tension between the Seminole Nation and the United States. The Mikasukis, who lived furthest north, were vexed by repeated demands for fugitive slaves and by American theft of their cattle.<sup>57</sup> Worse, American slavehunters continued to target Floridians of African descent. Under the pretense of recapturing runaway slaves, Americans invaded Seminole country.<sup>58</sup> They also targeted free people of color in East and West Florida. In 1815, for example, a gang of Georgians traveled south to Picolata and broke into the house of Edward Wanton, a white trader. They took his African-American wife and their five sons, selling them all as slaves in Georgia.<sup>59</sup>

Georgians even murdered three Mikasukis, and in retaliation some warriors attacked the Barber plantation along the Georgia/Florida border in February of 1817. Before fleeing the plantation, an enslaved man reported that the Seminoles killed the overseer's wife and two of her children then sacked the overseer's house and slave cabins.<sup>60</sup> Andrew Jackson was doubtlessly referring to this episode when he claimed that the Seminoles "visited our Frontier settlements with all the horrors of savage massacre—helpless women have been butchered

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<sup>56</sup> John Floyd to David Mitchell, April 12, 1816, Telamon Cuyler Collection, bin 76, folio 11, doc. 2, HRB, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia.

<sup>57</sup> Edmund Doyle to John Innerarity, January 28, 1817, Greenslade Papers, Box 2, PKY; John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 32.

<sup>58</sup> Bowlegs to José Coppinger, May 7, 1816, LC, Group 174, Box 12, PKY; Coppinger to Bowlegs, May 31, 1816, *ibid.*; Coppinger to Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, March 16, 1816, EFP, Section 2, reel 13, doc. 802, PKY.

<sup>59</sup> Juan Ruiz de Apodaca to Miguel de Lardizal y Uribe, October 20, 1815, LC, Group 174, Box 12, PKY. For other kidnappings of free Floridians of color see José Masot to José Cienfuegos, February 3, 1818, *ibid.*; William Gibson to David Mitchell, July 31, 1816, "Creek Indian Letters," Part III, 876-78, GA.

<sup>60</sup> William Gibson to David Mitchell, February 26, 1817, "Creek Indian Letters," Part III, 885-86, GA.

and the cradle stained with the blood of innocence.”<sup>61</sup> Although Mikasuki chiefs tried to keep the peace, they also bristled at the presence of American troops at Ft. Scott, only twelve miles distant from the village of Fowltown. Neamathla, chief of Fowltown, warned General Edmund Gaines to stop allowing his soldiers to cut down Mikasuki trees. Gaines told the Mikasukis that they must remove from the area, since their land had been ceded to the United States under the Treaty of Fort Jackson, which ended the Redstick War. Kinache, chief of the main village at Lake Miccosukkee, told Gaines he had no intention of removing: “he said he had no talks for him—that he expected shortly an English Agent who would settle the affairs of the Indians and drive the Americans back.”<sup>62</sup>

The First Seminole War began when Gaines’ forces invaded and destroyed Fowltown on November 21, 1817. Just over a week later, as an open boat commanded by R.W. Scott ascended the Apalachicola, the Seminoles struck back. They killed the boat’s fifty passengers and took one soldier’s wife, Elizabeth Stewart, as a captive.<sup>63</sup> A few months later, General Andrew Jackson made his way south with an army of 3,300, including 1,800 Creeks under the command of Coweta headman William McIntosh. They arrived at Ft. Scott in March 1818. After constructing Fort Gadsden adjacent the ruins at Prospect Bluff, Jackson marched to Mikasuki, which he claimed contained a red pole festooned with the scalps of those killed on Scott’s boat. At Mikasuki, troops killed Kinache and destroyed the town, including “nearly three hundred houses . . . and the greatest abundance of corn, cattle, &c.”<sup>64</sup> A soldier

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<sup>61</sup> Jackson’s Proclamation on Taking Possession of Pensacola, May 29, 1818, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, ed. John Spencer Bassett (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1927), Vol. II, 374-75.

<sup>62</sup> Edmund Doyle to James Innerarity, August 17, 1817, Greenslade Papers, Box 2, PKY.

<sup>63</sup> Gaines to Calhoun, December 2, 1817, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 1, 687.

<sup>64</sup> Jackson to Calhoun, March 27, 1818, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 1, 700.

reported that the Creeks enthusiastically participated, taking “the greater part” of the plunder.<sup>65</sup>

William McIntosh and his Creek warriors were especially interested in a particular sort of plunder—African American captives. McIntosh, son of a Scottish trader and Wind-clan mother, was chief of Coweta and served as speaker for the Lower Creeks at the National Council. A few years earlier, McIntosh had joined forces with Americans at Prospect Bluff. McIntosh happened to meet up with them at the mouth of the Apalachicola, where he and other Creek warriors had undertaken a slavehunting expedition. In the 1796 Treaty of Colerain, Creeks had agreed to take responsibility for capturing African Americans among the Seminoles; thereafter, opportunists like McIntosh used the treaty to claim African Seminoles as slaves for themselves. Understanding that most survivors of Prospect Bluff had taken refuge with Bowlegs, McIntosh was eager to penetrate their Suwannee River settlements.<sup>66</sup>

Jackson, intent on destroying both the Spanish and Indian presence in Florida, seized San Marco de Apalache. At the fort, Jackson found the Redsticks’ chief prophet Josiah Francis, whom he hanged. Moving south toward Bowlegs’ Suwannee towns, Jackson first arrived at a village of refugee Redsticks on Econfina Creek. There, troops recovered an unharmed Elizabeth Stewart, who had been held captive by a warrior named Yellow Hair.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Edward Brett Randolph Diary, April 1, 1818, ms. 619z, SHC.

<sup>66</sup> Jackson to Calhoun, April 20, 1818, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 1, 700-1; Felipe Fatio to José Cienfuegos, November 26, 1817, LC, Group 174, Box 13, PKY; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 198-99, 210; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 17; Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 11; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 20.

<sup>67</sup> Randolph Diary, April 12, 1818, ms. 619z, SHC. Thomas Woodward asserted, “I was told by the Indians that Yellow Hair treated her with great kindness and respect.” *Reminiscences*, 54. This was probably the same Yellow Hair who claimed that one of the Durants stole an enslaved man of his. John Hambly to Innerarity, October 29, 1816, Cruzat Papers, Box 3, PKY.



On April 16, 1818, Jackson's army arrived in Bowlegs' territory, where they found a main village flanked to the north by the scattered farms of African American tributaries.<sup>68</sup> Someone had forewarned Bowlegs, however, and only a handful of warriors greeted Jackson's army. The troops managed to kill only nine African American warriors and two Indian men, and, as usual, they razed the towns. The Creek forces, in particular, were disappointed that they would have to withdraw without many African American captives. William McIntosh, however, made a mental note of the large, prosperous black settlements, and he returned when the Seminoles were less guarded.

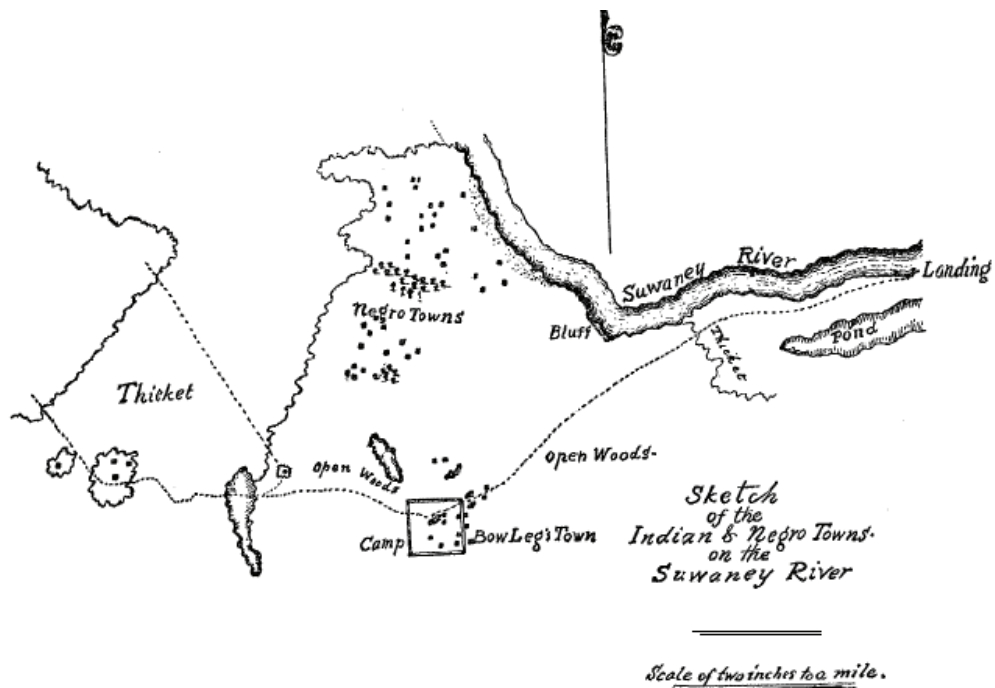


Figure 6. 1818 map of Bowlegs' Town and the settlements of his African-American tributaries by Captain Hugh Young, who served as Andrew Jackson's adjutant-general during the First Seminole War. From Alan K. Craig and Christopher S. Peebles, "Captain Young's Sketch Map, 1818," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 48 (1969), 177.

<sup>68</sup> Alan K. Craig and Christopher S. Peebles, "Captain Young's Sketch Map, 1818," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 48 (1969), 176-79.

Jackson withdrew his troops, marching toward Pensacola. To complete his conquest of Florida, the general conducted a sham trial of captives Alexander Arbuthnot, a Bahamian who traded with the Seminoles, and Robert Ambrister, a British ex-marine friendly to the tribe. Accusing both men of inciting the Seminoles to commit depredations, Jackson had them executed.<sup>69</sup>

Although Spanish possessions were later returned, Jackson's brief war demonstrated the weakness of the empire's grip on the peninsula. On February 22, 1819, Spain transferred control of the province to the United States, and Florida officially changed hands two years later.<sup>70</sup> In truth, Florida belonged to the Seminoles. For decades, they had held the balance of power, and, as the Patriot War demonstrated, the Spaniards depended on them to defend the colony. During the First Seminole War, there were few confrontations; rather than face Jackson's huge army, the Seminoles opted to flee and endure the loss of their largest settlements. Beyond the First Seminole War's substantial material costs, the conflict probably served to reinforce anti-American sentiments already prevalent among the nation's African American and refugee Redstick populations. The razing of Fowltown, Mikasuki, and Bowleg's Town, like the earlier destruction of Prospect Bluff and the massacre at Horseshoe Bend, were evidence of the Americans' thirst for the South's land and the blood they were willing to spill in order to possess the whole of it.

In the years after the First Seminole War, Seminoles and African Americans living along the Suwannee suffered repeated incursions by William McIntosh and his Coweta kin. Horatio Dexter, who traversed Seminole country in 1823, saw evidence of the Creeks'

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<sup>69</sup> John K. Mahon, "The First Seminole War, November 21, 1817-May 24, 1818," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (1998), 62-67; Missall and Missall, *Seminole Wars*, 41-43.

<sup>70</sup> Mahon, "The First Seminole War," 66-67.

depredations everywhere. The Suwannee River, reported Dexter, “was the seat of the most flourishing settlement of the Seminoles Nation not more than two years ago, but since has broken up by the incursion of the Cowetas who carried off or dispersed a band of 60 negroes slaves and a large stock of cattle and horses.”<sup>71</sup> William H. Simmons, who traveled through one year earlier, gave a similar report: “These people were in the greatest poverty, and had nothing to offer me; having, not long before, fled from a settlement further west, and left their crop ungathered, from an apprehension of being seized on by the Cowetas, who had recently carried off a body of Negroes residing near the Suwaney.”<sup>72</sup> Due to McIntosh’s raids, the Seminoles, for the second time in a generation, picked up what was left of their property and relocated deeper into the peninsula. Others moved even farther away; hitching rides on British ships, some African Americans moved to the Bahamas, where they founded Nicolls’ Town.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, in Florida, the new nucleus of the Seminole Nation became the Withlacoochee River, where Micanopy, nephew of Payne and half-brother of Bowlegs, resided along with his 160 black tributaries.<sup>74</sup>

In September 1823, the Seminoles signed the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, which recognized the United States’ claim to Florida but reserved four million acres in the central portion of the peninsula for the Seminole Nation. An uneasy peace reigned for several years, but by 1830, cries for possession of peninsular Florida reached a fevered pitch.

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<sup>71</sup> Report of Dexter, Keenan Collection, PKY.

<sup>72</sup> Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 41.

<sup>73</sup> Kenneth Wiggins Porter, “Notes on Seminole Negroes in the Bahamas,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1945), 56-60; John M. Goggin, “An Anthropological Reconnaissance of Andros Island, Bahamas,” *American Antiquity* 5, no. 1 (1939), 21-26. After the Second Seminole War, some Florida slaves continued to escape to the Bahamas. Mayor and Council of St. Augustine to the Secretary of the Treasury, August 14, 1843, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 26, 722-24.

<sup>74</sup> Report of Dexter, Keenan Collection, PKY.

## *Removal*

The Indian Removal Act, passed in 1830 by a slim margin in Congress, reflected new ideas about race in America. Formerly, American intellectuals had believed that humans were a unified species and that differences in environment accounted for both physical and cultural variance among people. As early as 1811, however, a North Carolina doctor named Charles Caldwell rejected that theory, proposing instead a natural hierarchy of the races. The developing pseudoscience of phrenology, which supposedly used cranial morphology to measure intelligence, bolstered Caldwell's theory of scientific racism. Philadelphia physician Samuel Morton's influential 1839 study *Crania Americana* used phrenology to formulate an elaborated racial hierarchy—whites at the top, Indians in the middle, and Africans at the bottom. Echoing Southern Indians' earlier theory of polygenesis, Americans also concluded that racial differences were immutable, propelling each group toward its separate destiny: whites would rule the continent, people of African descent would be subservient, Indians would disappear. Or so white Americans believed. In any case, gone were the days when policymakers sought to integrate "civilized" Indians into the republic; by the Jackson era, American expansion showed little regard for non-whites who stood in the way.<sup>75</sup>

Reflecting a sentiment widespread among Southern slaveholders during the removal era, Florida citizens claimed that they could not live alongside autonomous Indian nations or African settlements that upset the social, economic, and political order prescribed by their plantation system. In the minds of Southern planters, slaves and Indians might naturally grow to identify with one another and form a non-white alliance. Citizens of Alachua County

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<sup>75</sup> For more on shifting racial attitudes, see Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, especially 116-28. Saunt discusses scientific racism in *Black, White, and Indian*, 55-61.

declared, “While this lawless and indomitable people continue where they now are, the owners of slaves in our Territory, and even in the States contiguous, cannot for a moment, in anything like security, enjoy the possession of this description of property [slaves]. Does a negro become tired of the service of his owner, he has only to flee to the Indian country, where he will find ample safety against pursuit.”<sup>76</sup>

Florida citizens accused the Seminoles of ranging outside of territory designated to them in the Treaty of Moultrie Creek and stealing their cattle and slaves.<sup>77</sup> On May 9, 1832, Seminole chiefs signed the Treaty of Payne’s Landing, which provided for their removal to Indian Territory if they could find suitable territory within the Creek Nation. Accordingly, American officials accompanied seven Seminole chiefs to Indian Territory. In 1833, Americans forced the chiefs to sign the Treaty of Fort Gibson, which bound the Seminoles to remove. Seminole chiefs Holata Emathla, Coa Hadjo, and Jumper claimed that they had never signed the documents; the others said army officers forced them to do so with threats of violence and imprisonment.<sup>78</sup> While the Treaty of Fort Gibson allowed the Seminoles to remain in Florida until April 12, 1837, Seminole agent Wiley Thompson pushed them to remove as quickly as possible. Federal and territorial politicians pressured Thompson, but he also acted out of fear that white Floridians would endeavor to cheat the Seminoles out of their property before expelling them from the territory.

Although they portrayed themselves as victims of Seminole lawlessness, many white Southerners sought to enrich themselves and hasten Indian removal by stripping Seminoles

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<sup>76</sup> Petition of citizens of Alachua County, January 1834, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 465. In this petition, Alachua County residents claimed that one hundred slaves had run away to Seminole country since the signing of Treaty of Moultrie Creek two years earlier.

<sup>77</sup> Proceedings of Meeting of Citizens of Alachua County, January 23, 1832, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 24, 643-44; Governor Westcott to Abraham Bellamy, February 2, 1832, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 24, 668-70.

<sup>78</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 81-83.

of their Africans and livestock.<sup>79</sup> During William Simmons' travels, he found that the Seminoles greatly feared American occupation of Florida: "There was, a general impression among them, that the Americans would seize upon all the Negro property of the Indians; and the latter were also induced to believe . . . that the Americans would rob them and treat them with every degree of injustice and oppression."<sup>80</sup> Such Seminole fears were justified, for unsympathetic white landholders, judges, and politicians often turned a deaf ear to Seminole pleas for redress.

Ever since the Patriot War, Southern slaveholders had sought not only Seminole land, but also African Seminoles to work that land. Beginning in 1833, a gang of thieves from bordering states began to prey upon African Americans living in the Apalachicola River settlements, located less than one hundred miles from the borders of Georgia and Alabama. Florida governor James Westcott estimated that the Apalachicola villages contained roughly one thousand inhabitants led by "[f]ive or six chiefs . . . possess'd of considerable property."<sup>81</sup> The gang hired a slavehunter from Mobile who owned trained bloodhounds to assist them, and they attempted to bribe steamboat captains to transport the stolen African Americans. When the Apalachicolans resisted, thieves used physical abuse and threats. The gang told Chief Econchattamico, who suffered the loss of twenty-one African Americans, "if he did not fly for safety they should exterminate him and his town."<sup>82</sup> Banding together, Chiefs

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<sup>79</sup> Floridians clamored to extend territorial law over the Seminoles. Wiley Thompson to Lewis Cass, December 12, 1834, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 520-22.

<sup>80</sup> Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 41.

<sup>81</sup> Acting Governor Westcott to Abraham Bellamy, 2 February 1832, *Territorial Papers, Volume XXIV*, 668-670. Quotation on 668.

<sup>82</sup> For quotation, see Archibald Smith to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 19 February 1837, S.D. 393, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., (318), p. 12. A gang comprised of nine white men was convicted of the theft in 1836; Superior Court decision, District of West Florida, March 1836, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 469. See

John Walker, Econchattamico, Blunt, Davy, and Vacca Pechassie armed their warriors. Additionally, they appealed to Indian agents for help. They protested that their stolen African Americans were not runaway slaves, but their own property. Chief John Hicks protested, “I agreed to send away all the black people who had no masters, and I have done it; but still they are sending to me for negroes.”<sup>83</sup> Another Apalachicola chief implored, “But is there no *civil law* that will protect me? Are the free negroes and the negroes belonging in this town to be stolen away publicly—in the face of all law and justice?”<sup>84</sup>

American citizens attempted to use their legal system and occasional force to claim African Seminoles. The trials of the Factor family and their slaves illustrate the constant danger that phenotypically African people living along the Apalachicola faced after the U.S. gained Florida. Philatouche, or Black Factor as he was commonly called, was a half-African trader and chief of Chehaw.<sup>85</sup> Upon his deathbed in 1816, Philatouche bequeathed to his daughter Nelly Factor a number of enslaved African Americans including Peggy and her three children, Katy and her three children, Phillis and her child, and a young man named George. Philatouche gave to his son Sam Factor a woman named Rose who became his wife.<sup>86</sup> Nelly and Sam Factor moved away from their father’s village on the Chattahoochee

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also John Walker to Wiley Thompson, 28 July 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 463; D.M. Sheffield to William P. DuVal, 23 Feb. 1833, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 456; Wiley Thompson to William P. DuVal, 20 Jan. 1834, *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, Vol. 6.

<sup>83</sup> Talk of John Hicks, January 14, 1829, Keenan Collection, Box 4, Humphrey’s Letters, PKY. Hicks added, “When an Indian has bought a black man, they come and take him away again, so that we have no money and negroes too. A white man sells us a negro, then turns around and claims him again, and our big father orders us to give him up.” Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> John Walker to Wiley Thompson, 28 July 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 463.

<sup>85</sup> For more on Philatouche, see Chapter 7.

<sup>86</sup> Testimony of James Hardage, Case of William Everett vs. Margaret Cook, Superior Court of East Florida, June 22, 1829, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, M234,

to live among the Seminoles of the Apalachicola River, and Nelly married a chief named John Blount. The Factors, being of partial African descent, were perhaps drawn to the Seminole Nation as life in an increasingly racialized Creek society became uncomfortable. Unfortunately, the Factors did not find peace along the Apalachicola. Like many other Seminole masters, Nelly found herself entangled in a series of lawsuits over her slaves. One army officer observed that so many brought suits claiming African Seminoles that the Seminoles “begin to believe that it is the determination of the United States to take them all.” In Nelly’s case, a dizzying array of claimants filed suit, including Philatouche’s nephew (her cousin) William Kinnard, who claimed the slaves by right of matrilineal inheritance. Although a council of Seminole chiefs ruled that Nelly was the rightful heir to Philatouche’s slaves, an attorney for American Margaret Cook kidnapped them anyway.<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile, Sam Factor’s wife Rose and their children, though they lived as free people in the Seminole nation, were constant targets for slave-seeking Americans. In 1834, Americans Isaac and Levin Brown, who lived in northern Florida, came to the Apalachicola towns and tried to kidnap Sam and Rose’s son Billy; fortunately, other residents of the town were able to repel the Americans. Soon thereafter, slave-seekers did manage to kidnap Rose, her daughter Sarah, and Sarah’s children Daniel and Paladore. Rose was sold within the Creek Nation, and when the chiefs recognized her they sent her back to husband Sam. Sarah, Daniel, and

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r. 287, p. 233-34; Testimony of Noah Harrod, *ibid.*, p. 234-35; DuVal to Worth, December 22, 1842, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, M234, r. 289, p. 346-47.

<sup>87</sup> Wiley Thompson to Lewis Cass, December 12, 1834, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 520-22; Testimony of James Hardage, *Everett vs. Cook*, June 22, 1829, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, M234, r. 289, p. 233-34; Oren Marsh to William DuVal, May 29, 1829, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 24, 232-34; Talk of John Hicks to Gad Humphreys, August 15, 1828, Edward Keenan Collection, Box 4, Humphrey’s Letters, PKY. Quotation from George M. Brooke to Gad Humphreys, May 6, 1828, *ibid.*



Paladore remained slaves in Stewart County, Georgia.<sup>88</sup> Encroaching whites made life so unpleasant for the Apalachicola Seminoles that they voluntarily removed several years ahead of schedule.<sup>89</sup>

Elsewhere in the Seminole Nation, Seminoles and African Americans alike found themselves besieged by impatient, wealth-seeking white Southerners. Slavetraders attempted to use alcohol and persuasion to purchase African Americans before the scheduled removal west.<sup>90</sup> Seminoles protested to such trespass and refused to sell their tributaries. Chief Jumper vented his outrage to Indian agent Gad Humphreys:

It is well known that a great deal of our property, negroes, horses, cattle, &c. is now in the hands of the whites, and yet their laws give us no satisfaction, and will not make them give this property up to us. . . . We were promised justice, and we want to see it! These negroes are ours, and we will not consent to surrender them, or say that we are willing to surrender them, or say that we are willing to have them taken.<sup>91</sup>

In an attempt to quell rising Seminole ire, Andrew Jackson proclaimed on July 6, 1835, “It is made known to me . . . that the Indians in Florida have no disposition to sell their negroes, and the very idea that any individuals are permitted to come into their country to buy has disturbed them very much, and all say they will neither sell nor leave their negroes.”

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<sup>88</sup> R.C. Gatlin to William Worth, January 10, 1843, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, M234, r. 289, p. 346; George Walker to Archibald Smith, December 22, 1842, *ibid.*, p. 346-48; William Worth to J.S. Brown, December 19, 1842, *ibid.*, p. 348; Wiley Thompson to George Walker, November 24, 1834, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, p. 463-64; Archibald Smith to C.A. Harris, May 14, 1837, S.D. 393, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., Vol. 5, p. 15. Because Sarah, Daniel, and Paladore do not appear on Seminole emigration rolls, it is likely that they were not redeemed from slavery.

<sup>89</sup> George Gibson to Lewis Cass, August 19, 1836, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 25, 327.

<sup>90</sup> For example, see Wiley Thompson to Lewis Cass, 19 July 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 460.

<sup>91</sup> Speech of Jumper, Talk of Seminole Chiefs to Humphreys, April 17, 1828, Keenan Collection, Box 4, Humphrey's Letters, PKY.

Thereafter, non-Seminoles were required to apply for passports from the Seminole agent before entering the territory.<sup>92</sup>

### *The Second Seminole War*

Amid depredations against their villages and countrymen, Seminoles and their African-American tributaries began a militant nationalist movement. In October of 1834, Seminole headmen met with agent Wiley Thompson to discuss their grievances with removal. Thompson argued that the Treaty of Ft. Gibson absolutely bound the Seminoles to remove, but many of the chiefs disagreed. Micanopy insisted that under the terms of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek they did not have to leave until 1843. Others rejected the Treaty of Fort Gibson, which they claimed Major John Phagan forced them to sign. Many rejected their proposed resettlement near the Creeks, whom the Seminoles believed would marginalize them in their own country. For good reason, African-American tributaries feared that the Creeks would capture and enslave them. Charley Emathla admitted that while he and six others signed the Treaty of Ft. Gibson, they did not have the authority to do so. Finally, some chiefs declared they had never signed removal treaties.<sup>93</sup> Despite these protests from the chiefs, Thompson insisted that they must remove. While some ultimately resigned

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<sup>92</sup> Endorsement by Andrew Jackson, 6 July 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 478.

<sup>93</sup> Wiley Thompson to William DuVal, January 1, 1834, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 453-55; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 91-93. General Thomas Jesup claimed that the Spanish “assured the chiefs that [their] government sold no part of the country to [the U.S.] except where ‘*the white men had cultivated with the plough and the hoe*’; that all not thus cultivated had been reserved for the Indians; they therefore look upon us as robbers and oppressors, and have determined . . . to die on the ground rather than leave it.” Jesup to Joel R. Poinsett, June 15, 1837, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 7, 874.

themselves to do so, many others vowed to remain. According to Jumper, disgruntled chiefs immediately began to plot militant resistance against removal.<sup>94</sup>

During the winter of 1835, militant Seminoles lashed out with a number of planned attacks. Osceola, an outspoken opponent of removal, murdered Chief Charley Emathla. Preparing to emigrate west, Emathla had just sold a herd of cattle for cash when Osceola intercepted the chief on his way home. After shooting Charley Emathla, Osceola reportedly threw his money to the wind. A month later, U.S. Indian Agent Wiley Thompson was passing a balmy Florida winter afternoon with Lieutenant Constantine Smith. As the two men smoked cigars and strolled the grounds of the agency, Osceola and his warriors riddled the officials' bodies with musket balls. The following day, 28 December, the united forces of Micanopy, Jumper, and Alligator launched a devastating surprise attack upon Major Francis Dade's two companies as the soldiers marched from Ft. Brooke north to Ft. King. African-American spies had informed Seminole chiefs of the army's movement, and black and Indian warriors waited in a pine barren to ambush them. Shock and confusion reigned among the troops as the warriors easily shot their blue-uniformed targets. While Seminole forces suffered only light casualties, only three U.S. troops escaped "Dade's Massacre."<sup>95</sup>

Simultaneously, Seminoles and African Americans marched together against Anglo sugar and cotton plantations that stretched from the St. Johns River to the eastern seaboard. Seminoles sought to destroy Anglo-American property and capture black captives, but also to demonstrate their ability to strike any settlement at will, even those within miles of territorial capital St. Augustine. On December 26 and 27, Seminole warriors attacked plantations near

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<sup>94</sup> John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York: D. Appleton, 1847), 91-92.

<sup>95</sup> Sprague, *Florida War*, 87-92; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 101-7.

Volusia. They destroyed Tomoka plantation, including the big house, cotton house, stable, sugar works, tools, clothes, and forty slave cabins. The warriors captured slaves George, July, Scipio, and Abraham, all “prime men.”<sup>96</sup> At nearby Spring Garden plantation, Seminole warriors destroyed \$130,000 worth of property and captured an additional 130 enslaved African Americans. They likewise destroyed the Depeyster and Harriot plantations, taking dozens more Africans captive. The *St. Augustine Herald* reported, “Some of Depeyster’s negroes joined them, and they carried off the rest, about sixty, except one old negro man, whom they shot, and burned in his hut.” John Caesar, an African Seminole, led in the attacks. At the Hunter plantation, John Caesar reportedly attempted to lure John Hunter out of his house by saying that he had cattle and horses to trade. A suspicious Hunter escaped, but his slaves were taken.<sup>97</sup> As John Caesar commanded the Volusia attacks, Chief Philip led his warriors to New Smyrna, where they destroyed a number of sugar plantations and reportedly took hundreds of Africans captive.<sup>98</sup> Richard Keith Call, Commanding General in Florida, reported to President Andrew Jackson, “The whole country between the Suwanee and the St. John’s rivers, for the distance of fifty miles above the Indian boundary, is abandoned; the frontier inhabitants shut up in a few miserable stockade forts, and the Indians traversing the country at will, burning and destroying wherever they appear.”<sup>99</sup>

When Seminole warriors attacked Anglo-American plantations, it is unclear whether enslaved Africans voluntarily joined them or were captured. As in other situations, some

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<sup>96</sup> Claim of J. Bulow, Jr. S.D. 36, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., (314), p. 2; Affidavit of Francis Pellicer, Jr. S.D. 36, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., (314), p. 9-10.

<sup>97</sup> Excerpt from *St. Augustine Herald*, 13 Jan. 1836, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 21-22.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*; “Life and Times of Mrs. Jane Murray Sheldon, Written at her dictation in 1889,” typescript in PKY.

<sup>99</sup> R.K. Call to Andrew Jackson, 22 Dec. 1835, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 7, 217.

African Americans likely feared Seminoles and the violence of their attacks. At times, African Americans resisted or evaded Seminole attempts to capture them.<sup>100</sup> A free black man, Jim, and an enslaved man named Carlos were out driving cattle when surprised and taken by a Seminole war party in 1836. Jim, who had formerly lived among the Seminoles, “practiced considerable duplicity with them—representing his willingness to go with them again and be their slave . . . and joined in their songs and dances.” Under cover of night, however, Jim and Carlos escaped and gave U.S. troops intelligence concerning Seminole whereabouts.<sup>101</sup>

On the other hand, enslaved Africans often took advantage of wartime upheaval to seek their freedom. According to historian Kenneth Porter, African Seminole John Caesar “recognized that success for the Seminole struggle depended on bringing together Indians, Indian Negroes, plantation slaves, and free Negroes for a united effort.”<sup>102</sup> Certainly, African Seminoles believed a free Seminole Nation most conducive to their own freedom, and they sought to rally other people of African descent to their cause. Drawing upon the web of kinship that connected African Seminoles with other black Floridians, prominent African Seminoles Abraham and John Caesar visited St. Augustine and nearby plantations to solicit aid. Some responded to their calls through escape or attempted escape. Even free African

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<sup>100</sup> Excerpt from *St. Augustine Herald*, 13 Jan. 1836, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 21-22. See also *New York American*, December 20, 1839, Mickler Historic Florida Newspaper Collection, PKY; *Erie Gazette*, November 19, 1840, Goza Historical Newspaper Collection, PKY; *The Saturday Chronicle*, March 11, 1837, Goza Historical Newspaper Collection, PKY.

<sup>101</sup> *The Pennsylvanian*, March 17, 1836, Goza Historical Newspaper Collection, PKY.

<sup>102</sup> Kenneth W. Porter, “John Caesar: Seminole Negro Partisan” *The Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 2 (1946), 207.

Americans joined the Seminole resistance by contributing ammunition and supplies at the risk of losing their freedom.<sup>103</sup>

In December 1835 and throughout 1836, the Seminole/African alliance continued to humiliate U.S. troops, who were poorly fed, frequently ill, and unprepared for warfare in Florida's swamps and hammocks. One officer of the war asserted "Florida is certainly the poorest country that ever two people quarrelled [sic] for."<sup>104</sup> As Colonel Lindsay reported, "Another cause of the failure of our operations against the Seminole Indians may be found in our total ignorance of a country which, although near to us, was as much unknown as the interior of Africa."<sup>105</sup> On the final day of 1835, several hundred black and Seminole warriors routed General Duncan Clinch's U.S. troops, who were forced to retreat with high casualties. During January 1836, the Seminole alliance continued its assault on East Florida plantations, destroying sixteen in that month alone. White families fled in terror as they left enslaved Africans behind.<sup>106</sup> From late February to early March, warriors laid siege to Ft. Izard, wherein General Edmund P. Gaines' troops suffered famine conditions. On the eighth day, African Seminole interpreter John Caesar called out to U.S. troops "that the Indians were tired of fighting, and wished to come in and shake hands." Led by Jumper, Alligator, and Osceola, the Seminoles offered peace in exchange for the Withlacoochee River as the permanent boundary. Here, the Seminoles again expressed their desire to remain in their

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<sup>103</sup> Samuel Blair, Marshal of East Florida District, to Asbury Dickens, August 25, 1836, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 25, 328-31; Kenneth Porter, "Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835-1842" *The Journal of Southern History* 30, no. 4 (1964), 427-450; Porter, "Florida Slaves and Free Negroes in the Seminole War, 1835-1842," *The Journal of Negro History* 28, no. 4 (1943), 390-421.

<sup>104</sup> Motte, *Journey into Wilderness*, 199.

<sup>105</sup> Colonel Lindsay's testimony, 9 Dec. 1836, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 7, 140.

<sup>106</sup> Sprague, *Florida War*, 106. Sprague reported that Seminoles killed many of these slaves, though many were likely taken captive as well.

homeland as an autonomous nation. A volley from General Clinch's incoming troops disturbed the conference, and the Seminoles dispersed.<sup>107</sup> The Seminole alliance, however, enjoyed continued success, and by the fall of 1836 they controlled nearly the entire Florida peninsula.

Such losses embarrassed the army, but more alarming to white Americans was the alliance between Seminoles and African Americans. They feared that the alliance grew with each passing day, as the Seminoles captured plantation slaves and enticed others to escape. After witnessing unrest amidst Creeks forced to emigrate, General Thomas Jesup believed that the Seminole war could ignite the entire South in a general uprising, wherein peoples of color might destroy the region's plantation economy as well as their white oppressors. Jesup wrote to the Secretary of War, "The two races, the negro and the Indian, are rapidly approximating; they are identified in interests and feelings."<sup>108</sup> Indeed, white officers could not help but notice the ferocity and distinction with which African Seminoles fought. They saw Africans elevated to positions of power within Seminole society, as interpreters, advisors, and military leaders.<sup>109</sup>

The tide of war turned in December 1836 when Andrew Jackson replaced Commanding General Call with General Thomas Jesup. Jesup developed a plan designed to thwart the widespread non-white insurrection he feared. He first sought to capture as many Seminoles as possible: warriors, women, children, and especially all African Americans among the Seminoles. In an effort to starve inhabitants off the land, Jesup also tried to locate

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<sup>107</sup> Winfield Scott to Brigadier General Eustis, March 14, 1836, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 7, 257-58; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 148-50.

<sup>108</sup> Jesup to Poinsett, 16 June 1837, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 7, 876.

<sup>109</sup> Motte, *Journey into Wilderness*, 210.

and destroy all Seminole settlements. General Gaines explained the U.S. Army's philosophy: "Among savage nations, it is universally known and admitted, that in war they have no *non-combatants*, excepting only such as are physically incapable of bearing arms. Every man, without regard to age or color is a warrior; every boy able to fire a gun, or wield a hatchet or arrow, is a warrior; and every woman is a laborer, a slave, in the collection and preparation of roots, and other means of subsistence, and clothing for the warriors."<sup>110</sup> In early 1837, Jesup employed these tactics with success in the Oklawaha, Withlacoochee, and Big Cypress Swamp areas.

Promising them ownership of all captured slaves, pay, and an advance on their annuity payment, Jesup enlisted the aid of Creek warriors. Headed by High-headed Jim, Paddy Carr, and Echo Harjo, 750 warriors volunteered for service.<sup>111</sup> This time William McIntosh was not among the invading army—the Creek National Council had authorized his execution in 1825 for illegally ceding land to the United States.<sup>112</sup> During their 1837 campaigns with the U.S. army, the Creeks managed to capture between 85 and 100 African Americans.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Quotation from *Heirs of Love vs. E.P. Gaines*, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 36-39. See also R. Jones to Winfield Scott, May 5, 1836, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 7, 280. For more on Jesup's strategy, see Mahon, *The Second Seminole War*, 200-8.

<sup>111</sup> Ellisor, "The Second Creek War," 255-57.

<sup>112</sup> Michael Green explored the Treaty of Indian Springs and McIntosh's subsequent execution in *Politics of Indian Removal*, 69-97.

<sup>113</sup> A list of 35 slaves supposedly belonged to U.S. citizens appears in "[Roll of] Negroes [captured and returned to] citizens in the Indian country [for] reward to the Indian captors," 1837, HRB, Creek Indian Manuscripts, bin 1, folio 1, doc. 7, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia. The total number, however, was much higher. High-headed Jim and his warriors were reported to have taken 60 African Seminoles during a single battle at the Oklawaha. From *The Broome Republican*, February 2, 1837, Mickler Historic Florida Newspaper Collection, PKY. See also Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 17-18, 36-59.



Chief Halpatter Tustenuggee (also called Alligator) met with a party of the Creeks, who attempted to persuade him to surrender. For years, Creek leaders had argued that they had authority over the Seminoles: a group of chiefs told the Secretary of War, “These Indians [Seminoles] are a part of our nation, and should possess amongst us no separate and distinct interest . . . . Our great object and wish are, that we may become a united people; already we have been divided too long, and trouble has been the consequence.”<sup>114</sup> Seminole chiefs like Halpatter Tustenuggee, however, feared that the Creeks had the worst of intentions—to kidnap African Seminoles and spy on behalf of the Americans. A witness recalled the chief saying, “He does not wish to spill red [meaning Indian] blood but if the Creeks have made up their minds to fight let them come on.” At the heart of the differences separating the Creeks and Seminoles was their attitudes toward African Americans. Taunting the Creek party, Halpatter Tustenuggee declared “he understood the Creeks had come for negroes. We have plenty of them said he.” Indeed, by that time, many Creek slaveholders practiced only a very particular form of what had once been part of a broad captivity spectrum. Now Creeks were virtually indistinguishable from white slaveholders. Halpatter Tustenuggee concluded his talk to the Creek party by shaming them for straying so far from their cultural roots: He informed his visitors that the Seminoles’ “prophets & witches had said that the Great Spirit was on their side.”<sup>115</sup>

By March 1837, Seminole leaders Jumper, Holatoochee, and Yaholoochee wished for peace. In a treaty with Jesup, they agreed to remove west, and the U.S. guaranteed the

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<sup>114</sup> Roly McIntosh, Foshutchee Micco, Chilly McIntosh, and K. Lewis to Lewis Cass, June 5, 1834, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 6, 471.

<sup>115</sup> Frank Laumer, ed., *Amidst a Storm of Bullets: The Diary of Lt. Henry Prince in Florida, 1836-1842* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1998), 59-60.

Seminole and “their allies,” presumably meaning African Seminoles, “secur[ity] in their lives and property; that their negroes, their bona fide property, shall accompany them to the west; and that their cattle and ponies shall be paid for by the United States at a fair valuation.”<sup>116</sup> Interestingly, this treaty distinguished between “allies” and “their negroes” but promised that the Seminoles would retain both in their removal to Indian Territory.

Although many Seminole leaders found this agreement satisfactory, white Southerners were livid. Many claimed slaves lost to Seminole depredations. Jesup, however, was more interested in winning the war than placating slaveholders. Because these former slaves had borne arms against the U.S. and enjoyed a taste of freedom, Jesup thought they should be placed as far away from Southern plantations as possible. Acting Seminole Agent John C. Casey argued that they should be removed to Africa.<sup>117</sup> Ultimately Jesup made a secret treaty with Seminole leaders, who agreed to give up plantation slaves they had taken since the war began. Jesup believed that newly arrived plantation slaves, unlike more acculturated tributaries, were marginal in Seminole society. He declared, “I have some hopes of inducing both the Indians and Indian negroes to unite in bringing the negroes taken from the citizens during the war.”<sup>118</sup> Because Jesup considered African Seminoles the war’s most dangerous element, he pursued the policy vigorously. Via a messenger, he threatened Osceola, “I shall send out and take all the negroes who belong to white people, and he must not allow the Indians or Indian negroes to mix with them [the slaves]. Tell him I am sending

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<sup>116</sup> Sprague, *Florida War*, 177.

<sup>117</sup> John C. Casey to Major Isaac Clark, 11 July 1838, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 119-121.

<sup>118</sup> Jesup to Col. John Warren, 29 March 1837, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 9.

to Cuba for bloodhounds to trail them, and I intend to hang every one of them who does not come in.”<sup>119</sup>

The Seminole/African alliance began to dissolve during the fall of 1837. By then, Jesup had resolved that “the war must necessarily be one of extermination.”<sup>120</sup> The army continued its scorched earth campaign as Jesup captured Seminole leaders under flags of truce. This conflict, which historian John Mahon described as “a grueling, gloryless war,” had become desperately brutal.<sup>121</sup> Plantation slaves, the most recent arrivals in Seminole country, were the first to surrender to U.S. troops. Jesup seems to have been correct in his assumption that these people were the most marginal in Seminole society. On September 4, 1837, four African Americans taken from Florida planters in 1835 escaped from the Seminoles and voluntarily turned themselves in at Ft. Peyton. Wrote one soldier: “They presented a very pitiable spectacle, looking haggard and emaciated, and with no other covering than a cloth about the loins. They complained of having encountered intolerable hardships and very scant fare among the Indians, who gave them nothing to eat but *coonte* and alligators.”<sup>122</sup>

Among those who came in on September 4 was Luis Pacheco, who had an extraordinary story to tell. Born in 1800, Luis grew up on Francis Fatio’s New Switzerland plantation, where, along with Fatio’s children, he learned to read and write and speak English, Spanish, and French. Luis’ brother became a captive of the Seminoles (probably

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<sup>119</sup> Jesup to W.S. Harney, 25 May 1837, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), 16.

<sup>120</sup> Jesup to Poinsett, June 15, 1837, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. 7, 874. Others echoed this sentiment. See *Albany Argus*, August 1, 1837, Goza Historical Newspaper Collection, PKY.

<sup>121</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 322.

<sup>122</sup> Motte, *Journey into Wilderness*, 116.

during the Patriot War), and from him Luis later learned Hitchiti as well. As an adult, Luis became a slave of the Pacheco family of Sarasota, who hired Luis as an interpreter to the U.S. army. With Dade's companies on the fateful day of their attack, Luis Pacheco was one of the few survivors among U.S. troops. Pacheco later said that his life was spared because he could speak Hitchiti, in which language he told the Seminole warriors, "I was a slave and was doing as I was bidden."<sup>123</sup> A few months after Pacheco came in, twenty-one hungry and poorly clothed African Americans, also captives of recent Seminole raids, straggled onto a U.S. camp.<sup>124</sup> The hunger and poor clothing of these plantation slaves indicate that they suffered the worst of wartime privations in Seminole communities. Dozens more African Americans continued to surrender throughout the fall.<sup>125</sup>

During the fall of 1837, Cherokee chief John Ross sent a delegation to Seminole country at the urging of the federal government. Hoping to secure a more favorable removal treaty for his people, Ross wrote a speech recommending that the Seminoles give up their fight. After working tirelessly to gather about thirty chiefs, headmen, and important warriors, the Cherokee delegation, composed of Hair Conrad, Major Polecat, Richard Fields, Jesse Bushyhead and interpreter Thomas Woodward, gave Ross's talk on November 30 and December 1, 1837, at Chickasawatchee Creek.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Alcione M. Amos, "The Life of Luis Fatio Pacheco: Last Survivor of Dade's Battle," *Seminole Wars Historic Foundation Pamphlet Series* 1, no. 1 (2006), 1-6; D.B. McKay, ed., *Pioneer Florida*, 3 vols. (Tampa: Southern Publishing, 1959), Vol. 2, 481. Although Americans blamed Luis for tipping off the Seminoles about Dade's movements, Luis maintained his innocence.

<sup>124</sup> Motte, *Journey into Wilderness*, 116, 118, 153.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 132, 136; *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 5, 1837, Goza Historical Newspaper Collection, PKY.

<sup>126</sup> John Ross to the Chiefs, Headmen, and Warriors of the Seminoles, October 18, 1837, H.D. 285, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., Vol. 1, p. 6; Gary E. Moulton, "Cherokees and the Second Seminole War," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 53 (1975), 296-98. A group of Creeks also attempted to persuade the Seminoles to remove. Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 82.

Ross's talk opened by reminding his Seminole audience of the Native ancestry that bound him to them: "I am of the aboriginal race of the red-man of this great island, and so are you."<sup>127</sup> By the 1830s, the Cherokee and Seminole cultures had diverged considerably: The Cherokees maintained a republican form of government with a bicameral legislature, supreme court, and elected officials, as well as mission schools, a national newspaper, and increasingly harsh slave codes; the Seminoles, meanwhile, clung fiercely to their decentralized form of government, purposeful isolation from American culture, and tributary social system. Both nations fought removal, but the Cherokees did so with legal battles and savvy diplomacy, while the Seminoles used armed resistance. Seeking to overcome this cultural chasm, Ross revived the language of nativism, appealing to his fellow "red-man." The delegation echoed Ross' argument, "We stated to them that their Nation and the Cherokees, were now the only southern Indians east of the Mississippi river, and as brother Indians, we ought to settle our difficulties together with the United States, in a peaceable and friendly way."<sup>128</sup>

Some distrusted the Cherokees from the start. Arpeika, a Mikasuki religious leader, refused to visit them, saying that he "was quite encensed [sic] against the deputation, and charged us with being leagued with the whites to deceive them."<sup>129</sup> Micanopy, Cloud, Nocose Yahola, and others, however, agreed to accompany the Cherokees to Ft. Mellon for a talk with Jesup. Just as the Seminole leaders reached the fort, however, a runner delivered news: Coacoochee, a leading warrior, had miraculously escaped from a St. Augustine prison.

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<sup>127</sup> Ross to Seminoles, H.D. 285, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., Vol. 1, p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> Richard Fields et al to John Ross, February 17, 1838, in Grant Foreman, "Report of the Cherokee Deputation into Florida," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 9, no. 4 (1931), 431.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

The young warrior rejoiced that his people “had determined to *fight and die on the land that the Great Spirit had given them.*”<sup>130</sup> In a panic, U.S. officials seized and imprisoned the Seminole leaders, making it appear as though the Cherokees had set a trap for them.<sup>131</sup> With slavehunting Creeks and seemingly conniving Cherokees about them, the Seminoles must have felt truly alienated—all the South’s free people, including their fellow Indians, seemed to be conspiring to expel them from the region.

Even African American tributaries began to give up the fight. In early 1838, Jesup spread word that African Seminoles who surrendered would emigrate west to Indian Territory. As opposed to more recently arrived plantation slaves, Jesup considered these people either free or “slaves” of the Seminoles. Because of the increasingly desperate nature of the war, many African Seminoles found the offer—what they called “Jesup’s Proclamation”—alluring.<sup>132</sup> Plenty, an African tributary of Micanopy, decided that surrender was the best course for himself and his family. He arrived at Ft. Jupiter with wife Rose and children Juan, Jack, Caesar, Rachel, Sally, and Jesse, who ranged in age from fifteen to six.<sup>133</sup> Like Plenty, many African Seminoles settled for peace and promised removal over war and insecurity. After surrender, African Seminole leader Abraham explained to Jesup, “We do not live for ourselves only, but for our wives & children who are as dear to us as

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 435.

<sup>131</sup> Eventually, though, the Cherokee delegation managed to reach the Seminole prisoners taken at Fort Mellon and convince them of their innocence. John Ross to Joel Poinsett, March 8, 1838, H.D. 285, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., Vol. 1, 15-19.

<sup>132</sup> Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 18-19, 28.

<sup>133</sup> “Negroes, &c., Captured from Indians in Florida” H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 66-69, 74-80, 83-89, 95-96, 122-23.

those of any other men.”<sup>134</sup> Hundreds voluntarily came in while others offered no resistance to capture by U.S. troops. A prominent historian of the war has argued that by the spring of 1838 African Seminoles “had ceased to be an important factor in Seminole resistance. Thereafter they worked for negotiated removal.”<sup>135</sup> By March 1838, Abraham estimated that only twenty to thirty African Americans remained among the militant Seminoles.<sup>136</sup> At the rate of one dollar per day, the U.S. Army employed many African Seminoles as guides and interpreters. The intelligence and service these men provided proved decisive, for it enabled the army to locate important Seminole leaders and hideouts.<sup>137</sup> Those who worked for the army contributed to the widening rift between African Seminoles and their former protectors.<sup>138</sup>

When Jesup relinquished his command to Zachary Taylor in May 1838, the army had captured most Seminoles and nearly all their African-American tributaries and had driven the remaining militants into southern Florida. While sporadic violence continued on the peninsula, most Seminoles had given up their goal of remaining an autonomous nation in their homeland and settled for reluctant removal to Indian Territory. African Seminoles likely decided that they had little to gain and much to lose if they continued to fight. As General Gaines explained, African Seminoles “are prisoners of war of the United States, taken in combat with the Seminole Indians,” and as such they “may be put to death, imprisoned, held

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<sup>134</sup> Abraham to Jesup, April 25, 1838, quoted in Porter, “The Negro Abraham,” 38-39.

<sup>135</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 206.

<sup>136</sup> Motte, *Journey into Wilderness*, 210. See also W.G. Freeman to C.A. Harris, 15 March 1838, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), p. 80.

<sup>137</sup> J.A. Chamber, Field Order 14, 8 Nov. 1837, H.D. 225, 25-3, (348), p. 5; *Daily National Intelligencer*, October 19, 1841, Goza Historical Newspaper Collection, PKY; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 232, 283.

<sup>138</sup> Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 33.

as slaves, or liberated, at the option of the victor.”<sup>139</sup> Much like Indian captors, the federal government had a great deal of leeway in dealing with its prisoners. Those offered removal westward along with their Seminole allies likely considered this the best remaining option to retain a life of relative freedom. Many must have considered the possibility that they might be sold into slavery among Anglo-Americans if their fight for Seminole autonomy failed.

Fortunately for African Seminoles, the United States honored its promise to remove them. Moreover, because commanding officers wished to move African Seminoles as quickly as possible, they allowed relatively few claims for lost slaves. No claims were allowed for enslaved Africans taken by the Seminoles before the Treaty of Payne’s Landing, which set aside money for prior claims and “absolved the Indians from liability.” In 1841, Secretary of War John Bell declared, “No negro should be delivered up under any circumstances unless the claim to him be substantiated by the most satisfactory proof.”<sup>140</sup> Of all Southern slaveholders, the Creeks protested the most loudly over this decision. The U.S. Army promised its Creek allies ownership of all slaves they captured during the war, but later retracted this offer. Creek leaders Opothle Yoholo, Jesse Cornells, Jim Boy, David Barnard, and James Islands appointed an attorney in an attempt to retrieve their lost spoils; ultimately, they sold their claim to a white slave speculator.<sup>141</sup> U.S. officials declared all African Seminoles who arrived in Indian Territory “either free, or the property of [Seminole] Indians.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Heirs of Love vs. E.P. Gaines, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), 36-39.

<sup>140</sup> John Bell to Walker K. Armistead, 12 March 1841, *Territorial Papers XXVI*, 283.

<sup>141</sup> Creek chiefs to C.A. Harris, 8 May 1838, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), 91-92. Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 36-59, 71-74.

<sup>142</sup> W.G. Freeman to Major R.A. Zantzinger, 7 April 1838, H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., (348), 27.



By August 1842, the war ground to a halt. Although the United States failed in its campaign to remove all Seminoles, the conflict had become—and would remain—the nation’s most costly Indian war at \$30 million.<sup>143</sup> Over 4,000 Seminoles and nearly 400 African Americans had been removed to Indian Territory.<sup>144</sup> There, the groups tried to revive their old tributary system. A chasm, however, emerged between Seminoles and African Americans after many of the latter served with the Americans in the war. The separation between them widened in Indian Territory, leading some to resettle in Texas and, later, Mexico.<sup>145</sup> Back in Florida some three hundred Seminoles and a few African Seminoles successfully evaded removal and stayed in the region, where their descendants remain.

Together, Seminoles and African Americans developed a unique system of captivity in the American South. Seminole captive-holding differed drastically from that of other Southern Indian Nations, which developed plantation economies, centralized government, and legal codes that equated blackness with enslavement. Instead, the Seminoles reinvented their chiefly tributary system to create a reciprocal relationship between themselves and the African Americans who lived among them. While Seminoles enjoyed greater access to power and status, their tributaries lived in comparative freedom and material comfort. When removal threatened to destroy the Seminoles, they found an ally in their African-American tributaries. While most other Southern Indians resisted alliance with peoples of African descent, the Seminoles embraced it. In the Second Seminole War, African Americans and

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<sup>143</sup> Missall and Missall, *Seminole Wars*, xv; Mahon, *The Second Seminole War*, 326.

<sup>144</sup> Seminole figure from Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 57. African American figure from “Negroes, &c., Captured from Indians in Florida” H.D. 225, 25<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., Vol. 5, . 66-69, 74-80, 83-89, 95-96, 122-23. See also Littlefield’s Appendix in *Africans and Seminoles*, Lists A-K.

<sup>145</sup> For more on relations in Indian Territory, see Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 68-203; Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 61-182; Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 111-225.

Seminoles found a common enemy in the white Americans who would use racism to disempower them both.

## CONCLUSION

Captivity evolved over the course of several centuries as Native Southerners dealt with chiefly warfare during the Mississippian era, the emergence of the Indian slave trade in the late seventeenth century, colonial-era conflicts with rival nations, the rise of plantation agriculture, and American expansion. As they faced these threats, Southern Indians repeatedly refashioned the practice of captivity, using captured enemies in various ways to augment individual and group power. As outsiders devoid of kin ties, captives served as flexible mediums of power: they quieted crying blood, restored order, performed labor, produced children, and conferred status.

Colonization and the encroachment of the transatlantic economy did not bring inequality to the American South. By the time that Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century, Native Southerners already lived in hierarchical societies governed by hereditary chiefs. At the bottom of these societies were captives whom chiefs obtained through war or trade. Native Southern societies maintained a broad continuum that allowed for great flexibility in the treatment of the captured. Chiefs controlled captives, whom they worked, traded, adopted, humiliated, and killed—all to enhance the power of the ruling lineage. In the seventeenth century, most Native chiefdoms fell, dragging theocratic chiefs down with them. Native Southerners, though, continued to wage wars against enemies. Like the Native chiefs who came before them, captive-takers commodified their enemies, and they maintained no

moral qualms about selling these spoils to European allies. Exploitation of enemies was nothing new in the Native South; the change initiated by the Indian slave trade was the scale of the exchange. Hereditary chiefs, however, no longer monopolized captives. Instead, slavers like the Chickasaws used enemies to augment their *group* power by selling captives for firearms or adopting them to maintain population levels.

After the external market for Indian slaves declined in 1717, Southern Indians continued to capture their enemies. Native Southerners subjected their captured enemies—who by this time included peoples of Indian, African, and European descent—to fates ranging from death to adoption to enslavement. Before the late eighteenth century, Native Southerners did not use skin color to determine a captive's fate; rather, captors focused largely on sex and age when calculating how a captive's disposal would best benefit the community. The clan matrons who decided such matters understood that captives possessed diverse forms of power: A warrior's death quenched the crying blood of deceased relatives and restored earthly and cosmic order; the adoption of women and children augmented population levels reduced by war and disease; slaves provided economic rewards.

For centuries, Native Southerners' captivity spectrum was broad and flexible, but the crises of the late eighteenth century led many to revise their notions about appropriate captives and their treatment. During this period, large numbers of Native and non-Native Southerners moved closer—culturally and geographically—than ever before. But, as the ground grew darker and more bloodied, Natives and settlers highlighted and exaggerated their differences. As the nativists' message of pan-Indianism and polygenesis spread among Southern Indians, race gradually eclipsed more localized modes of self-understanding such as kinship. Concurrently, the need for economic diversification following the decline of the

deerskin trade led many to embrace commercial planting and ranching. As Native Southerners grew pessimistic about adopting non-Indians and were restrained by headmen from participating in torture, captive-taking became an economic pursuit. Warriors targeted African-American captives and subjected them to a more narrow range of fates—transgenerational bondage or sale.

The Seminoles and their African-American tributaries created a unique system of captivity. Periodic infusions of anti-American Creek emigrants contributed to the Seminoles' cultural conservatism, and continual wars throughout the first half of the nineteenth century made commercial planting and ranching impossible. Drawing upon their Mississippian roots, the Seminoles developed a more inclusive social model, the tributary system, which afforded African American captives and runaways a great deal of freedom. When U.S. expansion threatened their homeland and their autonomy, the Seminoles and their African-American tributaries fought to defend their way of life. Other Native Southerners who visited Seminole country—Creek soldiers and slavehunters and Cherokee ambassadors in league with the United States—dramatized the cultural chasm that, by the nineteenth century, separated the Seminoles from the rest of the region.

A son of the South, William Weatherford was a planter and slaveholder, and by right of matrilineal descent reckoning, he was also unequivocally a Creek Indian, who hunted, warred, and traded as his ancestors had for centuries. Without contradiction, he lived as both warrior Red Eagle and gentleman planter Billy Weatherford. In much the same way, Southern history and Southern Indian history cannot—and should not—be separated, for each is indelibly part of the other. Like their neighbors, Natives had a long history of

capturing and enslaving peoples they considered to be “other.” Along with other groups in the South, Natives grappled with ideas about race as they struggled to carve out a separate space for themselves within their beloved homeland.

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