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Creek Schism: Seminole Genesis Revisited

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Creek Schism: Seminole Genesis Revisited

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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College of Arts and Science
University of South Florida

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Cowkeeper

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DEDICATION

Gordy and Debby

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ABSTRACT

This work reevaluates commonly accepted interpretations of Seminole ethnogenesis in light of recent scholarship and previously ignored sources from the Spanish archives. It argues that Seminole formation was largely a bi-product of a struggle between two opposing Lower Creek factions: the Creek “nationalists” and the ostensive Creek “partisans” of the British. This factional struggle became increasingly bitter during the French and Indian War and ultimately led to a schism whereby the ostensive “partisans” of the British colonized of the Alachua savanna in the early 1760s to become recognized as the first Florida Seminoles. This work also raises questions about the ostensive Anglophile identity of the first Seminoles and suggests that such an “identity” was based largely on deception and theatrics. In closing, this work addresses the institutional basis of the myth of Seminole aboriginality.

INTRODUCTION

Like moths to a flame, the phenomenon of genesis ignites the curiosity of historians, draws them in closer, and ultimately consumes them. What were the origins of the Salem witch trials, American slavery, the First World War, or countless other phenomena? Such questions vex historians as much as they inspire them. In Native American studies, one is pressed to find a tale of origin more alluring than the ethnogenesis of the Florida Seminoles, defined here as the formation of group distinctness in a sociopolitical sense. Seminole genesis has attracted such respected scholars as Colin Calloway, James Covington, James Doster, Howard Cline, Charles Fairbanks, John Goggin, Joshua Piker, Patrick Riordan, Richard Sattler, William Sturtevant, John Swanton, Brent Weisman, Patricia Wickman, and J. Leitch Wright.

Perhaps timing contributes mightily to the popularity of Seminole origin studies. In the words of William Sturtevant, "the tribe is an entirely post-European phenomenon, a replacement by Creek settlers [from present-day Georgia and Alabama] of the Florida aborigines whom they eliminated in frontier military campaigns growing of antagonisms between European powers." John Missall and Mary Lou Missall explained the lure of

origins in similar terms: “One of the things that separates the Seminoles from other Indian nations is the fact that there exists historical records of the tribe’s formation.”¹

Despite the abundance of literature on Seminole ethnogenesis, a new study is warranted for a number of reasons. First, unlike the majority of the already mentioned authors, the present work reaps the benefits of a recent explosion of scholarship on Creek political culture, including the works of Steven Hahn, John Hann, Vernon Knight Jr., Joshua Piker, and John Worth. These recent studies have not only transformed the way historians look at the Creeks, but also their Florida offshoots, the Seminoles. In short, previous scholarship on the Seminoles has become seminal scholarship.

Secondly, previous works on the early Seminoles have underutilized the Spanish archives. From my time at one of the great North American storehouses of Spanish records, the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History in Gainesville, Florida, I have uncovered many previously ignored documents that cast Seminole formation in a new light. Such documents, for instance, clearly show that the Seminole-Creeks established permanent settlements in Florida years later than scholars have believed: the 1760s.² Prior to that decade, the Spaniards explicitly and repeatedly referred to seasonal Creek *caserias* (hunting parties), not permanent villages or towns. Such a revelation not only

¹ William C. Sturtevant, “Creek into Seminole,” in *North American Indians in Historical Perspective*, ed. Eleanor Burke Leacock and Nancy Oestreich Lurie (New York: Random House, 1971), 92; John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 3.

² For previous periodization models, see Brent Weisman, *Like Beads on a String: A Cultural History of the Seminole Indians in Northern Peninsular Florida* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 37; Patrick Riordan, “Seminole Genesis: Native Americans, African Americans, and Colonists on the Southern Frontier from Prehistory Through the Colonial Era” (Ph'D Dissertation (History), Florida State University, 1996), 6; Jerald T. Milanich, *Archaeology of Precolumbian Florida* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1994), xvi.

helps to explain why archaeologists have been unable to unearth Seminole artifacts prior to the 1760s, but it also calls for an entirely new periodization of early Seminole history.³

Like many of the above listed authors, the chief aim of this work is to uncover the structure of Seminole genesis, its temporal development, and its inevitable problems. Yet if this study has any underlying reprise, it is that identity is steeped in perceptions of difference. This maxim applies as easily to the eighteenth-century actors found in these pages as it does to the present author's arguments, which can be read as a critique of previous scholarship, in particular, those authors that insist that Seminole genesis was an arbitrary European invention. James F. Doster best articulated this line of thought when he argued that "the difference between the [Seminole] Indians in Florida and the other Creeks was something forced by white men over the violent objections of the Indians."⁴

The arbitrary European invention model is premised on the belief that the Creek confederacy was so "conditional," "voluntary," "ephemeral," "flexible," "loose," and "fluid" that Creeks could establish new communities at a great distance from their brethren and "gradually 'secede' from the loose configuration without ever formally declaring their secession."⁵ By extension, Creek splinter groups posed a categorical

³ For lack of archaeological evidence of an earlier colonization, see Charles H. Fairbanks, "The Ethno-Archeology of the Florida Seminole," in *Tacachale: Essays on the Indians of Florida and Southeastern Georgia during the Historic Period*, ed. Jerald T. Milanich and Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1978), 167; Weisman, *Like Beads on a String*, 38-39; John M. Goggin, *Time Perspective in Northern St. Johns Archeology, Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 62; Also see John Goggin's testimony in Indian Claims Commission, *Seminole Indians of Florida vs. United States* (Rex Quinn Papers, PK Yonge Library of Florida History), 125.

⁴ James F. Doster, *The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1740-1823* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1974), 272.

⁵ Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 247 ("loose," "flexible,"

problem to Europeans, not the natives. In the words of John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, although "the imaginary line drawn between Florida and Georgia meant little to the Indians," Europeans needed to employ the term Seminole "strictly for white convenience." Thus, Missall and Missall concluded that "the Seminoles were a European invention."⁶

Seminole beginnings can be gleaned from the tribe's ethnonymy, that is, the naming of sociopolitical groups by the group themselves or by outsiders. The subscribers of the arbitrary European invention model are quick to point out that the term "Seminole" was derived from the Spanish word *Cimarron*. A brief English translation is the adjective "wild" or "feral," but the Spaniards generally used the term in reference to animals or people that the Spaniards had formerly "domesticated," but had later runaway to become "wild." Thus, *Cimarron* can be understood as nearly synonymous with "fugitive" or "runaway."⁷

For instance, a sixteenth-century Spanish historian of the New World, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés (1478-1557), related that innumerable numbers of domestic cats and pigs brought from Spain had escaped into the forests and mountains of the New World to become "wild [bravos] or cimarrones." The Spaniards also used "Cimarron" to refer to runaway African slaves that formed distant communities in the

"voluntary," and "secession"); Vernon James Knight Jr., "The Formation of the Creeks," in *Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, ed. Charles Hudson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 386 ("conditional"); Morris Edward Opler, "The Creek 'Town' and the Problem of Creek Indian Political Reorganization," in *Human Problems in Technological Change, A Casebook*, ed. Edward Holland Spicer (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1952), 166 ("loose"); Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 3 ("fluid" and "conditional").

⁶ Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 3, 7, 10.

⁷ Leo Spitzer, "Spanish Cimarron," *Language* 14, no. 2 (1938): 145-147.

difficult to reach mountains or forests of the New World. (The English later borrowed this term to refer to a similar phenomenon in their colonies, but in the process, the English transformed Cimarron into “maroon.”) Similarly, Spanish colonists also “domesticated” many natives in the New World by bringing them into a mission system where they were kept in a near slave-like position. In Florida, many mission Indians lost faith in the system and became “Indios Simarrones,” either joining the unconverted or living in camps on the fringes of the mission system. Spanish authorities frequently sent out expeditions to capture these fugitives and bring them back into the fold. The frequent references to “Indios Simarrones” declined with the number of mission Indians following the near destruction of Florida’s mission system in the early-eighteenth century.⁸

The assumption of the arbitrary European invention model is that the Florida Spaniards labeled the Seminoles as “Indios Simarrones,” or wild Indians. According to Missall and Missall, the Spaniards “soon felt the need to create a name for this newly evolved tribe. Perhaps because of their ferocity or independence, the Spanish took to calling them Cimarrones.” Patricia Wickman argued that “Cimarron” was “heard and arbitrarily borrowed by the English” from the Spaniards after Florida was transferred from Spanish to British rule in 1763, and “these English speakers, and writers, set the stage for the transliteration of Spanish discourse systems into English discourse systems and for the documentary metamorphosis of cimarrones into Seminoles.” Thus according

⁸ Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia General y Natural de la Indias*, vol. 2 (Asuncion del Paraguay: Editorial Guaranía, 1944), 146-147. For “Indios Simarrones,” see John H. Hann, *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missions* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 114, 191, 240, 243, 279; John H. Hann, “Heathen Acuera, Murder, and a Potano Cimarrona: The St. Johns River and the Alachua Prairie in the 1670s,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 70 (April 1992): 451-474, especially 460-462.

to the arbitrary European invention model, “the formal separation of the Creeks and Seminole is,” in the words of Charles Fairbanks “in part at least, a result of British intrigues”⁹

The arbitrary European invention model is problematic at several levels, especially its specious argument about ethnonymy. First, the underutilized Spanish records do not support the thesis. The Spaniards referred to the Seminoles by many names; including enemies, barbarians, infidels, and so forth, but not once did they ever call them “Indios Simarrones,” nor could they. Given the rules of usage, the Spaniards had no right to label the Seminoles as “Indios Simarrones.” After all, the Spaniards never domesticated the Creek-Seminoles, nor did the Creek-Seminoles runaway from the Spaniards. Furthermore, the arbitrary European invention model fails to adequately explain the morphology of Cimarron into Seminole. The linguist William Sturtevant correctly identified “Seminole” as one of the many European loan words that the Creeks incorporated into their lexicon. In the process of incorporation, the Creeks transformed Cimarron into Seminole on account of the missing “r” in their language. According John Hann, this metamorphosis “does indeed indicate the term was being used by Indians.” In deed, the only Spanish speakers to utter “Cimarron” in reference to the Seminoles were the translators of Lower Creek officials, who needed a word to deride the unmanageable section of their own people.¹⁰

⁹ Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 3, 7, 10. Patricia Riles Wickman, *The Tree that Bends: Discourse, Power, and the Survival of the Maskoki People* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 196-197. Charles H. Fairbanks, *Ethnohistorical Report on the Florida Indians*, Florida Indians III (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 146.

¹⁰ John H. Hann, *The Native American World Beyond Apalachee: West Florida and the Chattahoochee Valley* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 191; William C. Sturtevant, “Spanish-Indian Relations in Southeastern North America,” *Ethnohistory* 9 (Winter 1962): 51. For lack of

If prominent Lower Creeks were insulting members of their own people as Seminoles, then the key to understanding either Seminole ethnonymy or genesis lies not in Europe or the European colonies, but in Lower Creek country. In shifting attention away from a European invention model, this work moves into the vicinity of what Richard Berkhofer referred to in 1970 as the “new Indian history,” in which practitioners should place natives at “the center of the stage.” Berkhofer believed that this figurative stage should be expanded to include more than Indian-European relations. Native-native relations were just as important.¹¹

The late J. Leitch Wright was the first scholar of the Creeks and Seminoles to apply Berkhofer recommendations, and it is worthwhile to devote some space to Wright’s provocative thesis about Seminole formation. In *Creeks and Seminoles: the Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (1986), J. Wright argued that the Creeks were not simply divided geographically into the Lower Creeks along the Chattahoochee and Flint rivers and the Upper Creeks along the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Alabama rivers. The Creeks were also divided along ethnic and linguistic lines. Wright believed that the bulk of Creek factionalism stemmed from a core-periphery relationship between the dominant Muskogee (Creek) speaking peoples and the peripheral non-Muscogee speakers. Seminole formation, according to Wright, was the product of ethnic-linguistic tensions between the multiethnic Lower Creeks on the Chattahoochee River, in which many of the peripheral Hitchiti speakers, especially those from the town of Oconee,

the letter "r," see William Bartram, *Travels* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 406. Also consider, James Milroy, “Toward a Speaker-Based Account of Language Change,” in *Language Change: Advances in Historical Sociolinguistics*, ed. Ernst Hakon Jahn (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999), 21-36.

¹¹ Robert F. Berkhofer, “The Political Context of a New Indian History,” *Pacific Historical Review* 40 (August 1970): 357-382, especially 358, 368.

gladly moved into the depopulated regions of Florida to gain independence from the dominant Muscogee speakers. Wright argued that “when Oconees called themselves Seminoles, they were telling the British that they were Hitchitis and not Creeks, not Indians from [the Lower Creek capitol of] Coweta and its vicinity who spoke Muskogee.”¹²

By focusing on the internal dynamics of Creek society, Wright was heading in the right direction, but his thesis was marred by a linguistic determinism that forced him on innumerable occasions to misidentify the language of a particular person or people to account for factional strife. Since most Creeks were multilingual, language was not as much of a barrier or point of conflict as Wright believed. Moreover, “when Oconees called themselves Seminoles,” Wright was putting words into their mouths. The first Seminoles emphatically rejected their name as an insult hurled by their detractors in the Creek Nation.¹³

Recent scholarship has emphasized that European alliances, not ethnicity or language, were the source of most Creek factionalism at least prior to 1763. This work extends that logic to put forth the argument that Seminole genesis was first and foremost a schism, a byproduct of a clash between two Lower Creek factions: the ostensive Creek partisans of the British and the Creek nationalists. The Creek nationalists were associated

¹² J. Leitch Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 4, 6-9, 18.

¹³ Frank L. Owsley, Jr., review of *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* by J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *American Indian Quarterly* 12 (Summer 1988): 261-262; James F. Doster, review of *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* by J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Pacific Historical Review* 58 (May 1989): 244-245. For a more philosophical discussion of identity and difference, see Gilles Deleuze, “Bergson's Conception of Difference,” in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2004), 32-51.

with the royal Yslachamuque dynasty of Coweta, the capitol of the Lower Creeks. The English, finding the Indian name Yslachamuque too cumbersome, decided to rename Yslachamuque with an even more Indian name: Brahmins (“Brimins”), after the highest caste in Hindu society. Starting with Emperor Brahmins (16xx-1730s), the Brahmins dynasty advocated a centralized Creek “Nation” to grapple with the pressures of European colonization. At first glance, this appears to be a noble aspiration, but it was hardly altruistic. The Brahmins were vehement about promoting and protecting their claimed power monopoly.¹⁴

Although Europeans generally preferred to deal with centralized polities, the Brahmins often refused to play the part of English partisans. On the contrary, the Brahmins of Coweta favored a policy of neutrality during the imperial conflicts amongst the French, Spanish, and English. The British interpreted Coweta’s neutrality as a hostile gesture and sought to undermine the Brahmins by fostering dissent. The self-styled English partisans from outside of Coweta rose to great influence by filling the diplomatic void and disobeying the decrees of the nationalist Brahmins at Coweta. Unsurprisingly, this English policy of undermining the Brahmins and supporting the partisans had a destabilizing effect in Creek country and nearly led to civil war on a number of occasions. It also laid the groundwork for the schism that would lead to Seminole formation.¹⁵

¹⁴ Berkhofer, “The Political Context of a New Indian History,” 373-379; Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 22.

¹⁵ Berkhofer, “The Political Context of a New Indian History,” 371-372; Jack Campisi, “The Iroquois and the Euro-American Concept of Tribe,” *New York History* 63 (April 1982): 165, 167; Morton H. Fried, *The Notion of Tribe* (Menlo Park, CA: Cummings Publishing Company, 1975), 10. For an

Nevertheless, the tension between the Creek nationalists and ostensive partisans of the British was an age old conflict that should not be equated with Seminole genesis. The Seminoles emerged at a particular point in time. This work suggests that the French and Indian War (1754-1763) was that critical time. Admittedly one could find traces of the “proto” Seminoles as far back as one pleases, but the French and Indian War was by far the most important era in the group’s formation.

Nonetheless, few scholars have focused on that time in Florida history. By and large, most general works on the French and Indian War rarely mention Florida until late in 1761, when the Spanish crown officially entered the conflict. These narratives ignore the unofficial origins of the conflict and assume that English colonists were only interested in expanding into French lands, solely afraid of French policies, and exclusively hostile to French Catholicism. Without a doubt, English colonials considered their French counterparts as enemy number one, but the English did not regard the French as their only enemy.

British colonists in Georgia and South Carolina continued to look at Spanish Florida with a mixture of fear, lust, and loathing. They covertly encouraged their Creek allies to assault the Spaniards and their native allies against the imperial will of Whitehall (London) and the Creek nationalists of Coweta, who began referring to these pro-English, anti-Spanish warriors of the French and Indian War as “Simarrones,” “Seminoles,” or “wild” Creeks. A key moment in the rift between the nationalists and ostensive partisans occurred when the partisans blatantly defied the will of the nationalists by joining the

example of near civil war in 1724, see David H. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 71-73.

English in the Cherokee War (1758-1761). By the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, the rift between ostensive partisans and nationalists was so great that many of the partisans settled the Alachua savanna near present-day Gainesville under a chief known as the Cowkeeper, Ahaya, or “the founder of the Seminole Nation.” The physical separation of the two factions only increased the tension.¹⁶

While the nationalist-partisan dynamic is critical in the unfolding of Seminole history, it is only the most obvious layer. With this in mind, I refer to the partisans as “ostensive.” They certainly presented themselves as unwavering followers of the British cause, but should displays of affection be equated with genuine sentiment? There is no easy answer to this question, but this work attempts to highlight the disparity between the actual and theatrical. Unquestionably, the distinction between ingenuous and disingenuous gestures became clearer after the 1763 Treaty of Paris that ended the French and Indian War and gave Britain control of all the lands east of the Mississippi. Since then, the diplomatic relations between the British and the Creeks in general drastically declined. Even the Alachua Creeks, the most ostensive partisans of the British, were disaffecting. This work argues that what really separated the Alachua Creeks from those in the Creek Nation was theatrics. The Alachua Creeks wore a politically-expedient mask of diplomacy that emphasized simplicity, politeness, and a past that was no longer present. They convincingly donned this figurative mask on special occasions, namely, periods of tension between the English and Creek Nation. The Alachua Creeks played

¹⁶ Kenneth W. Porter, “The Cowkeeper Dynasty of the Seminole Nation,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 30 (April 1952): 341-352.

their part as English partisans so successfully that they convinced the British to take the mask at face value.

No work on Seminole formation should ignore the recent and controversial claims that the “core” of the Florida Seminoles are actually aboriginal Floridians. In closing, this paper exposes the myth of Seminole aboriginality as emblematic of how politicized Seminole history has become since Congress created the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) in 1946.

There is one more final note on language. Since this study fluctuates between eighteenth-century English and Spanish records, I have taken the liberty to impose some rules on the language. In general, I use English rather than Spanish terminology for native groups, such as “Lower Creeks” rather than “Uchices,” “Cowetas” instead of “Cabetas,” and so forth. While retaining much of the original eighteenth-century English flavor, some of the more cumbersome language has been modernized for the reader’s sake. Likewise, I have translated the often awkward Spanish documents with the reader in mind.

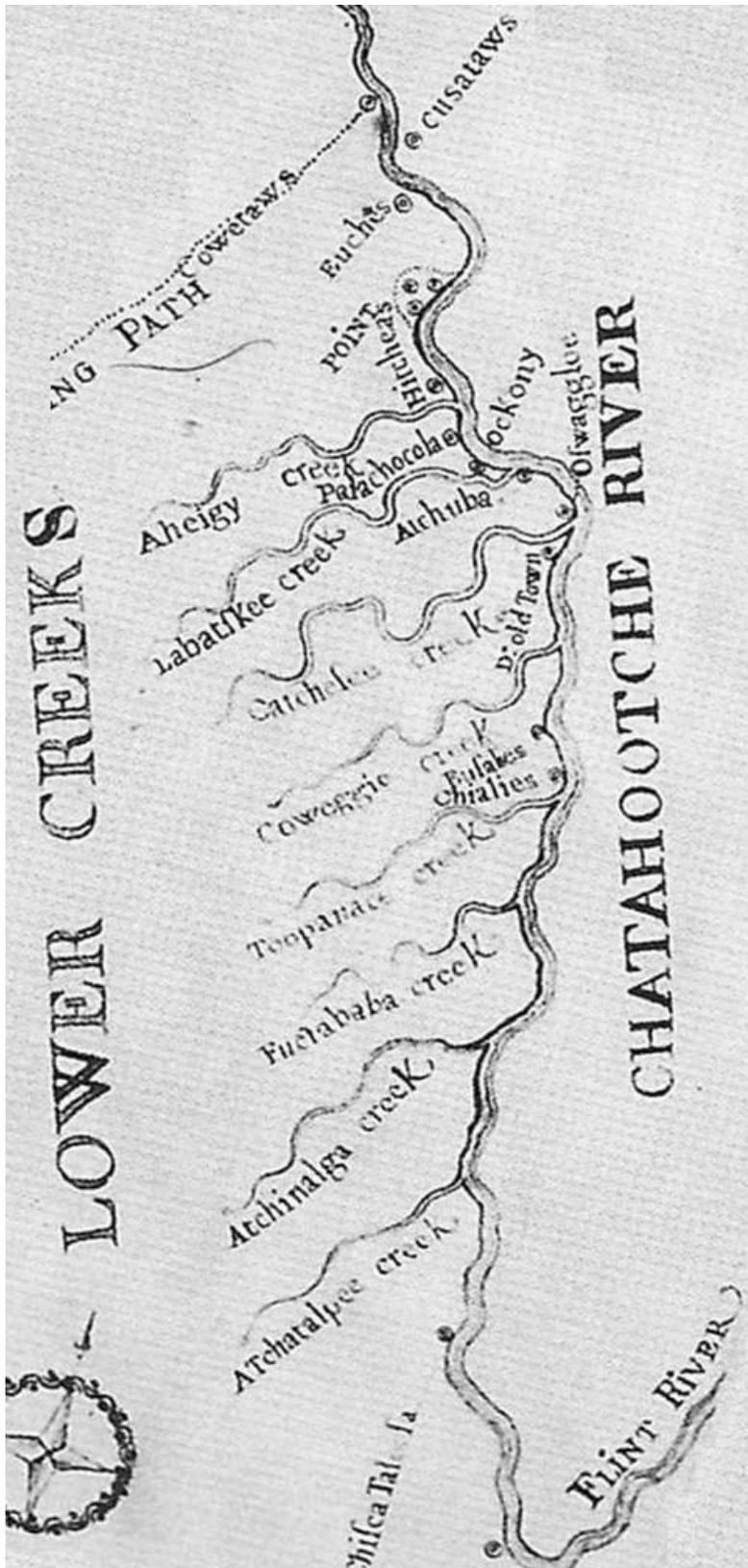
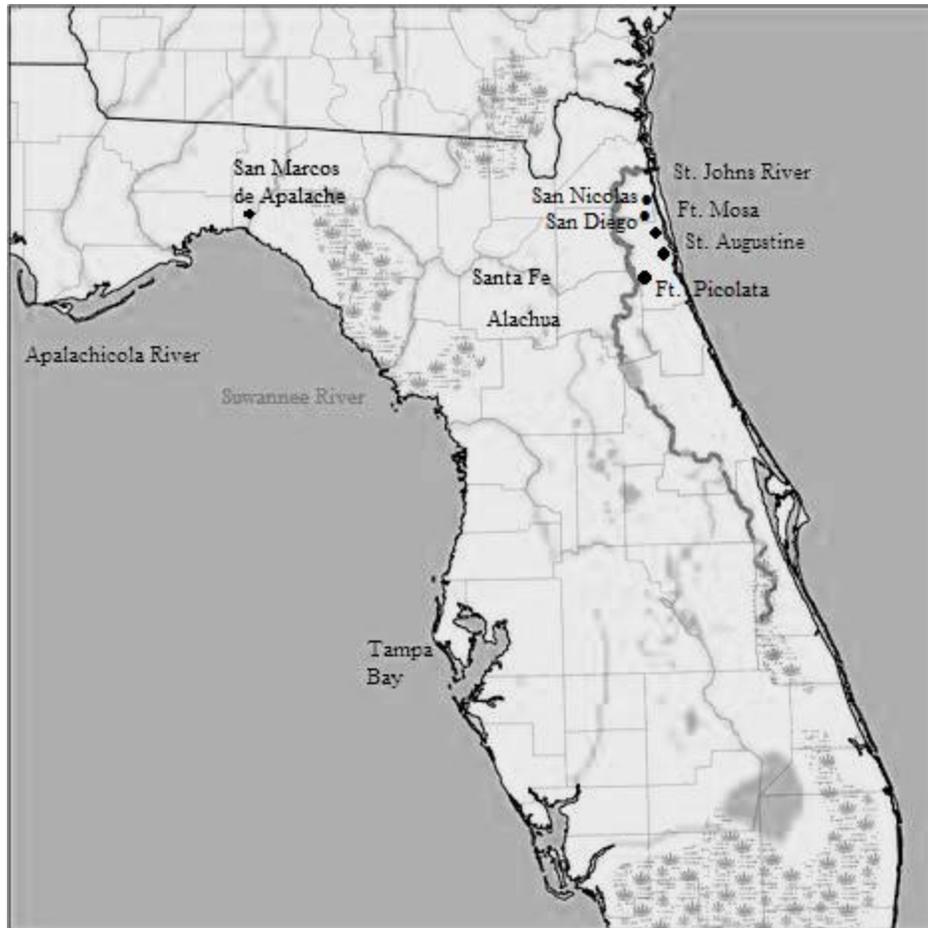


Figure 1. A Map of Lower Creeks Towns, 1757

- ❖ Coweta
- ❖ Cusseta
- ❖ Yuchi
- ❖ The Point Towns: Chehaw, Osochi, and Ocmulgee
- ❖ Hitchiti
- ❖ Apalachicola
- ❖ Oconee
- ❖ Little Oconee (Alchuba)
- ❖ Sawokli
- ❖ Eufaula
- ❖ Chialies
- ❖ Chiscatalafa
- ❖ Wioupkées or “the Forks”

(Taken from William Bonar, “A Draught of the Creek Nation,” May, 1757. Reproduced in William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, ed. Louis De Vorsey, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Plate 59E.)

Figure 2. A Map of Florida



CHAPTER ONE

“LOS SIMARRONES”

On December 10, 1753, a Lower Creek hunter named Tujalatte arrived at St. Augustine with pressing news from the English on Fort Frederica (St. Simon’s Island, Georgia). The hunter reported that the English seemed to be preparing for an unprovoked war against Spanish Florida. The British officers told Tujalatte that 100 reinforcements were soon expected to arrive at Fort William, the southernmost English fort on Cumberland Island, and they planned to rebuild all their fortifications on the southern frontier. Tujalatte recalled that the officers at Frederica were aware that his seasonal hunting schedule brought him into Florida and had many questions about Spain’s military strength. The hunter replied that the Spaniards were “very fortified,” at least east of the St. Johns River. The officers responded that they too had many good men, and if war broke out as was expected, the British would not repeat their failures of 1702, 1728, 1740, and 1743, when they devastated the Spaniards and their Florida native allies but were unable to take St. Augustine’s Castillo de San Marcos. This time the English were determined to take ancient city.¹

¹ Tujalatte, “Testimony,” December 10, 1753, enclosed in Solis to Conde de Rivilla Ggedo, June 14, 1754, Spellman Collection, reel 144G. For a general history on the attacks on St. Augustine, see Ian K. Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 154, 167, 168-

These rumors of war shocked the Spaniards, who desperately sought more information. Governor Fugencio Garcia de Solis (1752-1755) called on a prisoner named Antonio de la Vera for help. The governor had a proposition: he would immediately drop all charges if Vera served as a spy masquerading as a deserter. Vera's mission was to gather critical information about England's military preparations and their intentions towards Spanish Florida. Vera, always a "practical man," agreed to the terms. On December 17, 1753, he set out for Fort William to surrender himself. The English were delighted at the prospects of extracting useful information from the "deserter." They transported Vera all the way to Savannah to be interviewed by a corporal, but Vera attempted to reverse the roles between interviewer and interviewee. After extensive questioning about Florida's military strength, Vera wondered why the corporal was so concerned since he had "neither heard, nor learned anything of war." When the corporal asked about Fort Picolata on the eastside of the St. Johns River, the "deserter" responded that it was to be revamped after an Indian attack that resulted in two deaths. Vera wanted to know who was responsible for the attacks, but the corporal quickly denied any knowledge of the affair and moved on to the next question. The corporal also inquired into Spain's strategic economic centers, namely, the locations, names, and owners of the haciendas and cattle ranches that St. Augustine depended on for survival.²

After the extensive interview, the corporal transported the "deserter" to Port Royal to meet the Governor of South Carolina in January, 1754. Around the same time,

170. For French and Indian War, see Mark F. Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier: San Marcos de Apalache, 1763-1769 (part 1)," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (January 1941): 179.

² Antonio de la Vera, "Testimony," March 26, 1754, enclosed in Solis to Conde de Rivilla Gigedo, June 14, 1754, Spellman Collection, reel 144G.

General George Washington returned from his mission to Fort Le Boeuf in northwest Pennsylvania with the news that the French were sweeping south. The word on the street was that England and France were at war. Given all this information, the Spaniards concluded that "at the first disgust between the two Crowns" of France and England, the English Hanoverians would see Bourbon France and Bourbon Spain as "all related." The Spaniards had good reasons to believe that the English would go "against la Florida" in order to "take away this *Padrastro*," a play on words that can translate as a stepfather or an obstacle.³

The threat to Florida came from expansionist colonials of Georgia and Carolina, who saw the neglected Spanish outpost in the paradoxical terms of a threatening easy prey. The imperial overlords at Whitehall, however, wished to keep Spain neutral during the conflict and discouraged any hostile gesture towards Florida. In order to placate Whitehall and satisfy themselves, expansionistic colonists relied on covert methods of secretly encouraging Creek warriors of a pro-English persuasion to assault the Spaniards and their native allies. This chapter details how Seminole genesis was largely the product of the French and Indian War, a conflict that deepened already existing divisions between the nationalist faction at Coweta and the ostensive partisans living below them. The outcome of this inner-Creek conflict over war, trade, and colonialism ultimately led to the Creek-Seminole schism.

³ Ibid.. For Washington's January return, see William M. Fowler, *Empires at War: The French and Indian War and the Struggle for North America, 1754-1763* (New York: Walker & Co., 2005), 36; *New York Mercury*, February 18, 1754; George Washington, *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, vol. 1 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 118-61. Quotes regarding Spain found in Domingo de la Cruz to Julián de Arriaga, March 30, 1755, Stetson Collection, reel 50.

A Crisis on the Chattahoochee

Francis Jennings noted that “covertly, it seems, Indians were used by one colony to harass another at times when they were formally at peace,” but colonists rarely encouraged their native allies to attack Europeans during such times. “The basic strategy” remarked Jennings “was to hurl the Indians allied with Colony A against other Indians allied with Colony B.” English colonists relied on this covert strategy during the early years of the French and Indian War, while Spain clung to its official stance of neutrality. In fact, one piece of information that Antonio de la Vera gathered in his travels was that Georgians were encouraging their native allies to embark on slave raids against the Florida natives.⁴

This was not an easy request. When the first Spaniards reached the Florida, the peninsula was home to an estimated 350,000 natives. The number plummeted with the introduction of European diseases. From around 1690 to 1704, the Lower Creeks participated in a series of devastating slave raids that destroyed Florida’s interior mission system. According to an Englishman named Thomas Nairne, who joined in the slave raids, "our Forces entirely broke and ruined the Strength of the Spaniards in Florida, destroyed the whole Country, burnt the Towns, brought all the Indians, who were not killed or made Slaves, into our Territories, so that there remains not now, so much as one

⁴ Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 124-125. Vera, “Testimony.” .

Village, with ten Houses in it, in all Florida," except those protected "by the Guns of their Castle of St. Augustine."⁵

Florida's Indian population increased after the Yamasee War (1715-1717), when the losing Yamasee fled to Florida, but their numbers were soon to plummet. With English enticement, the Creeks determined in the 1720s to "take, Kill and Destroy all the Yamasees they meet with" until there was not "a Yamasee Left on the land." As a result of Creek determination, the Yamasee were, in the words of a Spanish priest, "being exterminated little by little." In 1728, a South Carolina expedition under John Palmer wiped out as many as one-third of the remaining Yamasee. The Creek raids increased after the establishment of Georgia in 1733, when Creek partisans reaffirmed their intentions to "go and fetch all the Spanish Indian scalps." The violence of the unofficial raids increased with the official beginnings of the strangely named War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748), which ended with the Yamasee becoming a mere shell of their former selves.⁶

Thus, by the time of the French and Indian War, most of the near 100 remaining Christian natives, largely Yamasee, preferred to live close to the protection of St.

⁵ For the estimated population of Florida natives, see Jerald T. Milanich, *Florida's Indians from Ancient Times to the Present* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), viii. For the Creek slave raids against Florida natives, see Mark F. Boyd, Hale G. Smith, and John W. Griffin, *Here They Once Stood The Tragic End of the Apalachee Missions* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999). Thomas Nairne quoted in Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 166.

⁶ Tobias Fitch, "Journal of Captain Tobias Fitch's Mission From Charleston to the Creeks, 1726," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton Dennison Mereness (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1961), 194, 209. "Little by little" is quoted in John Hann, "St. Augustine's Fallout from the Yamasee War," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (October 1989): 193. For the Palmer expedition, see 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), 284. The "Scalps" quote is from Joseph Hetherington to Oglethorpe, Thunderbolt, March 22, 1735 in *General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733-1743*, vol. 1 (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1975), 139.

Augustine at the missions of Tolomato and la Leche. Only on a lucky day could a Creek warrior catch a Yamasee off guard near the St. Johns River, the de facto boundary of Spanish Florida. On an even rarer occasion, a Creek war party might encounter a few Florida natives, who abandoned the mission life near St. Augustine "to live at their ease" in small camps in the north Florida woods.⁷

If the Georgians sought more Florida native slaves, Creek warriors would have to look further south to the *Costas*, the generic Spanish term for all south Florida natives, including the famed Calusa. British colonials despised the south Florida natives as "old enemies of the English." The captain at Fort Frederica, Raymond Demere, described them as cannibalistic pirates, who were the "Friends to no Nation." Living in a region known for shipwrecks, the Costas were helpful to Spanish castaways, but a terror to English crews in the same unfortunate situation. As recently as 1752, a violent storm drove an English ship under Captain Edwards upon the southern coast of Florida, where the natives boarded their vessel and "stript them, and other ways used them very ill." The English believed that the Spaniards paid the natives to harass them. The outbreak of war in 1754 was a chance for the English to enact their revenge. According to Domingo de la

⁷ For lack of potential Yamasee captives, see Kenneth Coleman and Milton Ready, ed., *Original Papers of Governor Reynolds, Ellis, Wright and Others, 1754-1763*, The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia 28.1 (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 108. Quotation ("live at their ease") found in Lucas Palacio y Valenzuela to Julián de Arriaga, St. Augustine, February 16, 1759, AGI-SD 2542-B, reel 20. The numbers and missions of the Yamasee found in Juan Joseph Solana, "Juan Joseph Solana Report on the Condition of St. Augustine in 1760," in *Spanish Borderlands Sourcebooks: America's Ancient City, Spanish St. Augustine, 1565-1763*, ed. Kathleen A. Deagan (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 565. For the Creeks attacking the natives in south Florida, see John E. Worth, "The Evacuation of South Florida, 1704-1760" (presented at the the 60th annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Charlotte, NC, 2003); John Hann, *Missions to the Calusa* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991), 198-199. For an earlier history of the slave trade in Native Americans, see Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717*. Also see Oatis, *A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Frontiers in the Era of the Yamasee War, 1680-1730*.

Cruz, “this strong motive induced the British nation to make use of the Uchices [Lower Creeks], in order to totally destroy those [Indians of] ours.”⁸

At the outbreak of war, Creek war parties set out to capture Florida Indians in the spring of 1754. Jacho, a Spanish-friendly Creek, who kept a seasonal cattle ranch near the St. Johns River, stopped two war parties. He exclaimed that if the warriors committed an act of violence towards the Spaniards or their native allies, it would be avenged. A third war party led by Chief Eschie and head warrior Esques evidently did not heed Jacho's warnings. They traveled deep into Costa territory, where they captured a man, woman, and child. Considering their mission a success, the slavers turned back home unaware that a group of Costas shadowed their every movements. When the moment was right, the Floridians attacked, killing most of the Creek party, including Chief Eschie. In the chaos of battle, captors and captives alike fled for safety. Only Esques and three other Creeks escaped alive. They warned the Spaniards that they would soon take revenge until “no Indian remained alive in the Keys,” but the first order of business was to return to the Chattahoochee for the annual Busk ceremony.⁹

⁸ For English conceptions of south Florida natives, see *Jonathan Dickinson's Journal; or, God's Protecting Providence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945); Wawhatchee talk to Demere, Fort Prince George, Keawee, Sep. 13, 1756 in William L. McDowell, ed., *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs*, vol. 2 (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), 209 (Demere's comments) [referenced hereafter as *DRIA*]; Samuel Urlsperger, ed., *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America, 1759-1760*, trans. Hermann J. Lacher, vol. 17 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 229. For shipwrecks, see Hann, *Missions to the Calusa*, 403; *Boston Post Boy*, January 8, 1753 (Edwards anecdote); James Adair, *History of the American Indians* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1775), 152 (Spanish payments). Domingo de la Cruz to Julián de Arriaga, March 30, 1755.

⁹ Raymundo Alonzo de Arrivas, Testimony, July 17, 1754, enclosed in Solis to Conde de Rivilla Gigedo, July 27, 1754, Spellman Collection, reel 144G.

This is a good point to introduce a reoccurring theme of this work: the Lower Creek presence in Florida, or anywhere for that matter, was not random. It followed the rhythms of the Creek seasonal calendar. Around early spring, the Lower Creeks abruptly disappeared from their hunting or warring grounds to return to their homes on the Chattahoochee River, where they could not be late for the planting season. Everyone in the community was expected to assemble in the town's square ground on the assigned date and proceed to the fields. Participation was not an option. It was "the Indian law." According to Thomas Nairne, "if any person absent himself above 2 days, the Chief and Counsel send the warriors who Pillage his house of such things as they can find, sell them and add to the Town stock." Once the cooperative labor of planting was completed, the corn ripened in a matter of a few months. In the meantime, women tended the crops, while men engaged in more manly pursuits like hunting or warfare.¹⁰

By July or August, Creek hunters and warriors would return home again to celebrate the Creek New Year's celebration known as Busk (literally, to fast) or the Green Corn Ceremony. Attendance was so essential that Benjamin Hawkins (1754-1816) wrote: "this happy institution of the Boos-ke-tuh, restores man to himself, to his family, and to his nation." By extension, not participating in such a ceremony was not only anti-

¹⁰ On the planting season, see Bartram, *Travels*, 400-401; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 406 (two month corn), 430 ("the Indian law"); Thomas Nairne, *Nairne's Muskhogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi*, ed. Alexander Moore (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 34. For post-planting hunting see, David Taitt, "David Taitt's Journal of a Journey through the Creek Country, 1772," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton Dennison Mereness (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1961), 560.

social but potentially disastrous. Thus, in the words of Philip Georg Friedrich Von Reck, "even if the nation has not assembled through the year, yet they assemble at this time."¹¹

The Busk ceremony symbolized a time of new beginnings and renewal. The townspeople would sweep and clean the entire community of all filth. For a period of three days, they would fast and take physics. In the process, they were symbolically reborn. Newborns donned a name. Boys became men. The judged became forgiven of all crimes except murder. On the fourth day, they would extinguish every fire in the community and light a new flame in the town's square ground. To symbolize the interconnections between each household and the larger community, a torch bearer would use the town's central flame to light anew each individual family's home fire.

With the dawn of the New Year, the women proceeded to the fields to harvest the new crops, which hitherto, all were forbidden to consume. Then, the starving townspeople would have an enormous feast in the town's square ground, where they would invite friends and family from outside of the community to join in the celebration with singing, dancing, and other forms of merriment until the sun peaked over the horizon. Once completing this essential ceremony, the villagers were free to do as they pleased.

¹¹ Many have written about the Busk ceremony. My reconstruction of the ceremony is largely based on the following sources: Bartram, *Travels*, 399; Philip Georg Friedrich Von Reck, *Von Reck's Voyage*, ed. Kristian Hvidt (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1990), 49; Benjamin Hawkins, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810*, ed. Thomas Foster (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 75s, 78s ("happy institution"), 79s; Hugh Young, "A Topographical Memoir on East and West Florida with Itineraries of General Andrew Jackson's Army, 1818," ed. Mark F. Boyd, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 13 (October 1934): 95-96; Taitt, "Journal, 1772," 549. On the importance of ritual, see Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 3. For the place of the hunting season in relation to other rituals, see Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 67.

Not every Creek went to Florida in spring of 1754 with ill intentions. The nationalistic Brahmins from Coweta travelled to St. Augustine to renew their ancient friendship with the Spaniards and invite them to attend their annual Busk ceremony that summer. Out of all the possible candidates for this mission, Florida Governor Fugencio Garcia de Solis chose a Florida Indian named Antonio Muono to mingle with a crowd that had recently expressed their desire to kill anyone resembling him. Muono's experience among the Chattahoochee River Creeks highlighted the growing division between nationalists and English partisans at the outset of the Great War for Empire.¹²

Muono spent most of his time at the Lower Creek capitol of Coweta. It was the northernmost town on the western (Alabama) side of the Chattahoochee River just below the Piedmont-coastal plains fall line. Muono found that the locals were "firm in the friendship of the Spaniards" so much so that he could not even detect "a minor sign of disgust." They provided the Spanish Indian with much critical information regarding the intentions of the English towards Spanish Florida. Apparently, Englishmen notified the Lower Creeks that "with the Spaniards they were for the present in good relations, but that in the spring it would not be, and that then they will arm them against San Augustine." Thus, the spring attacks of 1754 and the English "fortifying themselves at full speed" on the southern frontier were not without a purpose. They did so "in the event of [a] siege of this plaza." Luckily for the Spaniards, Coweta's leaders favored a policy of neutrality in the wars between the English, Spanish, and French colonists. They preferred to fight with none and trade with all. The French and Indian War was no exception.

¹² For Coweta's invitation, see Alonzo de Arrivas, July 17, 1754. Antonio Muono, Testimony, September 26, 1754, Spellman Collection, reel 144G.

Prince Malachi, the son of Emperor Brahmins, expressed his desire for neutrality. Chief Siticay of Coweta assured Muono that in case of "the outbreak of war with the English, they would be quiet in their towns."¹³

Unfortunately for the Spaniards, Coweta was a powerful exception. As Muono travelled south from Coweta to the town of Chehaw, the Spanish Indian's reception was far less rosy. Chehaw was the most influential of the "point towns," a name derived from a large bend in the Chattahoochee River. Aside from Chehaw, the point towns included Osochi and Ocmulgee. These communities were diverse, but known for their history of British partisanship and Spanish hostility. Upon entering Chehaw, a local named Simunque accused the Spanish delegation of coming to "trick them." He declared that the Spanish invitations to visit to St. Augustine were just a ploy "to finish them off." As the crowd at Chehaw began to turn on their guests, Muono feared for his life. Coincidentally, a friendly Creek named Sinjaque (quite possibly the already mentioned Jacho) was passing through Chehaw to visit his brother. Sinjaque, who just returned from a joyful stay at Fort Picolata, dismissed Simunque as a liar and encouraged the crowd to visit St. Augustine where they "would be well received and entertained," just as he had been. Perhaps the crowd abandoned the notion that visiting St. Augustine was a certain death wish, but Sinjaque could say nothing to erase the partisanship towards Great Britain so evident in the southern towns of the Chattahoochee River.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid.. For a great study of Coweta's politics, see Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, especially 3-4, 83, 110-120, 193.

¹⁴ Muono, September 26, 1754. For a discussion of the point towns, see Thomas Foster, Mary Theresa Bonhage-Freund, and Lisa O'Steen, *Archaeology of the Lower Muskogee Creek Indians, 1715-1836* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 53-56, 65-67, 70. For the pro-English, anti-Spanish bent of the point towns, see Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 153, 173, 185, 228, 241, 265, 269.

Not far below the point towns was a small but significant town called Oconee. According to Dr. John Swanton, “the history of the Seminole is to a considerable extent a continuation of the history of the Oconee.” The Oconee certainly had a reputation for being generally attached to the British and staunch opponents of the Spaniards. During the 1730s and 1740s, they were linked with the destructive campaigns against the Yamasee and other Florida aboriginal groups. At a time when General James Oglethorpe was in desperate need of reinforcements during the 1740 siege of St. Augustine, the Cowkeeper of Oconee (Ahaya) arrived with forty-five warriors. (The Cowkeeper would later become known to modern scholars as the “founder of the Seminole Nation.”) The Oconee Creeks carried on this tradition by participating in a second major Georgian expedition against St. Augustine in 1743. When a group of escaping Spaniards outran English forces, the Oconee pursued the Spaniards “under the Cannon” of St. Augustine and “kill'd an Ensign and 40 Men.” Unfortunately, “the Cannon play'd so smartly upon them that they had not time to bring off any Prisoners.” For all of these gestures, the British regarded the Oconee Creeks as noted English partisans.¹⁵

¹⁵ John R. Swanton, *The Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 181. Kenneth W. Porter, “The Founder of the Seminole Nation,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 27 (April 1949): 362-384; Porter, “The Cowkeeper Dynasty of the Seminole Nation.” For warfare against Yamasee and other Florida groups, see Bartram, *Travels*, 69, 130, 382-83; John H. Hann, “Demise of the Pojoy and Bomto,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (1995): 198-199. On the difficulty of recruiting Creek warriors for the 1740 expedition, see Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 103; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 181-182; Julie Anne Sweet, *Negotiating for Georgia: British-Creek Relations in the Trustee Era, 1733-1752* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 143-145; *The St. Augustine Expedition of 1740* (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1954), 55, 155. For 1743 campaign, see Edward Kimber, *A Relation or Journal of a Late Expedition to the Gates of St. Augustine on Florida* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1976), 29; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 19, 1743.

The Oconee's strong attachment to the British came at the cost of alienating themselves from the most powerful Lower Creeks: the nationalists at Coweta. The most significant incident occurred in 1749, when the president of Savannah, William Stephens, affronted Prince Malachi, who returned to the Chattahoochee to inform his kinsmen that war with the Georgians was imminent. Aware of Malachi's intentions, the Georgian councilors sent out John Kinnard to invite a new set of Lower Creeks unaffiliated with the Prince to "erase any bad impressions" that Malachi "on his return to the Nation might instill." This was a difficult task, since most Lower Creeks remained loyal to Malachi. Kinnard recalled that his mission would have been a complete failure without the aid of the Long Warrior of Oconee (Wehofkee), who "has always been remarkably friendly to the English." Against the will of the Prince, Kinnard and the Long Warrior recruited nearly a hundred Lower Creeks to visit Savannah. The Long Warrior, who served as "the Mouth of the whole," dismissed Malachi as a liar and announced that they "would believe him no more." The Prince was outraged at the treasonous behavior of this Oconee warrior. Whether true or not, Malachi heard that the Georgians attempted to give the Long Warrior a commission to rule the whole Nation, because Malachi did "not love the English." Although the Long Warrior declined the alleged offer, Malachi and his kin at Coweta continued to treat the Long Warrior, the Cowkeeper, and others of the pro-British faction at Oconee with great suspicion.¹⁶

¹⁶ For a detailed study of the 1749 incident, see Sweet, *Negotiating for Georgia: British-Creek Relations in the Trustee Era, 1733-1752*, 159-176. Allen Candler, ed., *Proceedings of the President and Assistants, October 12, 1741 - October 30, 1754*, The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia 6 (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner, 1904), 295-97; William L. McDowell, ed., *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs*, vol. 1 (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), 305-306.

Even though the anti-Spanish sentiment was widespread outside of Coweta at the outset of the war, the Coweta delegation singled out the Oconee as the leading troublemakers. They informed the officials at St. Augustine that only “one of twelve men,” representing the twelve tribes of the Chattahoochee, went to Florida “with evil intentions, and that those are from the town of Oconee,” who had “left many times at the end of the hunting parties.” In 1754, Prince Malachi urged the Spaniards not to see the actions of the unregulated Oconee as representing the will of the Creek Nation, because “if before I had wars with you there, now I have none with nobody.” Malachi declared through a Spanish interpreter that the attackers were “Simarrones,” which roughly translates as “wild” Creeks. Although Coweta Creeks heard their Spanish-speaking translators utter “Simarrones,” they had a difficult time pronouncing the term on account of the missing “r” in their language. Thus, Simarrones morphed into Seminoles as Creek officials incorporated the term into their lexicon. While the term evidently specified the Oconee in 1754, in time it became general enough to be “applied indiscriminately by the Creeks to all the vagabonds from their nation.”¹⁷

Prince Malachi attempted to regulate the “wild” Creeks. When warriors, true to their word, set out from the far southern towns of Sawokli (Sabacola) and Eufaula to eradicate the south Florida natives in the fall of 1754, Prince Malachi ordered the warriors to halt just as they were about to pass out of Lower Creek country. The Prince

¹⁷ Muono, September 26, 1754, and the enclosed Malachi letter. Spitzer, “Spanish Cimarron.” Bartram discussed the lack of the letter “r” in *Travels*, 406; For Seminole as a Spanish loan word, see Sturtevant, “Spanish-Indian Relations in Southeastern North America,” 51. Young, “A Topographical Memoir on East and West Florida with Itineraries of General Andrew Jackson's Army, 1818,” 83 (“all the vagabonds”). For a more philosophical discussion of translation, see David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1-2, 5-13.

launched into an oration about how they should "employ the time of peace in launching their hunting parties," not their war parties. Malachi's words managed to stop the warriors, but only for a time.¹⁸ Not everyone respected Malachi's authority, and the British certainly encouraged dissent. Whereas Malachi advocated that the Creeks employ their time hunting rather than fighting, the Cowkeeper of Oconee proudly proclaimed in a very curious choice of words that "his employment had been making War on the Florida Indians," because he preferred "war better than hunting, and finds it more beneficial."

While the Oconee Creeks were the most vocal spokesmen of the raids, they were not alone. The Yuchi played a significant role. Although their name sounds remarkably close to *Uchice*, the Spanish term for Lower Creek, the Yuchi spoke a language entirely unlike the rest of the Lower Creeks. In fact, they were once enemies until circumstances forced them to resolve their differences and join the others on the Chattahoochee River where they retained their linguistic and cultural uniqueness. While the majority of Creeks would at least give differential treatment to Prince Malachi, the Yuchi declared that "Melatchee had no superior Right to Them or any other Chiefs in the Nation."¹⁹

The attacks against the south Florida natives continued the following year despite Malachi's lectures. By 1756, English-speaking newspapers reported that "a Party of 70 Creeks had been as far as the Coast of Florida, where they killed and captivated [sic] all the Indians they found at that Place, save five that by some Means or [an]other got off

¹⁸ Juan de Cotilla to Fulgencio García de Solís, November 20, 1754, Spellman Collection, reel 144G.

¹⁹ For the Cowkeeper, see John T. Juricek, ed., *Georgia Treaties, 1733-1763*, Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607–1789 11 (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1989), 260 ("employment"); *Boston Evening Post*, November 3, 1760("war better than hunting"). For the Yuchis, see Hawkins, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 61s-62s; Glen to President and Council of Georgia, Council Chamber, June 15, 1751 in McDowell, *DRIA*, 1: 170; Candler, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 6: 289 ("no superior Right").

alive." The raids in search for the fugitive Floridians continued largely off the record throughout the French and Indian War. In the late spring or early summer of 1760, Yuchi warriors "fell in with the main Body of the Floridians, whom they surprised and fell in upon like a Torrent, killed many and took 11 Prisoners without any Loss on their Side; the rest took to their Pit-pans and fled South-westerly" with the Yuchis "proceeding after the Fugitives."²⁰ The Oconee Creeks under the Cowkeeper joined the Yuchi that fall, and together they caught about nine more captives. In October, 1760, the Cowkeeper and his band of warriors paraded through Savannah with twenty south Florida prisoners. The Cowkeeper announced that "he had at length, in a manner, extirpated the Florida Indians." Georgians were overjoyed and treated the warriors with a hero's welcome. Meanwhile, the handful of south Florida natives that escaped the slaughter fled to Key West where they awaited a vessel to take them to Cuba where most perished from hunger and disease.²¹

The Political Economy of Hunting Parties

The Lower Creeks had finally consolidated their claim to the entire peninsula west of the St. Johns River by right of conquest. Since the Creek conquest of the Spanish

²⁰ *New York Mercury*, June 21, 1756, October 6, 1760; Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports*, 17: 263. For the Cowkeeper's role, see *Boston Evening Post*, November 3, 1760.

²¹ *Boston Evening Post*, November 3, 1760; Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports*, 17: 263. For removal to Cuba, see *South Carolina Gazette*, April 3, 1762; Juan José Elisio de la Puente, September 12, 1764, Stetson Collection, reel 52; Charles W. Arnade, "The Florida Keys: English or Spanish in 1763?," *Tequesta* 15 (1955): 41-54; Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), 291; Charles B. Cory, *Hunting and Fishing in Florida: Including a Key to the Water Birds Known to Occur in the State* (Boston: Estes & Lauriant, 1896), 12; Worth, "The Evacuation of South Florida, 1704-1760."

mission system in the early-eighteenth century, Florida experienced an ecological revolution that transformed the peninsula into a commercial hunters' paradise. Notwithstanding the Cowkeeper's claim to preferring warfare over hunting, he and his "gang" were prolific hunters. William Bartram remarked that the Creeks, especially those in Florida, "wage eternal war against deer and bear... which is indeed carried to an unreasonable and perhaps criminal excess, since the white people have dazzled their senses with foreign superfluities." In a similar vein, Denys Rolle, a resident of East Florida, explained "for it must be understood of these kinds of Hunters, that they destroy, for the Sake of the Skins, ten Times as much Deer as they make use of the Venison of."²²

Having already explained the seasonality of the Creek presence in Florida, I would now like to spend some time discussing some of the more popular Creek hunting spots and those that frequented them. Scattered evidence suggests that Creek hunting paths in Florida were not random, even though "our understanding of the boundaries of these hunting grounds is murky today" noted Dr. J. Leitch Wright. Certain groups laid a specific claim to a particular ground. Wright attempted to reconstruct these paths. He argued that "the Chehaws hunted on the Altamaha, the Cowetas between the Oconee and Ogeechee... The Yuchis were among those who went to mid-Florida and Tampa Bay."²³

²² The most stunning description of the ecological revolution is found in Diego Pena, "Diego Pena's Expedition to Apalachee and Apalachicola in 1716," trans. Mark F. Boyd, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 28 (July 1949): especially 14. For secondary scholarship on the changing nature of the hunt, see William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 97-98, 105; Michael P. Morris, *The Bringing of Wonder: Trade and the Indians of the Southeast, 1700-1783* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), especially 3-6; Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 62. For quotations, see Bartram, *Travels*, 184; Denys Rolle, *The Humble Petition of Denys Rolle* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1977), 15.

²³ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 63-64.

As Wright pointed out, the Tampa Bay area was a popular hunting spot, especially for the Yuchi. Officials at St. Augustine were aware that many Chattahoochee River natives canoed to the region to hunt, but they knew little more of what was happening on the gulf coast. The Cuban navy, however, led several surveying voyages to the Tampa Bay region in the 1750s, and one of them, the Francisco Maria Celi expedition in April of 1757, recorded their interactions with the hunters. When not hunting by daylight, these hunters resided in small camps of no more than a dozen along the coast. Nevertheless, there were enough of these camps to cover the coastline with tiny flickers of light. These hunters travelled almost exclusively by canoe. The Spaniards encountered one innovative group of maritime hunters, who carried "four hallow deer skulls so prepared that they retained their antlers and had some small cords inside which made the ears move about." Although Celi made only a passing reference to their "lodgings" in his journal, the artistically drawn map of the region clearly depicted the quintessential hunting camp: an open two-sided structure.²⁴

A hunting site of even greater importance was just seventy miles away from St. Augustine at the Alachua (La Chuá) savanna, known today as Payne's Prairie Preserve State Park near modern-day Gainesville. Hunters, typically associated with the town of Oconee, would often gather there or at the nearby ghost town of Santa Fe to set out on

²⁴ For St. Augustine's knowledge of Tampa Bay hunters, see Juan de Cotilla to García de Solís, November 20, 1754; Fulgencio García de Solís to the King, St. Augustine, December 12, 1754, Stetson Collection, reel INSERT. Of the earlier expedition, see Jack D.L. Holmes and John D. Ware, "Juan Baptista Franco and Tampa Bay, 1756," *Tequesta* 28 (1968): 91-97. For the Celi expedition, see Charles W. Arnade, "Celi's Expedition to Tampa Bay: A Historical Analysis," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 47 (July 1968): 4-6; Francisco Maria Celi, "Tampa Bay in 1757: Francisco Maria Celi's Journal and Logbook Part II," ed. John D. Ware, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 50 (January 1972): 262-277. For the accompanying map, see John D. Ware, "A View of Celi's Journal of Surveys and Chart of 1757," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 47 (July 1968): especially 22-23. Compare to "Indian Camp" found in Von Reck, *Voyage*.

their hunts. In the words of William Bartram, “the extensive Alachua savanna is a level green plain, above fifteen miles over, fifty miles in circumference, and scarcely a tree or bush of any kind to be seen on it.” For Creek hunters, the savanna naturally embodied the ideal terrain that the natives artificially created through fire: a vast open space where game could be easily visible.

Aside from the “herds of sprightly deer,” Bartram also spotted “innumerable droves of cattle” on the savanna. Long ago, the Hacienda de La Chua was once the largest supplier of fresh beef in all of Florida, but since its destruction in the early-eighteenth century, the cattle went wild and roamed the lands as they pleased. Many Creek warriors learned of Alachua's animal wealth during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748), when they “inspected the inland country and brought us [the English army] plenty of fresh beef.” After the war ended, the warriors returned in hunting parties (caserias) to claim the cattle of Alachua and the neighboring Santa Fe area as their “ranches.” Chief Ahaya of Oconee, who was known to the British by the common employment title of “the Cowkeeper,” was particularly linked to the Florida ranches around Alachua.²⁵

These Florida hunting excursions contributed to the Creek-Seminole schism. Coweta headmen characterized many of these hunters as “wild,” because they spent so much time in their Florida hunting grounds. Their comparatively long excursions were

²⁵ For hunters at Alachua, see García de Solís to the King, December 12, 1754. For an explicit reference to the Santa Fe and Alachua meeting grounds, see Lucas Palacio y Valenzuela to Julián de Arriaga, St. Augustine, July 15, 1761, Stetson Collection. For Alachua's past, see Henry A. Baker, “Spanish Ranching and the Alachua Sink Site: A Preliminary Report,” *Florida Anthropologist* 46 (June 1993): 82; Pena, “Diego Pena's Expedition to Apalachee and Apalachicola in 1716,” 14. Quotation (“inspected”) found in *General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733–1743*, vol. 2 (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1975), 446. Bartram, *Travels*, 165. On the use of fire, see Timothy Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 59-66.

largely the result of a phenomenon known as “trading in the woods”: a form of commerce whereby merchants would illegally setup “shops” at popular hunting spots to exchange goods, often “Taffy” (rum), in return for unprocessed skins. By the 1750s, British merchants began accompanying the natives on their hunting excursions to Alachua and “Saint Taffy,” the English transliteration of Santa Fe.²⁶

Creek nationalists regularly complained of destabilizing effects of merchants, who “carry rum and other things into the woods, and trade with them while on their hunts.” In particular, they singled out a merchant named Ephraim Alexander, whose “particular friend” was none other than the Cowkeeper of Oconee. Although Alexander was at one time a licensed merchant to several small Lower Creek villages, he began illegally trading in the Florida woods, where he amassed “great influence” with the Florida hunters. Creek national officials complained that Alexander “trades away back in the Woods and [keeps] our People from coming Home by which Means our Towns are empty of People.” They requested that Governor Reynolds “order them to come in and [leave] of trading in the Woods.”²⁷

By 1757, twenty-eight of the gun bearing Oconees associated with Alachua formed a new village just a few miles below Oconee. This new settlement was known

²⁶ For a possible, yet implicit, reference to trading in the Florida woods, see *New York Gazette*, September 25, 1752. In 1754, the Spaniards mentioned a mysterious “casa fuerte” (strong house) nearby the St. Johns River. I believe this rumored casa fuerte was actually an exaggerated illegal trading post. See García de Solís to the King, December 12, 1754, Stetson Collection. For an explicit reference in 1759 to “the British having a store in Chua and in Santa Fee for the exchange of skins,” see Solana, “Report,” 548.

²⁷ Quotation (“carry rum”) found in *Georgia Gazette*, December 22, 1763. On the Cowkeeper’s relationship with Alexander, see Joshua Piker, “In the Wrong Place at the Right Time: The Creek Town of Alachua, the British Town of New Hanover, and the Role of ‘Outlaw’ Towns in the Southeastern Backcountry, 1750s-1770s,” April 1997, 7. For Alexander as a licensed trader from Carolina, see *DRIA*, 1: 124. Complaints about E. Alexander found in McDowell, *DRIA*, 2: 192. For secondary material on trading in the woods, see Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America*, 154-157; Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 101, 105, 106.

either as “Little Oconee” or “Alchuba” after their favorite hunting spot. Although we have no details of the reasons behind the formation of Alchuba, there are several possibilities. Thomas Nairne noted that natives often formed such satellite communities out of “some disgust, or other reason.” Given the reputation of those Alachua hunters, this is a very plausible explanation, but not the only one. By the middle of the century, the flood of English merchants into Creek country led a proliferation of “new” or “little” villages, known in the Creek tongue as *talofas*. New traders, rather than facing competition with an existing town trader, would often establish a splinter settlement with the help of a “special friend.” This explanation is also very promising given Ephraim Alexander’s relationship with the Cowkeeper. In all likelihood, the establishment of Alchuba was the result of both possibilities.²⁸

Ephraim Alexander’s role in Seminole formation appears to be incredibly significant. Unfortunately, little else is known about him aside from his troubled “connection” with a Georgian politician named Edmund Gray, who headed an opposition faction that accused Governor John Reynolds of unfair and arbitrary government. In January, 1755, several of Gray’s faction lost in the first Georgian election. They accused the Reynolds’ faction of voter fraud. When their calls for a new election were ignored, the Gray faction resorted to boycotting the assembly. In their absence, the assembly expelled Gray and his followers for sedition. Gray fled to the Satilla River, where he

²⁸ For Little Oconee/Atchuba, see Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 89; William Bonar, "A Draught of the Creek Nation," May 1757, reproduced in William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, ed. Louis De Vorsey, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Plate 59E. Nairne, *Muskhogean Journals*, 62-63.

established the illegal colony of New Hanover and claimed the entire territory between the Altamaha and St. Johns rivers. Gray was followed by boat loads of settlers, initially fifty to sixty gunmen, but by 1759 their numbers expanded to 300. Gray's "gang" was chiefly of a "lawless Set of People, Hunters, and who committed Outrages against all Law." Ephraim Alexander was drawn to New Hanover for the same reasons as many merchants. The illegal colony was essentially a rendezvous for traders in the woods. Without regulations, recognition, investors, or capital, New Hanover was dependent on commerce with the natives and Spaniards of Florida. According to Dr. Joshua Piker's study, a significant portion of New Hanover families were involved in the "Indian" trades as merchants or white hunters.²⁹

The Lower Creeks had mixed reactions to New Hanover, but the vast majority saw the illegal colony as a flagrant treaty violation of the Nation's hunting grounds. On March 20, 1756, eighty-two Lower Creek men, women, and children complained to Governor Reynolds of "Gray and other People being settled on a Place called Sattilla which is near their Hunting grounds." Despite Reynolds' antipathy towards the New Hanoverians, he replied that he could unfortunately do nothing about them, because his jurisdiction stopped at the Altamaha River. The natives should complain to the governor

²⁹ For Gray-Alexander connection, see Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 17-18. For Gray's expulsion, see Coleman and Ready, ed., *Original Papers of Governor John Reynolds, 1754-1756*, Colonial Records of the State of Georgia 27 (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1977), 56; *New York Mercury*, March 3, 1755; Allen Candler, ed., *Proceedings and Minutes of the Governor and Council, October 20, 1754 - March 6, 1759*, Colonial Records of the State of Georgia 7 (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner, 1906), 134; Edward J. Cashin, *Governor Henry Ellis and the Transformation of British North America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 63. For territorial claim, see M.B. Hamer, "Edmund Gray and His Settlement at New Hanover," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 13 (March 1929): 53. Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 27: 61 (boats, debtors, etc.). For New Hanover's population, see McDowell, *DRIA*, 2: 194; Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 174. See *ibid.*, 18 for "Merchant" quote. Quotation ("New Hanover Law") found in Rolle, *Humble Petition*, 75. Piker argued that at least 27% of New Hanover's known members were "linked to the Creeks"; see Piker, "In the Wrong Place at the Right Time," 8.

of South Carolina, who Reynolds believed had jurisdiction over the debated borderlands between England and Spain. Stepping into this bureaucratic quicksand, Reynolds believed that the “lawless Crew” of New Hanover “may very probably involve us in some future Broils with the Indians.” Reynolds was right. Those at New Hanover were terrified of a Creek attack. By contrast, a minority of Lower Creeks favored the illegal colony and “not only behaved friendly, but relishing the advantage of Supplies from this Settlement, are Solicitous for Our Stay.” These friendly Creeks were none other than the Cowkeeper and his kin from Oconee.³⁰

The two Creek views of New Hanover and trading in the woods—one partisan, the other nationalist—clashed in the fall of 1756, a time of general dissatisfaction among the Creeks over illegal settlers. In September, Upper Creeks from the Tallapoosa River exchanged bullets with English squatters in an event known to history as the Ogeechee incident. That same September, five New Hanoverians joined a Creek hunting jaunt to the Alachua-Santa Fe region. Although their Oconee friends were courteous, others grumbled about hunting in the company of land usurpers. Ten days into the excursion the New Hanover hunters noticed a “disagreeable Change in the behavior of several of the Indians.” The five became apprehensive. They were in the middle of nowhere hunting with their potential murderers. Luckily, a brother of the Cowkeeper would protect them, but he too was worried of a potential ambush if they continued in the woods. He

³⁰ Complaints about Gray found in Candler, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 7: 333; McDowell, *DRIA*, 2: 194, 355. Quotation (“friendly”) found in Hamer, “Edmund Gray and His Settlement at New Hanover,” 54.

recommended a safer passage to St. Augustine, and he even accompanied the five men along part of the journey until it appeared safe.³¹

When the New Hanoverians safely reached St. Augustine, several of the English-speaking inhabitants of the ancient city informed them of troubling news: the Spaniards planned to travel to the Satilla River to take advantage of the "rupture" between the Creek nationalists and the New Hanoverians. Three of the five New Hanoverians rushed home along the shoreline to sound the alarm that the Creeks wanted them dead and the Spaniards were coming. Most New Hanoverians fled to Cumberland Island, and by the time the Spanish force under Lorenzo Joseph de Leon reached Satilla's "small English population" on November 15, 1756, they found a majority of the homes abandoned.³²

The Spaniards explained to the few remaining settlers that they were misinformed about Spain's territory ending at the St. Johns River. The settlers needed to withdraw or become Spanish vassals. After the New Hanoverians returned from Cumberland Island, some were intrigued by the Spanish proposal. Their plan of gaining imperial recognition as a legitimate colony was not faring well. Perhaps the Spaniards had a worthwhile offer, or at least something the New Hanoverians could use to play the English off against the Spaniards in hopes of bettering their prospects of recognition. Nevertheless, their first concern was survival. In the face of Spanish threats, Gray called on Ephraim Alexander,

³¹ On the Ogeechee incident, Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 177; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 259-260. William Wilkins testimony of the Santa Fe hunting trip found in Candler, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 7: 429.

³² For Spanish learning of the "rupture," see *Ibid.*, 429. The flight to Cumberland Island can be found in Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 17. Lorenzo Joseph de Leon, *Diary*, November 26, 1756, enclosed in Herida to Arriaga, Florida, December 3, 1756, AGI-SD 2542B [PKY 28-B reel 19]).

who persuaded his “particular” Lower Creek friends to threaten war on the Spaniards if they continued harassing the illegal colony.³³

“Discreet and Very Delicate Conduct”

The tense borderland situation changed dramatically with the arrival of a new Georgian governor named Henry Ellis (1757-1760). Ellis saw the New Hanover settlers not as traitors, but as a symptom of “an almost universal discontent arising from the late proceedings and persons in power.” Almost immediately after arriving in Georgia, Ellis met Edmund Gray, Ephraim Alexander, and their native allies on Georgia’s southern frontier. In Ellis’s eyes, Edmund Gray was “a shrewd sensible fellow,” who if controlled, “may prove a useful instrument in many respects.” He held a similar view towards Ephraim Alexander, who he described as “a very bold sensible fellow, who has long dwelt, & acquired a great influence among the Lower Creeks Indians that reside toward the Bay of Apalachee.” Ellis also immediately liked the natives allied to New Hanover. They seemed so friendly to the British that Ellis was willing to overlook how they terrified the frontier settlers and killed their cattle. Perhaps they all could be useful.³⁴

What exactly did Ellis have in mind? Like many in the English-speaking world, the governor never took Spanish neutrality seriously and believed that it was just a matter of time before the Spanish Bourbons entered the war on the side of the French Bourbons,

³³ Ibid.. Candler, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 7: 547-548; Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 18.

³⁴ Ibid., 3 (“universal discontent”), 17-19.

then Florida would be legitimately up for grabs. While Whitehall officials encouraged peaceful relations with the Spaniards to keep them from joining the French, Governor Ellis advocated a preemptive attack against Florida. He asserted that although “it may be objected that such a Conquest amongst the Spanish Settlements would give Umbrage to Spain, which might happen, yet I am persuaded it would be our interest to make it, even were we to yield it to the Spaniards afterwards.” Given Whitehall’s disapproval, Ellis conceived of a policy towards Spain that was based on “discreet and very delicate conduct, always adapted to the circumstances of the conjecture.” The “conjecture” at Ellis’s arrival was the hostility between Alexander’s “particular” friends and the Spaniards. The governor admitted that he had no intention of “diminishing the deep rooted aversion these Savages have to the Spaniards.” In his mind, that would “certainly be bad policy.” Instead, he decided to “wink at many enormities committed by our own people & the Savages.” Needless to say, that under such conditions we can hardly rely on Ellis to provide us with anything more than cryptic statements regarding his “ticklish business” with the English partisans.³⁵

Shortly after Ellis’s arrival, his meeting with Gray, Alexander, and their “particular” friends, Creek warriors killed two unarmed workers from Fort San Marcos de Apalachee on the morning of July 26, 1757. After scalping and ripping out the hearts of their unfortunate victims, the natives set a large fire that spread within a few miles of the fort. The presiding commander at Fort San Marcos immediately dispatched several parties of soldiers to hunt down the culprits. One walked right into a slew of Creek

³⁵ Rumor had it in March 1757 that many French were at St. Augustine, and the Spaniards openly spoke of their intentions to join the French (McDowell, *DRIA*, 2: 354). On Ellis’s Spanish policy, see Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 74-75, 166, 248.

bullets, and by the time the detachment pulled itself together to await a second attack, the battle was over and the attackers returned home for the Busk purification ceremony. Nevertheless, the Spanish force managed to mortally wound several highly-respected war leaders, who died in the retreat. In accordance with custom, the attackers would seek their revenge after Busk.³⁶

The Spaniards strongly suspected that the English were behind the July 26 attack. Since the bloodshed forced the Spaniards at Pensacola to open further communication with the French at Mobile for intelligence gathering purposes, many Spaniards believed the attack was a part of an English ploy to raise “suspicions of our neutrality.” The Spaniards at St. Augustine placed most of the blame on the illegal English settlers at New Hanover. St. Augustine officials even accused Governor Ellis of “secretly kindling this flame.” The Upper Creeks blamed the English partisans among the Lower Creeks. The Lower Creeks pointed to the partisans among the Upper Creeks along the Tallapoosa River. In the end, the Eufaula, who lived amongst both the Upper and Lower Creeks, were deemed the main malefactors. Nevertheless, those at Coweta strongly suspected the involvement of the old enemies of the Spaniards: the Oconee Creeks. This assumption proved correct. A party of twenty-four Oconee walked away from the battle with four Spanish captives, who they took to Ephraim Alexander at New Hanover before returning to the Chattahoochee for Busk.³⁷

³⁶ Events described in Juan de Cotilla to Alonso Fernández de Heredia, (Diary, Jul. 26-Sep. 26), September 26, 1757, enclosed in Heredia to Arriaga, October 14, 1757, Stetson Collection, reel 51. For accounts from Pensacola, see Miguel Román de Castillo y Lugo to unknown, October 25, 1757, Spellman Collection, reel 144J.

³⁷ “Suspicions of our neutrality” quoted in Román de Castillo y Lugo to unknown, October 25, 1757. For accusations of Ellis and New Hanover instigation, see Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 74, 105-107, 175. For Oconee’s role, see Juan de Cotilla to Fernández de Heredia,

Around this time the Oconee heard disconcerting news that Governor Ellis was furious about their attack on the Spaniards. The natives were dumbfounded. Was Ellis's outrage a diplomatic performance or had Ellis betrayed them? To clarify the confusing situation, the Cowkeeper led a party of fifty warriors to visit the governor. The Cowkeeper was relieved when Ellis lauded the chief for his "firm and steady Friend to the English," including their efforts to prevent "the Spaniards from Cultivating their Lands or extending their Settlements from Pensacola or St. Augustine." However, the Cowkeeper mistook what seemed to be an explicit sign of approval as a public endorsement. When the chief wanted to discuss the problems his people were having with the Spaniards in the council chamber, Ellis said it was "imprudent and impolitic" to become involved in a dispute between the Indians and the Spaniards, especially since England and Spain were at peace. Ellis invited his guests to his house for a private talk, where he could candidly speak without the presence of a transcriber.³⁸

The Spaniards knew that a second attack was forthcoming after Busk. A month later, they discovered a mysterious fire near Fort San Marcos. The next night, warriors attempted to burn down the fort's store located on the confluence of the Tagabana and Apalachee River. To make matters worse, news arrived from Pensacola that the "infidels" from the Upper Creek towns along the Tallapoosa River had "congregated, and in fact, left already from their towns" to attack the Spaniards at Pensacola, while the Lower Creeks were planning to assault the Spaniards at San Marcos de Apalachee and St. Augustine. Just over twenty miles away from St. Augustine, Lower Creek warriors

September 26, 1757, especially the Aug. 22 entry; Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 187. On the four prisoners, see Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 104-105.

³⁸ Juricek, *Georgia Treaties*, 259-61.

descended on the haciendas of San Diego and Monte Puerco on September 15. They burned the plantations to the ground and captured six prisoners. Spanish military forces set out to intercept them, but moved too slowly. In time, the Spaniards learned that the aggressors were friends of New Hanover, who “came straight from the town of Oconee.” Despite such incriminating evidence against the English, the governor of St. Augustine, Alonso Fernandez de Heredia (1755-1758), instructed his officers: “do not make damage in the settlement of Satilla.”³⁹

Heredia preferred to handle the problem diplomatically by opening a correspondence with Governor Ellis. Governor Heredia demanded that Ellis remove the illegal settlers at New Hanover. Although Ellis agreed to Heredia’s diplomatic demands, he was completely insincere. To his Anglophone comrades, Ellis confessed that his response to Heredia was intended to be “in vague & general terms,” but specific enough to “render a further correspondence upon these points unnecessary.” When Heredia accused Ellis of being involved in the recent Indian attacks, Ellis swore to Heredia on his honor that he had always told the natives not to disturb the Spaniards, because their two nations were at peace. Ellis denied all responsibility or knowledge of the attacks since the attacks were unplanned. Ellis insisted that the Lower Creek warriors were hunting Florida Indians, but when they could not find any Florida natives, they suddenly remembered that soldiers at the garrison of San Marcos committed acts of indecency towards their women.

³⁹ Juan de Cotilla to Fernández de Heredia, September 26, 1757. For accounts from Pensacola, see Román de Castillo y Lugo to unknown, October 25, 1757. The September 15 event is found in a long series of declarations recorded on September 26 by military officers such as Lorenzo Joseph de Leon, Antonio Casimiro, Adefonso Sanchez, Alvero Lopez de Toledo, etc., they all tend to say the same thing. For knowledge of when the Oconee were deemed the culprits, see Alonso Fernández de Heredia to Lorenzo Joseph de Leon, September 18, 1757. All of these Spanish sources are found as enclosures in the massive 69 page letter from Alonso Fernández de Heredia to Julián de Arriaga, October 14, 1757, Stetson Collection, reel 51.

On a whim, they decided to attack the Spaniards. By painting the Creek attackers as capricious savages, Ellis could deny all responsibility.⁴⁰

Needless to say, the Spaniards did not accept Ellis's flimsy narration of events. Back at Whitehall, the Board of Trade became concerned with the attacks, and like the Spaniards, they doubted Ellis's claims to innocence. In particular, they questioned the governor's conduct behind closed doors. Ellis was known to have "constantly entertained select parties of the leading men" at his house, but he assured his inquisitive superiors that "it will perhaps seem strange to your Lordship that during our negotiation I never instigated the Indians to make war upon our Enemies." To make a marginal show of his sincerity, Ellis negotiated the release of several of the Spanish captives taken by the Oconee. Notwithstanding his public performance, Ellis was examining Georgia's southern defenses and considering the role that Mary Bosomworth, another influential Creek merchant, could play if Spain and England went to war.⁴¹

The violence in Florida increased in Florida after the arrival of Alonso Fernández de Heredia's replacement: Governor Lucas Fernando de Palacio y Valenzuela (1758-1761). By all accounts, Palacio was a ruthless and unpopular governor. His critics portray him as tyrannical, paranoid, and delusional. The priesthood openly despised him as "a demon, a wild man, or possessed by some evil spirit." The soldiers showed their disdain by deserting in droves. The Creeks would soon come to the same character assessment of

⁴⁰ For accounts from Pensacola, see Román de Castillo y Lugo to unknown, October 25, 1757; Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 74, 77, 105-108.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 87, 104-105, 108, 156, 160. For prisoner returns, see *New York Gazette*, November 14, 1757; Alonso Fernández de Heredia to Julián de Arriaga, May 31, 1758, AGI-SD 2542-B, reel 20.

Palacio, who saw the Creeks as “treacherous barbarians,” who like vermin “have at all times infested this country.” The new governor believed that a strong arm was needed to keep the Creeks in line. In particular, he was determined to maintain the boundary between the Spaniards and the Indians at the St. Johns River.⁴²

The conflict between the Creeks and Palacio developed immediately after the two parties met in November, 1758. A large delegation of Lower Creeks from various towns under Laziche from the point town of Osochi travelled to St. Augustine to greet and establish good relations with the new governor. Palacio, in turn, informed his guests that “they should not dare cross the Picolata [St. Johns] River without his (the governor's) permission, because he would hang them all.” Palacio declared that “they should understand that they were dealing with a strong and valiant Mico” (the Creek word for chief). Palacio’s outburst infuriated the Creeks. The natives replied that if one of their micos acted like Palacio, “they would join together and would kill him.” They stormed away announcing “their only desire was to kill him for his bad treatment of them.” Because of the Palacio’s rash behavior, the warriors declared that “from this time on no one would leave Florida because they would be killed.”⁴³

Although the Brahmins of Coweta renewed their ancient friendship with the Spaniards in 1759, most Creeks went to Florida to make war. After a short lull in the bloodshed, two Spanish fishermen heard discharges in the San Nicolas (Jacksonville)

⁴² Robert Kapitzke, *Religion, Power, and Politics in Colonial St. Augustine* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 165-175, 169 (“a demon”); Robert Kapitzke, “The ‘Calamities of Florida’: Father Solana, Governor Palacio y Valenzuela, and the Desertions of 1758,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 72 (July 1993): 1-18. For “infested” and “treacherous” quotations, see Lucas Palacio y Valenzuela to Julián de Arriaga, St. Augustine, August 15, 1760, Stetson Collection, reel 52.

⁴³ Solana, “Report,” 548, 554-555; Laziche’s town of origin can be found in John T. Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763–1776*, vol. 12, *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607–1789* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 2002), 466.

area on January 30. They hurried to St. Augustine to report the news. Governor Palacio dispatched a squadron of sixty-four soldiers to overtake the perpetrators. When they arrived on the scene, they found a wounded Christian Indian, who explained what had happened. He and four other mission Indians voluntarily left the safety of the missions "to live at their ease" around San Nicolas. They were sleeping around their camp fire that night when they were overtaken by fifty Creek warriors, who killed his comrades and mortally wounded him. (He eventually died in St. Augustine two days later.) The Spaniards were determined to catch the culprits. On the first morning of February, the military overtook the warriors near the St. Johns River and decimated them.⁴⁴

All was quiet again for a period of several months. Then, on May 23, forty Creek warriors descended upon a few soldiers outside of Fort Picolata. They killed one and captured others. The warriors released one of the prisoners to deliver a message to the governor: "they were waiting for him," but the governor did not respond. On June 2, twenty warriors attacked an isolated Spanish soldier near Santo Domingo. When the cavalry attempted to overtake the attackers, the natives disappeared from the scene leaving a trail of thirty dead cattle. Palacio refused to be content to enforce the St. Johns River boundary. He went on the offensive. On July 10, 1759, the Governor sent out 200 men to engage the warriors, but it was a pointless excursion, because most of the warriors had returned home for Busk. In the spring and summer of 1760, all was calm near St. Augustine. Governor Palacio fancied that through his bravery "those treacherous barbarians" had been "contained." The Lower Creeks, he declared, now "do not dare

⁴⁴ For Tugulki, see Lucas Palacio y Valenzuela to Julián de Arriaga, St. Augustine, July 3, 1759, AGI-SD 2542-B, reel 20. For the attack on January 30, see Palacio y Valenzuela to Julián de Arriaga, February 16, 1759. The attackers were allegedly from the town of Eufala.

even to pass the St. Johns River.” Palacio was wrong. The “treacherous barbarians” were simply occupied elsewhere as English partisans in the English-Cherokee War.⁴⁵

The Cherokee War began as a backcountry skirmish between frontiersmen and Cherokee warriors in the summer of 1758, but escalated into a full-scaled conflict by 1760. Governor Ellis hoped to aid the war effort by recruiting Lower Creek warriors, but found this very difficult on account of the recent friendship between the Cherokees and Creeks. The Creeks would only agree to a vague promise of support if the Cherokees attacked Georgia. This was not enough for Ellis. He pondered: "Nothing would contribute more to our safety than those two Savage Nations at variance I am using my utmost endeavours to that purpose." In typical Ellis fashion, the governor admitted: "Whist I am negotiating Publicly I am working in private with the stragling parties of Creeks that occasionally visit me." Ellis's friends, Mary Bosomworth and Edmund Gray, were vital to the recruitment of those stragling partisans, who included the regular cast of characters. The Cowkeeper announced his intentions "to try what he can do against the Cherokees, for he [the Cowkeeper] never will forsake us." The Long Warrior of Oconee (Wehofkee) and White Cabin of Cusseta (Tupahatkee) agreed to “go out against them and bloody the path, on certain conditions of reward.” As the English partisans set out against the Cherokees, Ellis hoped that some would not return alive. A Creek warrior’s

⁴⁵ Solana, “Report,” 547-548, 550, 554-555. Lucas Palacio y Valenzuela to Julián de Arriaga, St. Augustine, August 15, 1760, Stetson Collection, reel 52.

death would compel the rest of the Creeks to end their precarious neutrality with the Cherokees and avenge their kinsmen.⁴⁶

The Creeks, especially those of Coweta, were well aware of Ellis's designs and requested the governor to stop sending the straggling partisans against the Cherokees, because the Creek Nation declared its neutrality. Although Ellis bestowed praise and presents upon the Cowkeeper, the Long Warrior, and the other veterans of the Cherokee War, the same warriors felt a cold welcoming in Creek country, where there were "great Struggles" occurred between the partisans, "who endeavor to effect a Rupture with the Cherokees, and the Majority of the Nation." The Creek-Seminole schism was on the horizon in 1760.⁴⁷

Back in Florida, the short-tempered Palacio was enraged at the partisans, who were finishing off the south Florida natives and continually ignoring the governor's warnings to "remove disarmed to leagues of distance of this Plaza." In the spring of 1761, the rash governor threw gasoline on the fire by sending an expedition of Yamasees and free blacks from Fort Moosa to settle the score. On June 24, 1761, the Spanish force of non-Spaniards surprised the hunters at Santa Fe. The Creeks scattered into the forests, returned fire, and then disappeared into the woods in the "manner of Satyrs." The attack happened so quickly that they left behind their blankets, ammunition, and dead. The Lower Creeks lost about a dozen that day, whereas the Spanish force only suffered two

⁴⁶ Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America*, 228. Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 227, 231, 246-248; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 3, 1760; *South Carolina Gazette*, March 8, 1760.

⁴⁷ Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 250; *South Carolina Gazette*, March 10, 1760; Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports*, 17: 204; *Boston Evening Post*, November 3, 1760.

casualties. The English were overjoyed. One paper remarked that "although the skirmishes between the Creek Indians and Spaniards have hitherto been but trifling, yet their differences may soon become serious." Another paper commented: "In case of a rupture with Spain, the present disposition of the Creeks towards the Subjects of that crown, will prove, it is thought, no unfavourable circumstance to this province and Georgia."⁴⁸

In June of the following year, large numbers of Lower Creeks set out from the point towns to attack the Spaniards at Fort Moosa and enact their revenge, but the Young Lieutenant of Coweta (Escochabey) stopped them. He informed the warriors that while in the Cherokee Nation, he learned that England and Spain officially entered into a state of war. He launched into an oration whereby he predicted that England would soon conquer the Spaniards at St. Augustine, the French at Louisiana, and would then "no longer hesitate to demand satisfaction for the murders committed in the Creek nation." He prophesized that the Creeks "having no friends left on either side, would be obliged to submit" to every whim of the English or face the possibility of having "the numerous nation of the Choctaws set upon to extirpate them." The oration stopped the war parties in their tracks. The Young Lieutenant set out for St. Augustine to initiate the peace process, in which he brought Laziche, the head warrior in the Florida wars, to the peace table. Having completed the peace talks in August, 1762, the Spaniards hoped that "with this act is possible to hope for some security."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *New York Gazette*, March 29, 1762; Palacio y Valenzuela to Julián de Arriaga, July 15, 1761; *Boston News-Letter*, April 23, 1762.

⁴⁹ *South Carolina Gazette*, March 15, 1762, July 24, 1762, July 31, 1762, September 11, 1762, and October 16, 1762; *Boston News-Letter*, April 23, 1762; *New York Gazette*, July 12, 1762. On the

The quasi-peace came too late. That same month of August, the British army captured Havana after a two month siege. The Great War for Empire seemed to be heading towards its natural conclusion, and few were surprised when news reached St. Augustine on March 16, 1763 that the conflict was over. What may have come as a surprise was the fact that the British exchanged the valuable island of Cuba in return for the unprofitable colony of Florida. The Floridians began packing their bags. Even the remaining eighty-nine Yamasee and five Apalachees huddled around St. Augustine voluntarily chose to follow the south Florida natives to Havana where they disappeared into obscurity and Creek and Seminole folklore.⁵⁰

The reoccurring theme of all of these episodes since 1754 was the widening divisions between the English partisans and the nationalists of Coweta. The partisans fought for the British against Spanish Florida in direct opposition to the will of the Creek Nation, who wished to remain neutral. When the nationalists called for a cessation of bloodshed against the Florida Indians, the English partisans embarked on a mission of total extermination. To the displeasure of the nationalists, the partisans befriended and protected the illegal traders and settlers of New Hanover from hostile Creeks. Lastly, the partisans completely disregarded the decrees of Coweta nationalists by waging war

peace process, see Melchor Feliu to Julián de Arriaga, St. Augustine, February 20, 1763, Stetson Collection, reel 52.

⁵⁰ For Havana's capture, see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 498. For the transfer and evacuation, see Charles L. Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province, 1763-1784* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), 7; Robert L. Gold, "The Settlement of the Pensacola Indians in New Spain, 1763-1770," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 45 (November 1965): 567-568.

against the Cherokees. For all of these reasons, the nationalists regarded the English partisans as Simarrones or Seminoles.

Around the time of Florida's transfer, a "parcel of renegades" headed by the Cowkeeper and Long Warrior was "obliged to leave their respective Towns and go down there [Florida], for the purpose of being out of the way of Justice." Along with their friends from New Hanover, the first "Semiolokee" settled in their favorite hunting spot in the Alachua savanna, where they "lately built" crudely constructed "hutts" on its edges. During the eighteenth century, this area of Creek settlement was often called New Oconee, Latchaway, or Cuscowilla. The Seminoles of Oconee were not the only Creeks to move to Florida. Others, some of a more Spanish partisan persuasion, followed the Oconee's lead by settling along the Suwannee River and in the Apalachee Old Fields area, near Fort San Marcos de Apalachee. In 1764, English officials estimated the number of Florida Creeks to be about 400.⁵¹

⁵¹ On leadership of a new community, see Nairne, *Muskhogean Journals*, 64. For quotation ("out of the way"), see Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 261. For "Semiolokee" see De Brahm's 1765 journal entry in William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, ed. Louis De Vorsey, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 91. Quotation ("lately built") found in John Gerar William De Brahm, *Report of the General Survey in the Southern District of North America*, ed. Louis De Vorsey (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 228. Quotation ("hutts") found in Rolle, *Humble Petition*, 48, 50, 53. For the New Hanover connection, see Joshua Piker, "In the Wrong Place at the Right Time: The Creek Town of Alachua, the British Town of New Hanover, and the Role of 'Outlaw' Towns in the Southeastern Backcountry, 1750s-1770s," April 1997. For other indications of Alachua's newness, see Thomas Gage to John Stuart, August 18, 1764, Gage Collection, PKY reel 1. For population estimates, see John Stuart to Thomas Gage, St. Augustine, July 19, 1764, Gage Collection, PKY reel 1.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MASK OF DIPLOMACY

In the spring of 1771, Chief Cowkeeper and the Long Warrior of Alachua led a party of seventy-two heavily-armed Seminole and Creek warriors against Smyrnéa: Dr. Andrew Turnbull's large and newly established settlement of indentured servants from Greece, Italy, and Minorca. An Englishman encountered the warriors on the path and "endeavored to dissuade them from the attempt by telling them the settlement belonged to the English and subjects of the Great King." Chief Cowkeeper was not to be dissuaded and he and his warriors gathered outside of Smyrnéa declaring their intentions to break up the settlement. They assaulted members of Turnbull's boat crew and helped themselves to the settlement's provisions. The women and children at Smyrnéa fled to safety, while Turnbull sent out several friendly invitations to the chiefs, who refused to meet with the doctor.¹

The situation would have gone from bad to worse had not a cattleman misinformed the warriors that Dr. Turnbull was "appointed to govern the province" in the

¹ Frederick George Mulcaster to James Grant, St. Augustine, January 2, 1772, James Grant Papers; Andrew Turnbull to James Grant, Smyrnéa, May 9, 1771, James Grant Papers; Andrew Turnbull to James Grant, Smyrnéa, May 27, 1771, James Grant Papers. For an overview of New Smyrna history, see Epaminondas Panagopoulos, *New Smyrna; an Eighteenth Century Greek Odyssey* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966). For a general treatment of deception, see Gerald Sider, "When Parrots Learn to Talk, and Why They Can't: Domination, Deception, and Self-Deception in Indian-White Relations," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (January 1987): 3-23.

wake of the departure of James Grant, East Florida's first governor (1764-1771). The warriors, realizing that they were not dealing with an ordinary planter, suddenly changed their tune and the Cowkeeper accepted Turnbull's offer "to have [a] friendly talk." The headmen apologized for the misunderstanding and informed the doctor that they were only passing by his settlement to destroy an alleged "settlement of Spaniards and Yamisies on Cape Florida," which was much further to the south of Smyrnéa. Turnbull advised the warriors that no such settlement existed to the south.²

Although Dr. Turnbull gave some "credit" to this explanation, he sensed deception. When the warriors departed allegedly to search for the mysterious Spaniards, Turnbull sent a few of his people to shadow their movements and see if they were actually heading to Cape Florida, but the warriors barely went "farther than this place to look for it." Thinking this odd, Turnbull made further inquiries and became convinced that his first impulse was correct: the alleged Spanish and Yamasee settlement at Cape Florida was pure theater, an "excuse they made after I had found means to make them lay aside their first intentions which they before declared were against this settlement."³

Turnbull's account bewildered many influential St. Augustine officials. The Alachua Creeks under the Cowkeeper and Long Warrior were notoriously pro-English and anti-Spanish, but the doctor suggested that the simplistic caricature was not only flawed, it was a pretentious mask of deception. Governor Grant's actual replacement, the Lieutenant-Governor John Moultrie (1771-1774), dismissed Turnbull's concerns as paranoid delusions. Moultrie did not even believe "a tenth of the story," and compared

² Turnbull to Grant, May 9, 1771; Turnbull to Grant, May 27, 1771.

³ Ibid.

Turnbull and his settlers to "some younger people," who "have been brooding over frightful things at [the] dead of night and hatched a thousand young airy devils to plague themselves with." Turnbull's detractors insisted that the natives had good intentions towards the English, but they were gullible and easily misguided by rumors. The warriors likely confused Smyrnéa settlers as Spaniards on account of their darker complexion. "I cannot see one reason to think they [the Seminoles] mean any of the Kings Subjects the least harm," commented Moultrie. In fact, he had "never seen a time when we had less to fear from them than now." Despite being dismissed as paranoid, delusional, and "more than a little inconsistent," Dr. Turnbull's first impulses were correct: the natives were performing theatrical acts of deception, while their main audience, those high-ranking officials at St. Augustine, vicariously participated in "the unreality onstage," to use Erving Goffman's phrase.⁴

The Creeks that settled the Alachua savanna in the 1760s under the Cowkeeper invested so much stock into the distinction between the English and Spaniards, in which the latter were enemies, while the former were friends. After Spain's departure from the peninsula, the Seminoles' world was turned upside down. The foundation of the anti-Spanish sentiment, just like the context of English partisanship, became hollow and built on deception. The English of St. Augustine were now the new Spaniards, but worse. Before the 1763 Treaty of Paris, the subjects of Spain were so weak that their few

⁴ John Moultrie to James Grant, St. Augustine, June 10, 1771, James Grant Papers; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 483-484. Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1974), 130. Also see, Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1959); Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theater* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982); Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1989); Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

colonists could only huddle around the ancient city of St. Augustine. The English, on the other hand, were growing frighteningly stronger. They brought in thousands of new settlers to places like Smyrna, and they constantly lusted for more Florida land, the same lands the Seminole-Creeks claimed by right of conquest.

While the English of St. Augustine were becoming the new “Spaniards,” the Spaniards of Cuba were becoming the new “English,” who at their best were reliable trading partners, but since the end of the French and Indian War were exceedingly quick to threaten and/or enact embargoes to force the Creeks into submission. The Spaniards of Cuba filled the void, but instead of trading in the woods, the Cubans traded along the coast. A hushed, yet lively and prosperous, exchange developed between Cuban fishermen and the Florida Creeks by the 1770s. Through these fishermen, the Creeks and Seminoles opened covert diplomatic and trade relations. They even hoped the Spaniards would return to the mainland to offset the overly powerful British.

In this new world of deception and role reversals, the only stable continuity with the past was the rift between the Seminole-Creeks at Alachua and the Creek nationalists. The physical separation of the Cowkeeper’s band from the Creek Nation did little to ease the tension between the two groups. Conferences were major venues of tension between the Cowkeeper’s Alachua Creeks and the Creek Nation. From one perspective, Creek leaders banished the Alachuas from participating in their councils, where they “have no Vote.” The Creek nationalists of Coweta sought their return to the Chattahoochee River by demanding that the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, John Stuart, cut “the detached

Villages" off from trade in order to "force them to rejoin their Nation for in their present situation they cannot be answerable for their Conduct."⁵

Needless to say, the Alachua Creeks had a different understanding. They were not expelled from the congresses. They boycotted them. The Cowkeeper discreetly abstained from the 1765 Congress at Fort Picolata, alleging sickness in the family. The Long Warrior attended the congress, but curiously refused to speak, claiming that he was "not accustomed to speak in Public." Given his reputation as the arrogant loud "mouth" of the Seminoles, the Long Warrior's silence was a deafening political statement, a protest against those who belittled the Creeks of Alachua. The Alachua Creeks were more frank on other occasions. In response to the proposed 1767 Congress at Picolata, the Alachua Creeks announced that "they did not choose to attend being considered by their Nation as Wild People."⁶

In denying their wildness, the Creeks that colonized the Alachua savanna in the 1760s relied on their reputation as English partisans. As the Cowkeeper aptly put it, "though he was called a Wild man by the Nation, it was not so, for both he and his people love the White [English] People, and never did them harm nor would." Living up to the standards of English partisans without the presence of the Spaniards was a difficult task that required donning of a theatrical mask of diplomacy that emphasized nostalgic memories of the good old days that had seemingly come to pass. This metaphorical mask, like any physical mask, was suited for special occasions, especially ruptures between the English and Creek Nation. Although officials often failed to grasp the theatrics, several

⁵ For "no Vote", see the appendix of Rolle, *Humble Petition*, 36. "Force them" quoted in Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 251.

⁶ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 459, 467, 475 ("wild people").

East Florida governors remarked that the Alachuas “have on these disturbances shown great marks of uneasiness and an anxiety to be reckoned our friends,” and were “never very troublesome with their Visits when any mischief is going on.” The Alachuas sought to deflect any possibility of being punished for the crimes committed by the Creek Nation. Although based on the expediencies of the situation, the end result was reinforcing the distinction between the Creek Nation and the ostensive partisans at Alachuas, who were increasingly referred to as Seminoles, a term that sometimes applied to all Creeks living in East Florida.⁷

The Façade

Although the mask of diplomacy associated with English partisanship was always present, the facade became increasingly difficult to sustain after the French and Indian War. The Creeks in general did "not seem to relish the news" of the war's outcome. Rather, the natives acted with “the utmost contempt and insolence.” There was a pervasive rumor in Creek country that with the French and Spaniards gone, the British would seek revenge for past injuries, “make them tame,” and then take away their lands. The Creeks declared that “in case the French and Spaniards should be taken from them

⁷ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 478 ("never very troublesome"), 487 ("Wild Man"). Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, September 23, 1774, CO 5/555, PKY reel 66-B ("uneasiness").

we [the English] have no right to possess the lands that were never given to us, and they will oppose all our attempts that way." This was exactly what many did.⁸

At the news of the transfer in 1763, Chief Tonaby of Coweta consulted with the leading headmen at Coweta and elsewhere where he revealed his plans "to prevent the said English from establishing themselves at any point on the west coast, and on some portions of the east." In particular, Tonaby was determined to "force them [the English] from Apalachee," and to carry out this plan he established a "new village" in the Apalachee Old Fields about thirty-five miles away from Fort St. Marks (San Marcos de Apalachee). When Captain Jonathan Harries took control of the fort on February 20, 1764, he quickly realized that his new native neighbors were "greatly disaffected to the English." Mr. Forrester, a merchant living seventy miles away from the fort (likely at the town of Tomatlé), was "greatly terrified" of the natives and was "obliged to go... at the peril of his life." At a time when the garrison was "in Distress for Provisions," the fort's men were afraid of gathering firewood or collecting water. One visitor noted that "the Indians [were] jealous of the least Garden outside this purposed triangular Fortress." When the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, John Stuart, arrived in Apalachee in the fall of 1764, he sensed the "Uneasiness" of the natives. This became increasingly clear when they "drank freely" and revealed their hidden "Temper and disposition." Stuart concluded that their uneasiness "proceeds from Jealousy on Account of their Lands."⁹

⁸ *Providence Gazette*, June 25, 1763; Allen Candler, ed., *Proceedings and Minutes of the Governor and Council, January 4, 1763 to December 2, 1766*, Colonial Records of the State of Georgia 9 (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner, 1907), 76.

⁹ For Tonaby's intentions, see "Spanish Interests in British Florida and the Progress of the American Revolution," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 32 (October 1953): 110-111. For Forrester, see "From a Remote Frontier (part 3)," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (July 1941): 84; Robin Fabel, "St. Mark's, Apalachee, and The Creeks," *Gulf Coast Historical Review* 1, no. 2 (1986): 10. For the

Similarly, the Cowkeeper's people at Alachua were very concerned when the English military and settlers began pouring into East Florida. In particular, the Cowkeeper feared "reports of Castles [that is, stone forts] being built throughout this [the St. Johns] River." The Creeks in general considered "the Words Fort and Slavery as Synonymous Terms." Given that many Creeks believed that the English planned to make them "tame," the Creeks saw "no Occasion for a Fort on the other side of the River," unless the British had something sinister in mind. Forts were a threat to Seminole-Creek land claims west of the St. Johns River. Upon the arrival of the earliest East Florida settlers, the Alachua Creeks flatly objected "to the White People's settling any Lands" west of the river. They made this attitude well known, and few Englishmen even dared to travel beyond that point into Florida's interior. The Surveyor General met a roadblock in March, 1765 when his Indian guide abandoned him at the advice of a hostile Seminole hunting party. The surveyor gave up his mission fearing that he would have "fallen in with many Hunting Gangs of Semiolokee" that were under "the Indian Headman called the Cowkeeper." According to a Cherokee informant, the Alachuas planned to "way-lay" the British if they crossed the St. Johns River.¹⁰

Unfortunately, the frequent declarations of the Creeks did little to halt the flood of land speculators and settlers into Creek hunting territory. Large numbers of settlers

inability to gather or plant, see "From a Remote Frontier: San Marcos de Apalache, 1763-1769 (part 1)," 402-404; Rolle, *Humble Petition*, 52. Stuart's observations found in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 452.

¹⁰ For few travelers and objections to forts and settlers, see Rolle, *Humble Petition*, 5, 7, 44, (Appendix) 32-33. "Fort and Slavery" quoted in Claudio Saunt, "The English Has Now a Mind to Make Slaves of Them All': Creeks, Seminoles and the Problem of Slavery," *American Indian Quarterly* 22, no. 1/2 (1998): 164. Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 456-458 ("no Occasion"). For De Brahm's experience, see Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, 91. *New York Mercury*, March 19, 1764("way-lay"). For general Creek attitudes towards forts, see Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 153.

poured into the northwestern part of South Carolina, and on Christmas Eve, 1763, a party of Coweta Creeks took matters into their own hands by killing fourteen settlers at a settlement known as Long Canes. The outraged governor of South Carolina, Thomas Boone (1761-1764), exclaimed: "It is too plain a proof, I am afraid, that they [the Creeks] are not to be reclaimed by good offices, that they disdained your proffered friendship, and are really dangerous and inveterate enemies; as such they must be treated."¹¹

The Alachua Creeks were likely sympathetic to the bloody statement made at Long Canes: the settlers needed a geography lesson. At the same time, the Alachuas wished to avoid the unpleasant repercussions of the Long Canes murders. Like most Creeks, the Alachuas were "in great fear of having the trade withdrawn from them," and they set out to distance themselves from the attackers by donning the mask of diplomacy before Major Francis Ogilvie, the "virtual governor" of East Florida during the one year transition period from Spanish to English rule. The Cowkeeper sent a runner to inform the major that the Upper Creeks and Choctaws "had a bad talk" and "were determined to go to War against us." Ogilvie admitted to hearing several similar unsubstantiated reports, but considered this report more weighty coming from the Cowkeeper, who the major regarded as "a noted Creek Partizan." In direct opposition to the hostile Creeks, the Cowkeeper emphasized his people's peaceful intentions to much success. Major Ogilvie wrote to his superior, General Thomas Gage, challenging the opinion of Governor Thomas Boone, who saw war with the Creeks as "unavoidable." Ogilvie reported that the

¹¹ For the Creek concern of armed surveyors in their hunting grounds between the Altamaha and St. Johns rivers, see Coleman and Ready, *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 28 pt. 1: 408, 428-429. The Long Canes incident reported in *New York Gazette*, January 30, 1764; February 20, 1764; May 7, 1764; *Georgia Gazette*, February 2, 1764("enemies").

Creeks at Alachua were “very quiet here hitherto.” Likewise, the Alachuas donned the same mask before Superintendent John Stuart, who walked away from his encounter in the summer of 1764 with a favorable impression of the Indians of “Latchewie,” who were “very warm and I believe sincere in their protestations of Friendship.”¹²

Their theatrics were a success. After a party Creeks murdered a British subject on the path from St. Marks to Pensacola, Governor James Grant defended the innocence of the Alachua Creeks declaring that “My sending to Latchawa could have answered no End, but to make them believe, that I considered them as Parties in a Thing with which they have not the most distant Counexion [sic].” The Alachuas were, in Grant’s mind, “well disposed to his Majesty’s Subjects.” The alleged happiness of the Alachuas with the British settlement of East Florida was a facade that covered their underlying suspicions of the British.¹³

The Alachua Creeks were correct: the British coveted their lands as “the very best land, in all America.” Governor Grant privately dismissed “any Claim, which they [the natives] may pretend to have to the new Country.” One of Grant’s successors, Governor Patrick Tonyn (1774-1783), spoke even more belligerently of the East Florida “Savages or Indians,” who he saw “only as Wolves or wild Beasts in a Forest,” whom “have no

¹² Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 9 (“virtual governor”). *Boston Evening Post*, September 26, 1763 (“Partizan”). Francis Ogilvie to Thomas Gage, St. Augustine, March 25, 1764, Gage Collection, PKY reel 1 (“hitherto”). Francis Ogilvie to Thomas Gage, St. Augustine, July 20, 1764, Gage Collection, PKY reel 1 (“bad talk”). Stuart’s comments found in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 452.

¹³ Rolle, *Humble Petition*, 60, (Appendix) 2, 36.

right in any Land the Spaniards called the Province of East Florida." The Seminole-Creeks, on the other hand, believed that Florida was theirs by right of conquest.¹⁴

The question over who controlled Florida played out at the Treaty of Picolata in 1765, in which the main issue under discussion was establishing a boundary between the East Florida English settlers and the natives. Governor Grant donned the mask of diplomacy and proclaimed: "You are apprehensive as I have been told that the white People are desirous of getting Possession of your Hunting Grounds," which was true, but Grant assured his native audience that their fears were "very ill founded." The outcome of the proceedings was that the Creeks and English agreed upon a boundary line that recognized the natives' possession of the lands west of the St. Johns River. This was essentially the same border between the Creeks and Spaniards, who could not help but see the poetic justice: the English were the new Spaniards. They laughed that "the vain English" would learn what it felt like to have to "live inside of the lines" of the fortress, where "they don't dare to leave the vicinity of the Plaza." The Spaniards waited for the day when the English, unable to gather firewood from the forests, would be forced to burn whatever they could "get a hold of," until they resort to burning the wood from their own homes.¹⁵

Although absent from the proceedings, the Cowkeeper later traveled to St. Augustine after the departure of the Creek delegation, where he agreed to the boundary line because it would "prevent disputes." Surveyor General De Brahm went so far as to

¹⁴ Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, December 18, 1775, CO 5/556, PKY reel 66-B; James Grant to Board of Trade, July 30, 1763, CO 5/540, PKY reel 66-B; Patrick Tonyn to William Drayton, St. Augustine, December 18, 1774, CO 5/555.

¹⁵ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 455, 465. Elisio de la Puente to Gräl, "Description of Florida," April 12, 1766, Stetson Collection, reel 52.

claim that as long as the East Florida Creeks were given a congress, they would “not break out into War, nor be jealous about new Settlements, or even complain of it out of a political pretense.” The natives seemed happy about the Picolata Congress, but it did not remove their suspicions. The Alachua Creeks continued to believe that the English had designs of taking and selling their lands. Indeed, Governor Grant was unhappy at the results of the Picolata congress and still sought more lands between the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers. Nevertheless, he believed that “we better let our Creek Friends breathe a little and wait a favorable Opportunity, in order to kill two Dogs with one stone.” The Creeks however thought that too much land had already been ceded in Georgia and Florida. By 1770, the center of the opposition to Florida land grants came not from the Creek nationalists, but “originated amongst the Seminoles or Creeks who have separated from their Nation, and live at Alatchaway, near St. Augustine, and in the neighborhood of St. Marks.” Superintendent Stuart believed that land cessions in East Florida would be facilitated “if they [the Seminoles] could be induced to rejoin their Towns and put themselves under their ruling Chiefs.”¹⁶

The Florida Creeks hosted an encore performance of the masked theater during the next major rupture in Creek-English relations in the mid-1770s. The crisis developed largely over the “New Purchase” of 1773. The Cherokees had amassed a substantial debt

¹⁶ For the Cowkeeper and Picolata, see James Grant to Thomas Gage, St. Augustine, January 13, 1766, Gage Collection, PKY reel 1; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 467. For the alleged happiness of other East Florida Creeks, see Fabel, “St. Mark's, Apalache, and The Creeks,” 13; De Brahm, *Report of the General Survey in the Southern District of North America*, 224. For examples of English land lust and Alachua opposition, see Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 479-482; John Stuart to Cpt. Aleck et al., December 17, 1766, Gage Collection, PKY reel 1; James Grant to Earl of Hillsborough, St. Augustine, May 15, 1769, CO 5/550; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 359

to their merchants, who called for the debt to be paid in land. The Cherokees obliged by ceding lands in northern Georgia that were also claimed by the Creek Indians. The governor of Georgia, Sir James Wright (1761-1782) bullied the Creeks into formally accepting the land grant in June, 1773, in which the Creeks relinquished their land claims east of the Ogeechee River and north of the Altamaha.¹⁷

A sizeable faction of the Creeks refused to accept the new boundary. That winter, Creek warriors and surveyors exchanged bullets near the Oconee River, a region that the Creeks never officially ceded. Violence erupted once again the following winter when a group of Cowetas and Cussetas from an out-settlement called Standing Peach Tree (Pucknawheatly) discovered the corpse of an accused native horse thief near the new boundary. They followed the killer's tracks directly to William White's newly established home on the Ogeechee River. On Christmas day, seventeen warriors enacted their revenge by murdering the entire White family of six. The same party returned on January 14, 1774, and a battle broke out, in which four warriors died. More returned the following week with their faces "painted black, with a little red about their Eyes, the Signs of War." The warriors ambushed a company of militiamen from Augusta, killing the lieutenant and seven others, leaving the remaining thirty-two soldiers to flee for their lives. In the aftermath of these violent exchanges, Georgians concluded that "it is now beyond a

¹⁷ J. Russell Snapp, *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire on the Southern Frontier* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 116-147; Edward J. Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray, Indian Trader: The Shaping of the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 271-290; Alan Galloway, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 130-131.

Doubt that the Creek Indians are our Enemies, and that they mean to extirpate us if they can.”¹⁸

The violence on the Ogeechee River sent tremors throughout the southeast. Governor James Wright united all the southern colonies to declare a general embargo against all Creeks regardless of their involvement in the killings. On February 14, East Florida followed Wright’s call for unity by enacting an embargo against the Creeks living in East Florida. Lieutenant-Governor Moultrie at St. Augustine wondered if the East Florida Creeks should be lumped in with the culprits of the Christmas killings. He asked the Cowkeeper if the Alachuas were for peace or war. Moultrie asserted "I will not believe that your Nation will go to War with us unless you tell me so." The Cowkeeper claimed complete ignorance of the bloodshed on the Ogeechee River. Although he denied the authority to speak for those “at a distance,” he claimed that his people “should do no harm,” for “both he and his people love the White People, and never did them harm nor would." The Long Warrior echoed the Cowkeeper’s ignorance of the Christmas killings and expressed his sorrow for what had happened. The officials at St. Augustine accepted their talks as sincere, and Moultrie informed his superior that "the defection of the Creek nation is not general."¹⁹

If the Cowkeeper’s people had nothing to do with the killings, what was the point of making them suffer an embargo? Moultrie’s successor, Patrick Tonyn, refused to

¹⁸ *New York Journal*, February 18, 1773, April 7, 1774; *Essex Gazette*, February 15, 1774; *New York Gazette*, March 7, 1774; *New York Journal*, April 21, 1774. For a slightly different narration of events, see Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 159.

¹⁹ For Wright's embargo, see Allen Candler, ed., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, vol. 12 (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner, 1907), 408-409; Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 24. For the Alachuas reaction, see Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 484, 485, 487; John Moultrie to Secretary of State, St. Augustine, February 21, 1774, CO 5/554, PKY reel 66-B.

enforce the total embargo for the East Florida Creeks. He only stopped the exchange of weapons related commodities. Tonyn rationalized his actions by claiming that the East Florida natives were not only domesticated, but also because they had “separated from the Creek Nation, and are not considered by them to be of it.” Because the Seminoles were better behaved than the Creeks, Tonyn decided “to draw a line of difference, between this People, and the Creek Nation,” by “giving each a different reception” so that those in the Nation would “comprehend the distinction” and change their poor behavior.²⁰

Despite Tonyn’s declarations, East Florida planters could not see the “line of difference” between the Alachuas and the Nation. Not being invited to the diplomatic theater, most planters derived their knowledge of the Alachuas from first hand experience. Planters regarded their neighbors as violent drunks and notorious thieves, who frequently stole horses, cattle, and other provisions. Moreover, they noted that the Alachuas were becoming “more indolent every day.” After the Christmas killings, many East Florida planters fled their plantations in fear of an attack from the local Alachuas. The Alachuas, in turn, began looting abandoned plantations. Even Governor Tonyn, who was so adamant that there was nothing to fear from the Alachua Creeks, felt compelled to send out parties of British troops to show the locals that they were prepared for war. Tonyn’s spectacle of force made the Florida Creek perfectly quieted, but that too was just a spectacle. Animosity and distrust boiled beneath the surface of quietude.²¹

²⁰ For the embargo in Florida, see Candler, *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 12: 405-406. For Creek-Seminole distinction, see Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, September 23, 1774.

²¹ Rolle, *Humble Petition*, 10-11, 13-14, 39, 48, 56; Andrew Turnbull to James Grant, Smyrna, October 28, 1771; Moultrie to Secretary of State, February 21, 1774; Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St.

East Florida's Black Legend

The Alachua Creeks were in a dilemma. They unwisely put all their diplomatic eggs into one British basket, but now they were becoming disillusioned with the English, who were lusting after their lands, threatening to cut off their trade, and suggesting that they rejoin those that despised them in the Creek Nation. In their predicament, the Alachua Creeks began to reassess not only their relationship with the English, but also "their former Enemies in order to make the most of them." The Spaniards, after all, did not disappear entirely from Florida. Cuban fishermen frequently visited the coast where they gathered provisions, information, and trade. The Cowkeeper's band, like most Florida Creeks, traded with Cuban fishermen along Florida's coast. During the 1770s, William Bartram spoke to an unnamed Florida merchant who divulged that he attained "large supplies of goods, from these Spanish trading vessels suitable for that trade; and some very essential articles, on more advantageous terms than he could purchase at Indian stores either in Georgia or St. Augustine."²²

As students of colonial Native American history are well aware, commerce was never purely commercial. It was also diplomatic. By 1768, "a great part of the Nation"

Augustine, May 19, 1774, CO 5/554, PKY reel 66-B; Louis LeClerc de Milford, *Milford's Memoir*, trans. Geraldine de Courcy (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1956), 83

²² For scholarship on the Cuban presence along the coast, see Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interests in British Florida and the Progress of the American Revolution," especially 94; James W. Covington, "Trade Relations Between Southwest Florida and Cuba, 1600-1840," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 38, 114-128 (October 1959): 116-119. Grant to Earl of Hillsborough, May 15, 1769 ("former enemies"). Bartram, *Travels*, 194. The growing trade between Cubans and natives is one reason for explaining the decline of pelt exports from St. Augustine: 6,348 pelts in 1770, 3,990 pelts in 1771, and 468 pelts in 1772 (Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 78).

desired the Spaniards' to return to the mainland to "live near them as they should then be better off than now & that they have offered them Lands about the River Apalachicola." They played to the Spaniards' religious side by emphasizing their desire for priests. As English relations declined in the 1770s, some Creeks approached the Cubans with their plans of waging a "pitiless war" against the English "if they are provided with arms and munitions."²³

The Alachua Creeks did not change their opinions of the Spaniards overnight, but the first step towards the Alachuas overcoming their animosity towards the Spaniards likely came from the cues of their Sawokli Creek neighbors on the Suwannee River. Although the Sawoklis lived just below the Oconees on the Chattahoochee River, they were notoriously pro-Spanish since the seventeenth century. As such, they were disheartened at the news of Spain's departure from Florida. After the Spaniards left, some of them under the White King settled the town of Talahasochte on the Suwannee River in order to keep in touch with the Spaniards by way of the Cuban fishermen. The Alachuas befriended their fellow neighbors and in time, the Oconee and Sawokli became intermixed through marriage.²⁴

²³ "From a Remote Frontier (part 8)," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (October 1942): 137-138 ("Great part"). For priests, see Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interests in British Florida and the Progress of the American Revolution," 114. Mark F. Boyd, ed., "From a Remote Frontier: San Marcos de Apalache, 1763-1769 (part 6)," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 21: 100 ("pitiless war").

²⁴ For Sawokli in 1763, see Bentura Diaz to Conde de Rivilla Gigedo, San Marcos de Apalachee, November 6, 1763, Stetson Collection, reel 52. I am the first to identify the Sawokli as the predominant settlers on the Suwannee River. This assessment comes largely from *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794*, vol. 4 (American Historical Association Annual Report, 1945), 239. For travelers to the Suwannee, see Lieut. Philip Pittman, "Apalachee During the British Occupation," ed. Mark F. Boyd, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 12 (January 1934): 121; Rolle, *Humble Petition*, 50, 53. For Sawokli's presence at St. Augustine, see John Stuart to Thomas Gage, "An account of Presents delivered to the Latchie Indians at St. Augustine, 22 June (enclosed)," July 19, 1764, Gage Collection, PKY reel 1.

The English of St. Augustine were aware that Cuban-Creek intercourse was taking place, but they lived in a fantasy world where native disaffection was nearly inconceivable, because the Florida Creeks were so passionately anti-Spanish and pro-English. The Cubans and natives just happened to meet incidentally at the same spots along the coast. The English were wont to believe that the natives were still unwavering in their hatred of the Spaniards, who were obliged to give presents to the English-loving Indians to keep them “in Temper, and prevent the accidents and attacks which they [the Spaniards] were accustomed to in Florida.”²⁵

William Bartram grappled with the real and fantasy world of Cuban-native contact when he visited Alachua in 1774. He noticed something out of place: “the manners and customs of the Alachuas, and most the lower Creeks or Siminoles, appear evidently tinctured with Spanish civilization.” Even stranger, most of the Alachuas spoke and understood Spanish, and there were even several baptized Catholics among them. Bartram’s observations were so peculiar because they clashed with English preconceptions of the Seminoles. Those natives were supposed to be unwavering in their deep seated hatred of all that was Spanish. When faced with such anomalies, Bartram, like most English observers, clung to the anti-Spanish, pro-English caricature. “Notwithstanding” all the evidence to the contrary, Bartram insisted that the Alachuas were “the most bitter and formidable Indian enemies the Spaniards ever had.”²⁶

The closest St. Augustine officials came to comprehending the nature of Cuban-native contact occurred after the 1773 Christmas killings, when Lieutenant-Governor

²⁵ Grant to Earl of Hillsborough, May 15, 1769; James Grant to Earl of Hillsborough, St. Augustine, March 27, 1770, CO 5/551.

²⁶ Bartram, *Travels*, 164.

Moultrie noted in passing that “it is from the Spaniard alone that they could get any Arms or Ammunition, in case of a rupture with us.” Nevertheless, Moultrie’s passing remark was overshadowed by his belief that the natives were nearly passive participants in Cuban contact. They most certainly did not seek Cuban aid. Rather, the Cubans attempted to seduce the Creeks away from the English. Moultrie accused the Spaniards of attempting to “tamper with and corrupt them,” which “has a bad effect on some of the irregular bad disposed young people.” Nonetheless, Moultrie was convinced that “it has no effect on the Headmen, or any great part of the nation.” Moultrie was of course taking the mask of diplomacy at face value, but disaffection was growing underneath the mask.²⁷

“Scarce Distinguish our Friends from our Foes”

The mask of diplomacy, the hidden Spanish relations, and Seminole-Creek conflict reached new levels of complexity during the American Revolution. While other colonies sided with the rebels, East Florida was a bastion of Loyalism. Governor Tonyn remarked: “East Florida is still at the bosom of the mother Country; it cannot support or exist, without her care, affection, and benevolence.” Recently, Colin Calloway produced a well-researched essay on the Seminoles during the American Revolution, in which he argued that a number of factors made the revolution important to “Seminole genesis.” Calloway highlighted how the revolutionary era led to an increased English consciousness of a Creek-Seminole division. This was more a political tactic than an

²⁷ Moultrie to Secretary of State, February 21, 1774.

ethnographic realization. As fighting broke out, Governor Tonyn advocated recruiting the Indians as military allies, because he believed that "the Indians settled in the Province would I believe go any where with me." Superintendent Stuart, however, called for Indian neutrality. To take the neighboring Indians out of Stuart's jurisdiction, Tonyn declared that all natives in East Florida were Seminoles, not Creeks, and therefore, Tonyn, not Stuart, had jurisdiction over Seminoles.²⁸

Although Tonyn was certain of aid from the Seminoles, he admitted with some reluctance that "I have reason to think, as well of the Creek Nation." Tonyn's initial hesitation proved correct. Many in the Nation chose to remain neutral. Others, namely "the Cowetas with a few of the Hitchitas and Cussitas," sided with the rebels, while some traveled to Cuba seeking Spanish aid. In February, 1776, Tonyn called on the Cowkeeper to guard the Georgia-Florida frontier, but the chief was reluctant to provide military assistance without knowledge of the will of the Creek Nation. Tonyn noted how "the Cow-keeper and Seminolies are very much afraid and stand in great awe of the Creek Nation," and therefore decided to send Commissary David Taitt into the Nation to gain the Nation's approval. In August, 1776, the Miccosukee Lake Creeks brought news that the Nation did not approve of participating in the war effort. Nevertheless, the Cowkeeper decided to ignore the national dictum and participate in the war effort of 1776 and 1777. His performance was so spectacular that the new Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Thomas Brown, singled the Cowkeeper out for his heroic display of loyalty during the American Revolution. It was just like old times, and as before, the

²⁸ Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, June 14, 1775, CO 5/555 ("bosom"). Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, July 22, 1775, CO 5/555 ("go any where"). Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 257.

Cowkeeper's pro-English gestures came at a cost. When the headmen at Coweta learned of the Alachua Creeks involvement in the war, they ordered the Seminoles "to immediately return to their respective villages." If they disobeyed, the Cowetas would "send a force to destroy everyone" of the Seminoles. All this, Calloway aptly noted, illustrated "the widening division between Creeks and Seminoles."²⁹

Although most lauded the Florida Creeks for their Loyalism, William Drayton was one of the few Englishmen to notice a massive disaffection among the Seminoles. He went so far as to label the locals a "domestic enemy."³⁰ By 1778, the Florida Creeks had totally disaffected from the British cause. The Cowkeeper told a Spanish spy named Don Juan Joseph Eligio de la Puente that the old chief had "always [been] a partisan of the English," but "he has broken his friendship with them" and was ready to wage a war against his former friends. He also told the spy that "although old [he] can serve in any undertaking." Perhaps the Cowkeeper misunderstood. Eligio's mission was only for intelligence gathering purposes to satisfy the royal order of February 28, 1776 that commanded sending spies "to Pensacola, Florida, Jamaica, and other British colonies." Eligio was not attempting to form an army of disaffected natives against the English.³¹

Seminole deception and Cuban contact went hand in hand. In early 1778, Chief Tonaby returned to Apalachee from Havana with a flag from the governor "to be raised

²⁹ Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 258-260; Martha Condray Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest in the American Revolution, 1776-1778* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 86; Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interests in British Florida and the Progress of the American Revolution," 113. Tonym to Lord Dartmouth, July 22, 1775 ("reason to think"). Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 501, 502.

³⁰ Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 114; Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 259-262.

³¹ Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interests in British Florida and the Progress of the American Revolution," 100-114, 122-23.

on a staff.” An English lieutenant passing through Tonaby’s town later that year was unnerved by the Spanish flag flying high in the town square ground. The lieutenant instructed Tonaby to take the flag down. Tonaby apologized and insisted that he was finished with the Spaniards, who he despised for lying and misleading him. Needless to say, this was just a mask, and Tonaby’s relations with the Spaniards continued. When the British became aware of the continued presence of Spaniards in the Apalachee region, they became concerned again. Under further inquiry, the natives admitted that a Spanish commissary came to their town, and they admitted to accepting his gifts. Then to console the British, the natives insisted that they murdered the Spaniard on the spot. The British did not suspect a thing. Superintendent Thomas Brown laughed: “the Indians [were] rather too politic for the Spaniards.” On the contrary, the Indians were too politic for the British.³²

The man they allegedly murdered was Don Francisco Ruiz del Canto, who was still alive after two junkets to Apalachee in 1779 and 1780. The Spaniard met with about 250 natives, who showed “notable happiness,” “demonstrations of rejoicing,” and “signs of affection.” What these natives “greatly desired was to employ themselves in the service of the Great King of Spain.” They announced that “they all live disgustedly with the English,” while insisting that Spain’s return to the peninsula “would be the happiest day which they had ever seen.”³³ Not long thereafter, the natives had their wish come

³² For Tonaby's flag, see *Ibid.*, 112; Howard F. Cline, *Notes on Colonial Indians and Communities in Florida, 1700-1821*, Florida Indians 1 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 98-99. For British denial, see *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, vol. 18 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), 57-58; *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, vol. 20 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), 290.

³³ Francisco Ruiz del Canto, Havana, September 26, 1779, AGI Cuba 1290, f 221-223; Francisco Ruiz del Canto, Havana, February 14, 1780, AGI Cuba 1233, f 630-635.

true. The rebels won the revolution, and according to the Treaty of Versailles, Spain would return to possess East and West Florida.

The Second Transfer

When word arrived of the pending transfer in early 1783, Governor Tonyn had the unpleasant task of confirming the news before a Creek and Seminole audience.

Conspicuously absent from the proceedings was the Cowkeeper. As usual, he boycotted attending Tonyn's speech on account of the presence of Creek officials. Instead, the Cowkeeper sent his right-hand man, the Long Warrior, who, in typical Long Warrior fashion, stood silently while the conference was in open session. Once the conference ended, however, the Long Warrior pulled Brigadier-General Archibald McArthur and Superintendent Thomas Brown aside and privately asked them to "inform the Great King that if he meant to throw away the Land to send Vessels to take them off, as they were determined to follow their friends." Of course, this theatrical gesture never materialized, and the Alachuas never joined the Loyalist exodus to the Bahamas.³⁴

While the Long Warrior stood silent, a metaphorically masked warrior named Kinache of Lake Miccosukee took the center stage and declared: "The King and his warriors have told us they never would forsake us," but now "we have heard that the Great King intends to throw away this land." The warrior recalled: "The Spaniards formerly lived here—they were the Enemies to the Great King—the English put

³⁴ Joseph Byrne Lockey, ed., *East Florida, 1783-1785* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 109-110.

Weapons into our hands—we used them as men.” Since they conquered the Spaniards, the land belonged to them. The English at St. Augustine existed because the Seminoles and Creeks allowed it at the Picolata Congress of 1765. Even though the Creeks at Miccosukee Lake played a small role at best in the American Revolution, Kinache selectively recalled that when the American Revolution broke out, “we took up the hatchet for the English at a time we could scarce distinguish our friends from our foes,” and “have lost in the Service a number of our people.” Kinache could not understand how land could be given away by a treaty written across the ocean. He inquired: “Is the Great King conquered? Or does he mean to abandon us?” Kinache hid his people’s secret friendship with the Spaniards and rhetorically asked: “Do you think we can turn our faces to our Enemies and ask a favour from them?” Kinache answered “no... we will not take our enemies by the hand.” Tonyn was so moved by these theatrical declarations of partisanship, in which he lacked “the least doubt” of their sincerity. Tonyn concluded “their aversion to the Spaniards is insurmountable,” and that once the Spaniards arrived “peace with them cannot last long.”³⁵

The Spaniards, who anticipated returning to Florida after the American Revolution, were unaware of the Seminoles’ clandestine overtures to the Spanish Crown. Instead, most Spanish observers in 1783 derived their knowledge of the East Florida from wild reports from the departing British. Such rumors and hostile words by natives like Kinache created a sensation in the European press. John Adams, who was in Europe at the time, jested that the British “care no more for us [Americans] than they do about the

³⁵ Ibid., 138-140; K.G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, vol. 21 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), 168.

Seminole Indians.” For Spaniards, such news was not a joke. Bernardo Del Campo recalled: “I read in the *Courier de l'Europe* an article that indicates more fully the displeasure of the Indian partisans of the Loyalists, or of the British crown, because they had been abandoned and Florida handed over to the Spaniards. Later I saw another article in one of the English papers.”³⁶

Meanwhile, more and more extravagant reports poured in from the loyalists leaving East Florida, where “complete confusion reigns.” Bernardo Del Campo rightfully admitted that much of this news was questionable. It could be “false, true, or exaggerated.” Nevertheless, that did not stop him from reporting that “the Indians bordering on the province... are resolved to cause all sorts of hostilities and annoyances when the treaty goes into effect.” In May, the Spanish governor of the Bahamas learned from “a schooner [that] arrived from Florida, [that] it has been rumored that the Indians are every day killing ten or twelve English because they are turning over the province to the Spanish.” The next day, an unnamed correspondent at St. Augustine wrote back to London that “The Cowkeeper and other Indian Chiefs are come to town and swear Vengeance against the King that gave away their Country.” They said what they had always said the land was theirs and promised to “kill every Spaniard that offers to set his head out of the Lines of the town.”³⁷

What were the Spaniards walking into? The newly appointed Spanish Governor of East Florida, Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, admitted: “For present my greatest worry is how to meet the demands of the Indians.” Although the Crown insisted on an aggressive

³⁶ John Adams quoted in Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 88 Lockey, *East Florida*, 138-139.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 111, 138-139, 172-173.

assimilation program in East Florida that would have surely set off a bloody conflict, Zéspedes wisely chose to acknowledge but not obey. Instead, he believed that a policy of British mimicry would save the incoming Spaniards from destruction. “I shall find it necessary” wrote Zéspedes “to give them [the natives] the same attention that the English gave them to prevent their noticing the least change in their treatment. Otherwise grave consequences might result.”³⁸

The arriving Spaniards believed that if anyone could help, it was the departing English. One Englishman remarked: “every step has been taken, previous to the arrival of the Spaniards, to induce the Indians to receive them as friends.” At his departure, Tonyn gave a detailed description of the Indian situation to Count Bernardo de Galvez y Madrid. Tonyn offered his services to Zéspedes claiming “it would give me great pleasure to unite to your Excellency's the British influence with the Indians.” Superintendent Thomas Brown also gave Zéspedes a crash course in Indian affairs.³⁹

One point remained clear: the key to successful diplomatic relations was providing a reliable source of commodities. The overtaxed and overregulated Spanish commercial system was no match for English prices and goods. Zéspedes remarked: “One of my greatest cares has been the matter of gifts for the Indians.” The new governor arrived with some goods, but they were “insufficient to content them.” Thanks to the help of a Loyalist firm called Panton, Leslie, and Company, Governor Zéspedes acquired enough gifts to please the natives. Thomas Forbes, a member of the Panton firm, summed up the situation as follows: “the persons who can supply them [the natives] at the best

³⁸ Ibid., 211.

³⁹ Ibid., 223, 395. Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Zéspedes in East Florida, 1784-1790* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1963), 80-81.

price cannot fail to establish friendship with them." Since Zéspedes felt the survival of the new colony depended upon preserving the notion that Florida was not undergoing any significant change, keeping Panton's firm operating in Spanish territory was a wise decision. He remarked: "I have not thought wise to interfere with this trade, especially since I have reliable information that if we are not as attentive to the Indians as the English are (so say the Indians themselves) they will establish a new trade with the Americans."⁴⁰

The test in Spain's training in Seminole diplomacy came in late September, 1784, when the Spaniards held their first conference with the Creeks and Seminoles. Zéspedes informed his audience that "The kings of Spain and England are at present bound together in the bonds of friendship and brotherhood. They have buried the tomahawk and they have taken each other by the hand." He informed the natives that little has changed. "I hope" announced Zéspedes "that you will be as good friends and brothers with the Spaniards as you have been with the English, understanding that you will receive from us the same good treatment and good faith as from them." As for trade, "you will supply the wants of your people and families as hitherto, in the warehouses of Panton, Leslie and Company."⁴¹

The conference went over well, and all of the predictions of mass bloodshed disappeared into thin air. Although the departing English claimed that the natives of Alachua would be the most difficult to win over, the headmen of the town informed the Spaniards that they desired to live in peace and friendship with the Spanish governor,

⁴⁰ Lockey, *East Florida*, 161, 178, 273.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 280-283.

especially in “preference to the Americans.” In fact, the Alachuas were perhaps the most frequent visitors to St. Augustine during the early period of 1785 to 1788.⁴²

The only problem was that the English-speaking world believed that a massive Seminole uprising was on the horizon or already occurring. In what appears to be a reference to the above mentioned congress, the American press reported: "Nothing can exceed the uncomfortable situation of the Spaniards in that province," in which the Cowkeeper allegedly “rejected their presents with disdain.” It is true that the Cowkeeper did not attend the September congress, nor did he accept Spanish presents, but not because of his “disdain” for the Spaniards. The chief did not accept the gifts because just before the arrival of Zéspedes in July, 1784, the Cowkeeper died. Carlos Howard, who wrote the first obituary for the Cowkeeper, mentioned no dramatic death, and one is led to believe that the Cowkeeper quietly passed away of natural causes at an advanced age of around seventy. He was succeeded by a mestizo named “King” Thomas Payne.⁴³

The Hapless Wanderings of William Augustus Bowles, 1788

On October 26, 1787, fireworks filled the sky over Nassau, New Providence in the Bahamas, to celebrate the arrival of the former Royal Governor of Virginia, the

⁴² Carlos Howard to unknown, St. Augustine, 1784, East Florida Papers, reel 44. Perhaps the earliest reference to Payne was in 1786. Found in “Accounts of Presents to the Indians, 1785-1788,” East Florida Papers, reel 167.

⁴³ For the Cowkeeper, see *New York Packet*, December 19, 1785; Howard to unknown, 1784. Perhaps the earliest reference to Payne was in 1786. Found in “Accounts of Presents to the Indians, 1785-1788.” For other sources on Payne and his identity, see Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Chiefs and Warriors of the Seminole Nation, Platica, January 6, 1792, East Florida Papers, reel 43 (mentions his first name); *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794*, 239 (mestizo); American State Papers, *Indian Affairs*, vol. 1 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 392 (Payne identifies himself as mestizo).

infamous Lord Dunmore, who was accompanied by his good friend John Miller of Miller, Bonnamy, and Company. Not long after arriving, Lord Dunmore and Miller learned of startling developments in Creek Country, where a full scale war broke out in 1786 between the Creeks and Georgians over land rights. Initially, the Creeks were winning. The only problem was maintaining a reliable source of ammunition from Panton, Leslie, and Company. The Spanish Governor of West Florida, Arturo O'Neill, feared that natives were becoming too independent and jeopardizing Spain's efforts at courting secessionist American frontier movements in Kentucky and Tennessee. Governor O'Neill demanded that the Creeks make peace with the Americans, and he used his influence over Panton, Leslie, and Company to reduce the flow of weapons related commodities into the Creek Nation. The Creeks felt betrayed.⁴⁴

Lord Dunmore and John Miller saw these recent developments as opportunities to not only influence events on the mainland, but also to consolidate power in Nassau. Key members of the highly profitable Panton, Leslie, and Company were also leading figures in the political opposition to Dunmore's rule. Lord Dunmore and Miller were overjoyed at the news that Panton, Leslie, and Company had fallen from grace in the eyes of the Creeks. Dunmore and Miller hatched a filibustering scheme whereby Miller would establish "a trading house among the Seminole-Creeks in opposition to Panton." In order

⁴⁴ For Nassau, see *Daily Advertiser*, December 7, 1787; J. Leitch Wright, *William Augustus Bowles, Director General of the Creek Nation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967), 26-28. For developments in the Creek Nation, see John W. Caughey, ed., *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), 152 note 94, 165. For Spain and the American frontier movements, see Arthur Preston Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier, 1783-1795* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927), 90-122; Patricia Watlington, *The Partisan Spirit: Kentucky Politics, 1779-1792* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 133-187; Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3, 30, 107, 156, 199, 212.

to carry out their plans, they recruited a strange character named William Augustus Bowles. Bowles was a discharged Ensign from the Loyalist Maryland Division, who spent some time with the Creeks during the war. He later joined the Loyalist exodus to the Bahamas, where he became a stage actor and portrait painter.⁴⁵

In the late spring of 1788, Bowles appeared in Alachua introducing himself as a member of an English charitable society, who heard about the poor Indians' plight from the newspapers. He informed the locals that if the Spaniards and Panton, Leslie, and Company would not supply them with arms in their moment of need, his organization would. This was too good to be true. King Payne and the rest of Alachua received the stranger warmly. Bowles promised to return by the end of the year with the war supplies and soldiers to aid the Creeks and Seminoles in their war against the Georgians. The natives agreed to bring Bowles and his men a large number of horses upon his return. Everything seemed to be falling into place. In September, 1788, Miller, Bonnamy, and Company publically opened rendezvous house in Nassau, where they recruited about fifty soldiers. In late September, the members of the expedition departed from New Providence on route to the Indian River.⁴⁶

According to the soldiers, the Nassau organizers never "fully acquainted [the troops] with the object and intent of the said Expedition." The men had no idea that they were embarking on an unofficial filibuster expedition. Many assumed the closeness that

⁴⁵ Milford, *Milford's Memoir*, 81; Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Policy of France toward the Mississippi Valley in the Period of Washington and Adams," *American Historical Review* 10 (January 1905): 271. Benjamin Baynton, *Authentic Memoirs of William Augustus Bowles* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 45-47

⁴⁶ Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 195. John Hambly to John Leslie, St. Johns Conception, September 14, 1788, East Florida Papers, reel 8.

existed between the governor and organizers implied that they were on an official mission. Nevertheless, nobody could recall an instance where the governor publicly supported their expedition. While the Bowles expedition waited for the natives to arrive with the horses, they conducted military drills by daylight and relaxed by moonlight. During this time, the troops learned more of their mission by overhearing the “conversations that passed in the Evenings over the pipes between Bowles and Bonnamy at Indian River.” The troops assumed that their mission was to attain revenge against the Americans by joining the local natives against the state of Georgia. This assumption proved wrong. The men learned that “the first and primary object of the Expedition was to plunder burn and destroy the said Indian Store of Panton Leslie & Co. on the River St. Johns” so that Miller, Bonnamy, and Company could take over the Indian trade. According to Bowles’s tall tale, this would be an easy task, because the leading headmen in the Creek Nation made Bowles the new “King & Commander in Chief of the Creek Nation.” Being the influential man that he was, Bowles bragged that as they marched into Indian country, 1000 to 1500 native warriors would join them.⁴⁷

Bowles’s confidence was unwarranted for many reasons. Despite the aura of secrecy surrounding the expedition, Spaniards already knew of Bowles’s plans and they were waiting for him. The recruiting process in Nassau caught the eyes of a Nassau resident named Thomas Brown, the former Superintendent of Indian Affairs during the Revolution. Brown informed Governor Zéspedes that Bowles and his men planned to land in East Florida, join the Indians, and attack not only against Georgians, but also the

⁴⁷ Lawence Kinnaird, ed., “A British Invasion of Florida in 1788,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 10 (October 1931): 82-84.

trading houses of Panton, Leslie, and Company. Governor Zéspedes approached the local natives about the affair. King Payne was in a predicament. He kept silent about Bowles for months, but it appeared the plans were falling apart. Moreover, Payne was offended at Bowles's dishonesty. Although the chief would have supported an expedition against the Georgians and an alternative to Panton's monopoly, Payne was not sympathetic to Bowles's designs of replacing one monopoly with another. King Payne admitted that Bowles had fooled him with extravagant promises and lies, but the chief promised that it would never happen again.⁴⁸

Bowles was unaware that his position among the local natives had changed. Provisions were running low after waiting for nearly a month at the Indian River for the natives to arrive with the horses. Bowles calmed their fears by insisting that soon they would have all the food they could eat once they sacked Panton's store. In the meantime, the troops expected that upon entering Indian country, the natives would gladly bestow a bounty of food for their "King & Commander" and his army of liberators. This, however, did not happen. When the expedition reached the first village on the first of November, the men purchased "a little corn and some pumpkins." At a second village, they purchased "another very scant supply of Corn." Shortly thereafter, a small group of Indians approached Bowles and warned him that the expedition was in danger. The Spaniards learned of Bowles's plans and sent the cavalry and a party of "American woodsmen" to intercept them on the path to Panton's store. Everyone looked to Bowles,

⁴⁸ Thomas Brown to Vincente Manuel de Zéspedes y Velasco, Nassau, 1788, East Florida Papers, reel 17; Tanner, *Zéspedes in East Florida, 1784-1790*, 192. Hambly to Leslie, September 14, 1788; Janice Borton Miller, *Juan Nepomuceno De Quesada: Governor of Spanish East Florida, 1790-1795* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 103.

who “at this news” became “greatly disconcerted and appeared in manifest consternation.”⁴⁹

Rather than taking his force of fifty into battle against an unknown force, Bowles decided to go to his friends at Alachua, who were so kind earlier that year. If the Spaniards attacked, the Seminoles of Alachua would surely join them, given their pro-English, anti-Spanish heritage. The march from the Indian River to Alachua was long, and the men were tired and starving. Along the way they resorted to foraging for sustenance. Upon reaching Alachua on the twelfth, the expedition was “contrary to expectations very coldly received by the Alachua Indians and with difficulty obtained a small quantity of peas.” Someone in the town informed Bowles that the Spaniards were not pursuing them. The natives fabricated the story to protect Panton’s store. Bowles was determined to return to his original plan. They would march back to sack the trading house.⁵⁰

The men grumbled. This was not what they expected when they signed up for service in Nassau. The plan was to help the Indians attack the evil Americans. Instead, they planned to rob William Panton, a fellow Englishman with strong ties to the Bahamas. Bowles insisted that the natives regarded him as their “King & Commander.” Over 1000 natives would join their march, said Bowles. In reality, the natives were reluctant to even feed the troops. Others lied to them. Bowles tried to rally the soldiers. The march would be easy, he said. It was only forty miles. The troops had other ideas, namely, desertion. Some left that night surrendering themselves to the Spanish troops

⁴⁹ Juan Galphin to William Augustus Bowles, September 17, 1788, East Florida Papers, reel 43. Kinnaird, “A British Invasion of Florida in 1788,” 82-84.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

guarding the Indian store. Meanwhile, the deserters kept pouring into Spanish settlements in small groups. In the end, as many as forty of the approximately fifty members of Bowles's expedition surrendered to the Spaniards.⁵¹

Upon reaching Panton's store, Bowles and his small cadre of devout followers froze. Rather than attacking the fort, Bowles wrote a letter to the commander of the small Spanish detachment guarding the store. He claimed that he was leading a group of volunteers against Georgia when he accidentally stumbled upon the Spanish post guarding Panton's store. He assured the Spaniards that he had no ill intentions towards Spanish property. As for the deserters, the Spaniards could do with them as they wished.⁵²

When over four-fifths of an army deserts, something had obviously gone wrong. William Augustus Bowles read the newspapers. Were not the Alachua Seminoles just waiting for someone like him to come along and save them? Were not they inflexible partisans of the British and inveterate enemies of the Spaniards? Bowles lived in the same fantasy world as most Englishmen, who could not imagine that the natives would side with the Spaniards when offered an English alternative. All the while, the original Seminoles settled in the Alachua savanna in the 1760s adapted in ways that the English could not have foreseen. Because of the mesmerizing effects of the mask of diplomacy, combined with English arrogance and naiveté, the English could not recognize what was plain to see. They mistook diplomatic statements of friendship as genuine protestations,

⁵¹ Ibid., 85; Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes y Velasco to Josef Espeleta, Florida, November 24, 1788, East Florida Papers, reel 2; Josef de Espeleta to Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes y Velasco, Havana, March 13, 1789, East Florida Papers, reel 1.

⁵² William Augustus Bowles to Carlos Howard, Mr. Hambly's Store (Concepcion), November 15, 1788, East Florida Papers, reel 45.

despite all the signs to the contrary. The English flattered themselves that the natives would cover the peninsula with Spanish blood following the English departure from Florida, but that never happened. Such misconceptions even led Bowles and his men to go on wild adventures that were contrary to expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

SEMINOLE GENESIS ON TRIAL

Throughout the above discussions, one fact remains unsaid: the genesis of the Seminole Indians and their early history has hardly been an esoteric inquiry. On the contrary, it was incredibly politicized. To grapple with comparable issues, the philosopher Michel Foucault devised the theory of “power-knowledge.” Foucault believed that the “will to knowledge” is not far removed from the will to power. “Knowledge” argued Foucault “is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.” The most devious part of the power-knowledge affair is the uncanny ability of discourse (the point where “power and knowledge are joined together”) to conceal not only its point of origins, but also its original motivations of perpetuating power.¹

For all practical purposes, there was little “will to know” the intricacies of early Seminole history until the United States Congress issued the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946. As one mid-century scholar noted, prior to the act “many aspects of the process and details related to the origins and evolution of these Creek bands in early eighteenth century Florida have been obscure.” The act called for the establishment of the

¹ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 154 (“cutting”); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 100 (“joined”). Also see, Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 52.

Indian Claims Commission (ICC) to provide a long awaited outlet for Native American grievances against the United States government, and “settle once and for all every claim [Indian tribes] could possibly have.” The Seminoles held a long series of grievances. The American military destroyed their homes during the First Seminole War (1817-18), after which Americans forced the Seminoles under duress to relinquish all claims to Florida and sign over 30 million acres of land at the 1823 Treaty of Moultrie Creek. With the creation of the ICC, the Seminoles of Florida and Oklahoma filed claims in 1950 and 1951 that were later consolidated for trial. For the 1823 treaty alone, the collective Seminoles claimed \$37,500,000 plus interest. When combined with other land claims, the natives sought \$47,782,975 plus interest. With such high financial stakes involved, there was a sudden and urgent “will to knowledge,” and Seminole history became a battleground between those who fought for or against compensation.²

In 1956, officials at the Department of Justice called on an archaeologist named Charles H. Fairbanks to work with the government in combating the Seminoles’ land claims case. For Fairbanks, who had just completed his PhD that very year, this was an amazing offer. As long as Fairbanks testified as “an expert witness” for the government during the ICC hearings, the government would facilitate and fund the production of “an ethnographic report.” Fairbanks complied with a 300 page monument in early Seminole historiography, “partially as result of litigation in the claims brought by Seminole bands

² Cline, *Notes on Colonial Indians and Communities in Florida*, iii (“obscure”). For an overview of the ICC, see Nancy Oestreich Lurie, “The Indian Claims Commission Act,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 311 (May 1957): 56-70; Nancy Oestreich Lurie, “The Indian Claims Commission,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 436 (March 1978): 97-110. For an excellent overview of the Seminole case, see Henry Kersey, “The Florida Seminole Land Claims Case, 1950-1990,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 72 (July 1993): 35-55, especially 38.

against the United States, partially as a result of long-standing academic interest and study of related matters.”³

Fairbanks was not alone. The Justice Department also called on a historian named Howard F. Cline in 1959 to research Seminole origins. Cline remembered that the Justice Department asked him to “prepare reports and other materials required by the Department in litigation involved in the claims brought before the Indian Claims Commission by groups of Seminoles.” In a revealing choice of words, Cline recalled that the Justice Department not only aided him with the library staff at the Library of Congress, the library actually “directed the writer to prepare appropriate professional materials for the Department of Justice.” Nevertheless, Cline cautioned his readers that although growing “out of an official context,” his work did “not represent the official views of the Library of Congress, or necessarily those of the United States Government.” The curious word here is “necessarily.”⁴

Suspicious of mercenary scholars ran high during the hearings. An extreme example occurred when the federal attorney, Maurice Cooper, interrupted the testimony of Dr. John K. Mahon, a military historian known for his works on the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). Cooper accused Mahon of “reading from what Mr. Bragman [the attorney for the Florida Seminoles] and his associates have written and appraised.” It was “an argumentative brief,” cried Cooper, and Mahon knew “nothing about the text from which he is reading.” In short, Cooperman called Mahon a mindless puppet for the

³ Perry W. Morton to Charles H. Fairbanks, Washington D.C., November 16, 1956, in Fairbanks, *Ethnohistorical Report on the Florida Indians*, 2. Cline, *Notes on Colonial Indians and Communities in Florida*, iii (“partially”).

⁴ *Ibid.*, i-ii.

Seminoles. Feeling offended, Mahon replied "I don't know whether the counsel wishes to insult me by his statement or not, but I was quoting from the document I prepared for simplicity. Now, if you want me to go through all the photostats, it's perfectly all right with me. Just sound 'aye' and I will do it." There were no takers. This verbal exchange, as comical as it was, still represents how seriously politicized Seminole history became during the ICC hearings.⁵

Aside from producing mercenary scholars, the court ushered in a major discursive shift away from rights of conquest to rights of aboriginality by insisting, at least initially, that the ICC would only compensate those groups that held an "exclusive" and "aboriginal title" to the land since "time immemorial." As we have learned, the Seminoles did not meet these guidelines. In the days before "aboriginal title," the Seminoles proudly claimed their homeland by right of conquest, as did many natives. Their forefathers consciously embarked on a mission to kill, enslave, or otherwise drive off the remaining Florida natives, which they finally accomplished by the 1760s. Likely at the behest of their lawyers, the Seminoles of Florida sidestepped the issue and filed a petition on August 14, 1950 claiming exclusive occupancy to Florida since "time immemorial." Shortly thereafter, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma filed a suit claiming their occupancy of Florida since "time immemorial," while dismissing the Florida Seminoles as "outlaws" and insisting that all awards should go to the Oklahoma Seminoles. The "time immemorial" clause was so powerful during the early years of the ICC that even Morton Silver, the lawyer of the Miccosukee Seminoles, fervently

⁵ Indian Claims Commission, *Seminole Indians of Florida vs. United States*, 218-219.

researched the historical records to claim his clients' aboriginal status even though the Miccosukee rejected the ICC affair and rejected monetary compensation.⁶

Once the trial began, such claims to aboriginality could not go unquestioned. The defense for the US Government placed a significant emphasis on the argument that "there can be no continuity of exclusive use and occupancy from time immemorial." In the opening address, Maurice Cooperman declared: "We will adduce evidence to the effect that Florida was completely depopulated of its native Indians by 1715, by disease and war and military incursions from the north and heavy raids." Cooperman asserted that "the remnant of less than 100 Indians remaining were taken to Cuba by the Spaniards when they left Florida in 1763." Therefore, "no present-day Florida Indian could truthfully say that they are descendants of the aboriginal natives who occupied Florida during the first Spanish dominion."⁷

The defense relied largely on Fairbanks' report. When the Assistant Attorney General, Perry W. Morton, first requested Fairbanks' professional services, Morton explicitly requested that Fairbanks focus his "ethnographic report" on "showing what portion, if any, of the approximately 30 million acres which were relinquished to the

⁶ "Aboriginal title is based upon the exclusive use and occupancy of an area of territory by a land-owning Indian entity. Determination of whether a claimant has such title is a question of fact which depends on historical evidence of actual occupation of the territory by the claimant." Quoted from *Indian Claims Commission Decisions* (Washington D.C.: The Commission, 1948), vol. 24: 214. For a great overview of "aboriginal title," see Daniel G. Kelly, Jr., "Indian Title: The Rights of American Natives in Lands They Have Occupied since Time Immemorial," *Columbia Law Review* 75 (April 1975): 655-686; Lurie, "The Indian Claims Commission Act," 61-64; James Axtell, "The Ethnohistory of Early America: A Review Essay," *William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (January 1978): 112. On Florida-Oklahoma Seminole rift during the ICC, see Kersey, "The Florida Seminole Land Claims Case, 1950-1990," 39. For Miccosukee claims, see Sturtevant, "Creek into Seminole," 121. For examples of other conquest legends, see James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee* (New York: Courier Dover, 1996), 20; J. Alden Mason, "The Papago Migration Legend," *Journal of American Folklore* 34 (July 1921): 254-268, especially 264-265.

⁷ For "no continuity," see the appendix of *Ethnohistorical Report on the Florida Indians*, 343. For Cooperman's opening address, see Indian Claims Commission, *Seminole Indians of Florida vs. United States*, 328-329.

United States by the 1823 treaty, had been in the actual and exclusive occupancy of the Florida Indians from time immemorial.” Fairbanks obliged the government’s request by arguing in his report that “between 1685 and 1708 the Indians of Florida, both mission and pagan were virtually destroyed by Carolinian and Indian raids,” and “the period following 1710 was one in which the Florida area was for a time almost uninhabited.” The defense used Fairbanks’ report of a “low [population] tied” in 1710 to cite a 1954 case (*Quapaw Tribe of Indians, et al. v. United States*) whereby the court decided:

When an Indian tribe ceases for any reason, by reduction of population or otherwise, to actually and exclusively occupy and use an area of land... such land becomes the exclusive property of the United States as public lands, and the Indians lose their right to claim... ownership to such land.⁸

The “time immemorial” clause certainly gave the natives a tough case to make. As Dr. John M. Goggin, a witness for the Seminoles, took the stand, Commissioner William M. Holt initiated the historical discussion by stating: “Well, of course, I am interested in getting an outline of what the plaintiffs are claiming was the area that they had aboriginal title to.” Goggin’s response wisely evaded the question of aboriginal title by pointing to the 1765 Treaty of Picolata already discussed in chapter two. Later in the hearings, Goggin addressed the issue in the following terms: “The ancestors of these Seminoles were the ones that took the Apalachee Indians captive, and who probably incorporated many of the Apalachee Indians into their own group.” Goggin argued that

⁸ Perry W. Morton to Charles H. Fairbanks, Washington D.C., November 16, 1956, in *Ethnohistorical Report on the Florida Indians*, 2, 98 (“uninhabited”). For the defense’s case, see appendix of *Ibid.*, 343.

the existence of Florida native slaves among the Seminoles was a “source of aboriginal ties between the Seminoles and the earliest inhabitants.”⁹

As the first chapter of this work alluded, the early Seminoles captured and kept a number of Florida native slaves, nearly all female. While visiting Alachua in 1774, William Bartram could not help but observe “the striking contrast betwixt a state of freedom and slavery,” in which “they differ as widely from each other as the bull from the ox.” The children of a master-slave relationship were not slaves, but still could not “arrive to much honorary distinction in the country” on account of their mother’s slave status. They were stigmatized and marginalized as “of the slave race.” Fully integrating the “slave race” into a matrilineal society could take generations to accomplish. This was apparently the case by the 1820s, when one American observer remarked: “it is a fact that the Creeks have held a slave race, descended from the Yamasee nation, which has but recently been incorporated with their tribe.”¹⁰

Ironically, the conquest, enslavement, and slow incorporation of the stigmatized “slave race” would save the Seminoles centuries later when the Seminoles attempted to present themselves as those they formerly enslaved. Such claims were certainly aided by a redefinition of “aboriginal title” and “time immemorial,” as the ICC decided that “aboriginal title need not exist from time immemorial; a long time is enough.” Such redefinitions, together with Goggin’s arguments, ultimately led the court to decide that

⁹ For Goggin’s remarks, see Indian Claims Commission, *Seminole Indians of Florida vs. United States*, 90, 134.

¹⁰ Bartram, *Travels*, 164. For references to “slave race,” see Taitt, “Journal, 1772,” 524; 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*, ed. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, vol. 5 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1855), 259-260 (“honorary distinction”); *Essex Register*, April 21, 1825 (“recently”).

"Indians of Creek extraction, together with the assimilated aborigines...made up the native population of Florida which became known collectively as 'Seminoles.'"

Therefore, "the Seminole Nation had Indian title to an area which may be generally identified as all of Florida."¹¹

The conclusion of the case should have marked the end of the politicization of Seminole history, mercenary scholars, and the myth of Seminole aboriginality. It should have opened the door for new and innovative research not tied down to the concerns of the ICC. For reasons not entirely clear, Seminole history has become even more politicized than ever before. In 1992, the charismatic and controversial chairman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, James Billie, hired the author of *Osceola's Legacy* (1991), Dr. Patricia Riles Wickman, as a historical consultant for the tribe. Wickman was also the great-grandniece of Jacob Mickler, an Indian-hating bounty hunter during the Second Seminole War. Wickman divulged that she wanted to "restore the balance" upset by Mickler and that "one of the reasons I'm here is to make up for him." Nevertheless, Wickman was essentially no different from other mercenary scholars during the ICC era. In an interview with *Indian Country Today*, Wickman commented: "I report to the Tribal Council... I let them know what I am doing. I have to satisfy them that I'm spending their money wisely, and that I am doing things they and their constituencies consider important."¹²

¹¹ Indian Claims Commission, *Seminole Indians of Florida vs. United States*, 90, 134; *Indian Claims Commission Decisions*, vol. 13: 333; Appendix of *Ethnohistorical Report on the Florida Indians*, 348.

¹² Vanessa Bauzá, "The Search for Seminole Roots," *Seminole Tribune*, May 5, 2000. Pat Hubbard, "Tribal Identity a Priority for Seminole Ethnohistorian," *Indian Country Today*, July 10, 2002.

One product of Wickman's employment for the Seminole Tribe of Florida was her 1999 book *The Tree that Bends: Discourse, Power, and the Survival of the Maskoki People*, in which she resurrected the myth of Seminole aboriginality. She not only asserted that the Seminoles were "direct evolutionary descendants of the pre-Contact 'Florida' Natives," but also dismissed all previous scholarship as "Eurocentric" and "chauvinist." Although most Seminoles still cling to their more historically accurate migration legends, some have been influenced by Wickman's teachings. The Seminole Tribe of Florida's website currently attests that "the core of the Seminole people did not 'come' to Florida." Rather, the Seminoles had "lived and hunted all over the Florida peninsula for thousands of years before the coming of the English or the Spaniards." Wickman's employer, James Billie, echoed her teachings by declaring in 2000:

The United States has always tried to contend that we Indians were not always here, that we were some sort of immigrants, who just got here and have no rightful claim to the land or anything else. They have been saying this for years and even to this day you will hear someone stand up and say "You Indians are newcomers."¹³

Wickman's specious arguments about Seminole aboriginality have dumbfounded scholars that have mistaken her work as historical scholarship rather than a political tract. A reviewer of *The Tree that Bends*, archaeologist Brent Weisman, expressed his confusion at Wickman's claims, in which "the specific archaeological record of the Florida Seminoles is ignored." Her claims struck Weisman as "largely unsupported by

¹³ Wickman, *The Tree That Bends*, 1, 11. For "the core," see the "Frequently Asked Questions" section of the Seminole Tribe of Florida's website; available from <http://www.seminoletribe.com/history/faqs.shtml>; accessed 4 January 2009. James E. Billie, "Pithlachocco's Honor," *Seminole Tribune*, October 20, 2000. Also see, Sarah Olkon and Martin Merzer, "Ancient Cemetery Found at Brickell Park Site May Hold 100 Tequesta Graves," *Miami Herald*, July 4, 2001.

the author's arguments," which were marred by "flawed premises of assumption and flaws in methodology." This was a natural impression, but as before, the myth of Seminole aboriginality was never about advancing human knowledge for the sake of knowledge. It was always about politicized cutting. Wickman cryptically admitted as much when she wrote: "It is my contention that Euroamerican scholars have, wittingly or not, colluded in the projection of an American myth [of Seminole non-aboriginality], one that has undermined Seminole land claims and, what is more, has questioned the legitimacy of Seminole culture." Wittingly or not, Dr. Wickman does the Seminoles a great disservice by colluding in unsubstantiated theories about Seminole aboriginality to defend the tribe from losing a land claims case that has already been determined in the court of law. By teaching the Florida Seminoles that they are aboriginal Floridians, Wickman contributes to undermining Seminole culture by promoting an ironic, albeit false, consciousness whereby the conquerors relinquish their former identity and become the very people they conquered.¹⁴

The dark legacy of the ICC's foray into Native American history is also apart of the dark history of ethnohistory: a scholarly movement that rose to great prominence during the ICC era and is best symbolized by Fairbanks, Cline, and Goggin. For these reasons and more, many recent scholars have called for the abandonment of the tarnished "ethnohistory" banner, or as Shepard Krech III advocated, the creation of a new banner such as anthrohistory, anthropological history, or historical anthropology. (If "ethnohistory" is damned by its dark history, how can a banner with the term

¹⁴ Brent Weisman, review of *The Tree that Bends: Discourse, Power, and the Survival of the Maskoki People* by Patricia Riles Wickman, *Southeastern Archaeology* 22 (Summer 2003): 123-125. Wickman, *The Tree That Bends*, 1.

“anthropology” be any better?) The future of “ethnohistory,” whether it is renamed or renounced from the scholarly lexicon, is more of a humdrum than a conundrum.

Although consciously avoiding it by name, this work certainly owes much to the methodology of ethnohistory, in which historical documents are read with an eye for culture, but what I have attempted to achieve in this thesis is to go beyond the traditional concerns and methods of ethnohistory by infusing it with other influences, such as dramaturgical theory and discourse analysis. Its success is left open to the reader.¹⁵

Before closing this work, there was one more interesting, albeit often forgotten, drama during the ICC hearings that deserves recounting. On August 9, 1951, a group called the Creeks East of the Mississippi filed a suit seeking compensation for the lands north of the Seminoles. Later in the proceedings, after it became apparent that the Seminoles would win their case, the Eastern Creeks “altered the thrust of their case” by arguing that the Seminoles were “really Creek Indians and a part of the Creek Nation or Confederacy,” and “thus the Creeks were entitled to compensation for most of Florida, including more than was awarded to the Seminoles.” To argue their case, the Eastern Creeks called on Dr. James F. Doster as an expert witness. Doster fulfilled the role expected of him by arguing that “the difference between the Indians in Florida and the other Creeks was something forced by white men over the violent objections of the Indians.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Shepard Krech III, “The State of Ethnohistory,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20 (1991): 345-375, especially 365.

¹⁶ *Indian Claims Commission Decisions*, vol. 22: 10-15; vol. 35: 10; Doster, *The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1740-1823*, vol. 1: 272.

Although the courts dismissed the Eastern Creek claims as contrary to “historic fact,” many scholars continue to subscribe to the argument that Seminole genesis was an arbitrary European invention. This paper has demonstrated that the arbitrary European invention model of Seminole genesis is without foundation. On the contrary, there was a structure to Seminole genesis, and it was a homegrown byproduct of a struggle between two competing Lower Creek factions: the nationalists and the ostensive partisans, in which the former began designating the latter as “wild” or Seminoles during the French and Indian War. Such partisans were “wild” only within a Creek political discourse. From constant interaction with English colonists, the partisans learned the art of cross-cultural diplomacy. They knew what to say, when to say it, and how to act when delivering cross-cultural messages. Literate Europeans, rather than arbitrarily inventing anything, sat in the audience throughout this factional (often fictionalized) drama playing the part of interpretive transcribers, who perhaps at times took more poetic liberties than they should have, but largely played the part of literate dupes.

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