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## Muskogee Internationalism in An Age of Revolution, 1763-1818

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“Muskogee Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763-1818”

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty  
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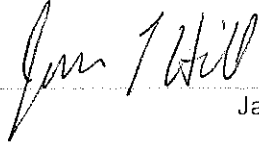
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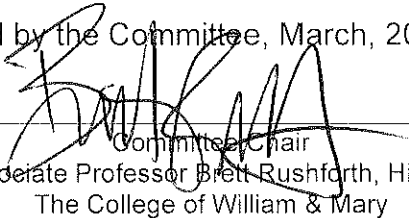
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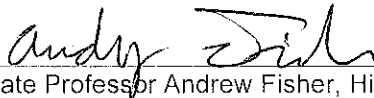
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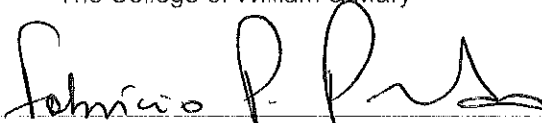
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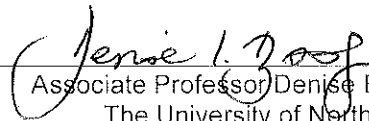
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation reevaluates the consequences of the American Revolution by examining how indigenous peoples preserved their role as regional powers in the decades following the birth of the United States. Focusing on the Creek Indians of the present-day southeastern United States, I demonstrate that they maintained ties with Britons, Spaniards, and other Native peoples, employing these connections to their advantage. Creeks created borderlands that connected their societies with those of the British and Spanish Caribbean. The Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of Florida and their surrounding waters became zones of encounter and exchange between Native peoples, British wreckers from the Bahamas, and Spanish fishermen from Cuba. The networks created through these borderlands show that many elements of colonial-era diplomacy, where Native peoples held significant power in relationships with Europeans and Euroamericans, continued in force well after American independence.

Creek diplomacy during this era engaged with European international law and concepts of nationhood in ways that compare to and were in dialogue with the efforts of the United States. Both Creeks and Americans sought to negotiate as unitary nations because the international order of their era demanded it. Each consisted of disparate peoples who had little sense of common interest or cohesion prior to the mid-eighteenth century. Creeks identified as members of towns and clans rather than as a singular nation. Any political unity between the Creek towns developed only in response to challenges presented by European colonization. Likewise, Americans identified more with their home states or local communities than the nation as a whole. Over the course of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, both Creeks and Americans struggled to find ways to balance local interests with the diplomatic needs created by the Atlantic community to which they belonged. In this sense, Creek diplomacy was decidedly modern and conversant with legal and political developments throughout the Atlantic world.

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This Ph.D. is dedicated to all of the people who have helped me along the way.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Creek Indians pursued an aggressive and far-reaching series of diplomatic efforts that relied upon engagement with and appropriation of European legal concepts to secure international alliances by presenting themselves as a “treaty-worthy” nation. These efforts were designed to perpetuate Creek territorial and diplomatic power by securing valuable alliances and connections. They involved manipulation of the European concept of a “nation,” with Creek emissaries presenting themselves as sovereign authorities of a unified polity of dozens of communities, in contrast with the decentralized political structure Creeks actually practiced. In many ways, these efforts mirrored contemporary developments among the United States. Both groups of peoples struggled to reconcile their internal political structures, which diffused sovereignty and political authority to varying degrees, with a European diplomatic order that sought to negotiate with centralized bodies that could enforce agreements over a wide area.<sup>1</sup>

This work explores how the idea of a “Creek nation” meant different things to different Creek leaders and communities. Creek *etvlwvlke* (tribal communities or tribal towns; singular: *etvlwv*) each remained autonomous of one another, governing their own affairs and, frequently, conducting their own independent negotiations with outsiders. Usually, men referred to as *mēkkvvlke* (singular: *mēkko*), revered men with a great deal of political influence but no coercive authority over their townspeople, led these

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<sup>1</sup> I employ the term “treaty-worthy” as defined and articulated by Eliga Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 12-3.

negotiations.<sup>2</sup> Creek *mēkkvlke* used their connections in a variety of ways, with some attempting to leverage them into the unification of Creek towns into a singular political entity and others seeking to employ their diplomatic ties to combat these centralizing efforts and reinforce town- and community-based autonomy. Some Creek leaders genuinely wanted to construct a Creek nation with a centralized government, drawing upon Euroamerican institutions and ideas as models and blending them with Creek political institutions. However, many others resembled the “parochial cosmopolitans” historian Stephen Warren sees among the Shawnees. Committed to the local autonomy customary to Creek political life, they viewed connections to the outside world as a powerful tool to guarantee that autonomy. These Creeks saw Euroamerican terminology about nationhood as convenient for their network-building efforts, but did not aspire to the project of Creek political unification.<sup>3</sup>

By presenting themselves as leaders of a singular Creek nation, many Creek diplomats sought to instill British, Spanish, and/or American confidence in them as Atlantic and continental power brokers, figures who could use the force of the Creeks to help advance imperial and colonial agendas. This process, while conversant with Atlantic developments concerning international law and sovereignty, also represented the continuation and intensification of longtime trends in Creek diplomacy, whereby Creek

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<sup>2</sup> I employ a few terms and concepts from the Muskogee (Creek) language. Although linguistic diversity among Creeks and Seminoles was (and remains) great, I rely on Muskogee because it was the most commonly spoken language among them, and it is the best documented. Undoubtedly, many of the individuals I discuss in this work spoke other languages, particularly Hitchiti and Mikasuki. For orthography, pronunciation, and other linguistic information, see Jack Martin and Margaret McKane Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), xiii-xxiii and s.vv. “*evlvy*,” “*mēkko*”; Martin, *A Grammar of Creek (Muskogee)* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 127-130.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Warren, *The Worlds the Shawnees Made: Migration and Violence in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

leaders gained power and built reputations by forging connections with outsiders, and established those connections in part by advertising (often greatly exaggerating) their ability to project their authority over people and space. Posturing over command of a Creek “nation” that could place tens of thousands of warriors in the field sometimes represented a genuine aspiration, but more often served as a rhetorical posture that paid lip service to European and Euroamerican ambitions.

The broader aim of this study is to place Native and American political and diplomatic efforts in dialogue with one another. In particular, I demonstrate how both U.S. and Creek projects of sovereignty overlapped and interrelated in multiple ways. Recently, a number of scholars have sought to examine Native efforts in conjunction with and in comparison to European and Euroamerican concepts of nationhood and sovereignty.<sup>4</sup> In particular, Gregory Ablavsky has compared the nation-building efforts of Native peoples, including the Creeks, to that of the United States, arguing that they were parallel processes. This work complements Ablavsky’s, focusing on diplomatic processes whereas Ablavsky engages in a studied analysis of authority and jurisdiction. Whereas Ablavsky examines how Americans and Native peoples articulated, manifested, and defended claims of authority and jurisdiction to one another, I seek to reconstruct the Atlantic and continental webs that Creeks forged with the goal of seeking recognition for these claims.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sami Lakomäki has argued that the “state-centric tradition of historical scholarship” has led studies of nation building to ignore Native peoples. In particular, Native territoriality and boundary marking often go unrecognized and underappreciated. Saliha Belmessous addresses this point, advancing the notion that Native peoples have articulated legal arguments against European colonialism since contact. See Sami Lakomäki, *Gathering Together: The Shawnee People through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 2-3; Saliha Belmessous, ed., *Native Claims: Indigenous Law against Empire, 1500-1920* (Oxford: Unviersity Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Gregory Ablavsky, “Beyond the Indian Commerce Clause.” *The Yale Law Journal* 124, no. 4 (2015): 1012-90.

For both Americans and Creeks, the process of asserting and defending sovereignty was inextricable from and shaped by diplomacy. Recent scholarship detailing the development of ideas about sovereignty and nationhood has demonstrated the importance of diplomacy to that project for Anglo-Americans.<sup>6</sup> Many U.S. leaders realized that their nation existed within an interconnected world, where its territorial, political, and economic security depended in part upon the willingness of other nations to recognize borders, honor negotiated agreements, and acknowledge the sovereign rights of American citizens. Americans faced challenges to their sovereignty throughout the Atlantic. British and French naval officers and Barbary pirates seized American persons and property; British military officers refused to evacuate posts in territory claimed by American authorities; French agents recruited privateers on American soil in violation of American law; and Spanish officials scoffed at U.S. territorial claims that clashed with their interpretation of postwar treaties.

These pressures from without demanded greater political centralization within the United States, as the new nation had to demonstrate that it was indeed “treaty-worthy” and capable of enforcing its laws and agreements. Most Europeans maintained that republican governments were inherently unstable, particularly large ones. This belief led

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<sup>6</sup> Eliga Gould, Peter and Nicholas Onuf, and Francis Cogliano all stress the centrality of treaties, the law of nations, and international relations to the development of the U.S. federal government and federal foreign policy. These authors argue that European nations demanded a stronger central authority that could uphold agreements and enforce binding agreements over the American states as a whole. All three demonstrate how U.S. leaders helped shaped the Constitution and adopted a flexible foreign policy with this end in mind. Daniel Hulsebosch has argued how New York’s place in the “institutional matrix” of the British Empire helped it develop a peculiar and profoundly influential model of constitutionalism. Its role as a key commercial node in Britain’s Atlantic networks created a flow of people, goods, and ideas created a world that was at once local and cosmopolitan. This dynamic led New Yorkers to seek to balance local, national, broader concerns after American independence, and this concept would go on to shape the nature of the U.S. constitutionalism. See Francis D. Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson's Foreign Policy*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*; Daniel Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire: New York and the Transformation of Constitutionalism in the Atlantic World, 1664-1830* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2005); Peter Onuf and Nicholas Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World: The Law of Nations in an Age of Revolutions, 1776-1814* (Madison: Madison House, 1993).

them to the conclusion that the United States would eventually fracture into feuding nations, all of which would remain weak and susceptible to European domination. The lack of respect for the United States seriously jeopardized its ability to function as a sovereign entity and necessitated reforms. However, this contradicted most U.S. leaders' desire for political decentralization and the autonomy of individual states. To meet the demands of the outside world, American politicians found themselves striking an uneasy balance between state and federal sovereignty, which has remained in continual negotiation to the present.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, I argue that Creeks realized that the protection of their own rights required the ability to compel outsiders to honor agreements and acknowledge Creek boundaries. Alterations in the Atlantic world's diplomatic and geopolitical order at the end of the eighteenth century increasingly necessitated that Creeks portray themselves as a nation in negotiations, even when that rendering directly contradicted the political structure that many Creeks sought to maintain. Prior to the mid-eighteenth century, Creeks had taken advantage of European imperial rivalries to not only defend their rights, but project power through the surrounding region. Creek communities such as Coweta and Okfuskee grew strong and influential by securing materially lucrative and symbolically powerful trade connections with European colonies. Europeans, well aware of how isolated and weak their colonial outposts were, realized they depended on the goodwill of their Native neighbors in America. Moreover, each European colony feared that Native peoples would aid its colonial rivals against them if provoked, which would amplify the dangers that they faced.

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<sup>7</sup> Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty*; Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*; Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World*; Leonard J. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).



In the Creek case, their position between British Carolina, French Louisiana, and Spanish Florida created a climate where none of the three colonies grew powerful enough to threaten the Creeks and all three competed with one another to win Creek favor, or at least avoid the Creeks' wrath. Although controversies frequently developed over issues ranging from murders, to trade, to territorial encroachments, Creek communities maintained a favorable enough position to settle these disputes in a favorable, or at least satisfactory, manner up until the 1760s.<sup>8</sup>

This work claims that changes in the broader political climate among both the Creeks' surroundings and the broader Atlantic forced Creeks to alter their strategies in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Various European empires either lost their positions on the margins of Creek territory, or lost interest in maintaining colonial competition in that part of the world. At the same time, tens of thousands of Americans increased the challenges Creeks faced. No longer under even the minimal restraint that British imperial authorities had imposed upon them, Anglo-Americans flooded into Native lands, including those of the Creeks. Geopolitical shuffling either altered or eliminated some of the Creeks' diplomatic options. These developments compelled Creeks to broaden the geographical scope of their connections and adopt maritime travel. When Britain expelled Spanish colonists from Florida at the end of the Seven Years' War, Creeks began traveling to Cuba to remain in contact with them. When most of Britain's mainland colonies rebelled and overthrew imperial authorities, Creeks journeyed to the Bahamas,

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<sup>8</sup> Examples of works that illustrate Creeks' political and diplomatic world prior to the 1760s include Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation: 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Joseph M. Hall, *Zamumo's Gifts: Indian-European Exchange in the Colonial Southeast* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Piker, *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler: Telling Stories in Colonial America*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013).

the Great Lakes, Quebec, and even London itself to maintain those connections. Though Anglo-American and Creek societies differed dramatically in many respects, both had to find their footing in a North American landscape where, because of revolutions and wars, the future appeared less certain than ever.

More than an alteration of geography and travel however, late-eighteenth-century developments required Creeks to change their diplomatic tactics. For one, they had to convince defeated empires that had been expelled from the areas around Creek country to continue to invest in their Creek connections, that Creeks still had something to offer their empires. As with Americans, for Creeks part of that project involved convincing Europeans that they could maintain and uphold agreements and that they even had sovereign rights that required defending. As Sami Lakomäki has noted, a shift in the conception of nationhood occurred among European and Euroamerican thinkers in the late eighteenth century. Increasingly, Europeans and Euroamericans began to think of the term “nation” as exclusively applying to themselves, and that Native peoples permanently occupied a lesser political order incapable of organization or political sophistication. Potential allies seemed to demand the cultivation of the notion of Creek nationhood and the development of centralized political authority.<sup>9</sup>

Creeks responded to these challenges in different ways, some adopting the project of creating a central Creek authority and others embracing the idea of a Creek nation as negotiating rhetoric only. A handful of scholars have employed the lens of nationhood or nation-building to examine changes in identity and political structure among Native peoples throughout the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Most notably, Steven C. Hahn and Sami Lakomäki have employed the concept in their studies of the

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<sup>9</sup> Lakomäki, *Gathering Together*, 225-7.

Creeks and Shawnees, respectively, while cautioning not to conflate the term “nation” with a modern notion of the nation-state. In this sense, they use nation to describe a generalized sense of political, social, and cultural relationships held together through marriage, kinship, communication, and shared elements of identity. Both view their case studies of nation building as stop-and-start processes, cycling between fragmentation and consolidation, with “oscillating periods of . . . fission, fusion, and factionalism.”<sup>10</sup>

In some ways I maintain the arguments of these works, but I tend to emphasize “nation” as more a conceptual tool of diplomacy than a structural descriptor. I employ their broader definition of “nation” that disentangles it from the nation-state. I also argue that consolidation of a national identity among Creeks was not a linear process, rife with contestation and proceeding with ebbs and flows of unifying sentiment. However, I observe Creeks employing the term “nation” in negotiations with Europeans and Euroamericans, but see a disjuncture between the meaning they are trying to convey and the reality of Creek politics. The lack of unity among Creeks clashes with the way many mēkkvlke claimed to be speaking on behalf of Creek communities as a whole. Both of these trends exacerbated over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. More than ever, diplomats negotiating with Britons, Americans, and Spaniards claimed to be representing the Creek nation rather than individual communities. Yet, in the 1780s and 1790s, cooperation between Upper and Lower Creek towns gave way to a sharp division in diplomacy and political objectives. Creek communities along the Flint River in what is now southwestern Georgia and in the Florida panhandle pulled further and further away from the Upper and Lower towns that claimed authority over them.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2-3; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 7.

Finally, in the 1810s Creeks fought a bitter, bloody war with one another, splitting over the diplomatic, political, and socioeconomic future of Creek country.

With regard to Hahn's work in particular, I simultaneously expand the chronology of his argument and modify its conclusion. The body of Hahn's work concludes in 1763, though his conclusion briefly addresses later decades. He rightly concludes that Creeks attempted to preserve the diplomatic connections that they maintained in earlier eras, but overemphasizes how Creeks felt "an apparent need to centralize and institutionalize the leadership of the Creek Nation." While many Creek leaders collaborated with one another in this period, they also frequently sought out rival connections for the benefit of their individual communities. At times, they found a unified Creek political voice useful in negotiations, but those instances were contingent upon the assent of the individual *etvlwvlke* or *mēkkvlke* and not a push at creating a permanent, unified Creek political authority. Moreover, Creeks and Creek communities that lacked established leadership roles but aspired to political influence operated in spite of more powerful *etvlwvlke* or *mēkkvlke*. They sought to multiply, not consolidate, sites of power within the Creek nation. Yet, they still employed the notion of a Creek "nation" as a means of asserting their power and influence in diplomacy, employing it as a bit of false bravado to increase European and Euroamerican confidence in them as negotiating partners.<sup>11</sup>

Moving beyond comparison of Native and American efforts, this work also demonstrates how Native political and diplomatic agendas shaped and influenced those of the United States. By considering the entirety of Creek transatlantic communications throughout the first four decades of American independence alongside, this work aims to

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<sup>11</sup> Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 274.

demonstrate how disruptive they were for Americans, and how much diplomatic and political energy Americans devoted to breaking them. Native peoples such as the Creeks, who persisted in creating and maintaining transatlantic connections with European empires, had a greater hand in shaping U.S. policy than scholars have acknowledged.<sup>12</sup> In the eyes of many Americans, Native transatlantic connections not only provided them with weapons to counter American assaults, but also threatened to perpetuate British and Spanish influence in regions of North America that Americans considered or expected to become U.S. territory. A great deal of U.S. negotiations with Native peoples and British and Spanish emissaries alike centered on the prevention of these connections.<sup>13</sup>

By demonstrating the transatlantic dimensions of Creek projections of territorial sovereignty, I also argue for the usefulness of Atlantic frameworks. For years, one of the

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<sup>12</sup> David Andrew Nichols and Leonard Sadosky have demonstrated that conflict with Native peoples posed risks to U.S. sovereignty similar to Americans' disputes with European empires or Barbary pirates. During the era of the Articles of Confederation, states and even localities managed their own relations with neighboring Indians, usually with disastrous results. States and frontier communities antagonized Native peoples, but lacked the resources and strength to win the conflicts they provoked. The United States' inability to defend itself from Indian attacks not only put tens of thousands of Americans' lives at risk but fed the international perception that the U.S. was a weak and ineffectual entity that would not remain intact for long. Sadosky and Nichols demonstrate that these concerns played a significant factor in the decision to reform the framework of American government at the Constitutional Convention. U.S. politicians sought to give the federal government sole authority over Indian affairs and strengthen the U.S. Army as a means of combating these issues. See David Andrew Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008); Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*.

<sup>13</sup> Two important works concerning Creeks and Seminoles' relationship to U.S. sovereignty in particular deserve mention here. While this work argues for ways in which Native sovereignties challenged U.S. sovereignty, Lisa Ford demonstrates how federal authority in part rested upon Creek and Cherokee sovereignty. Ford argues how federal officials in the early Republic, still too weak to impose their political will upon the state of Georgia, asserted themselves by adopting the role of intermediaries between Georgia and the Indians. Federal authorities claimed federal sovereignty over Indian trade, for instance, but relied upon Native peoples' consent, and the threat of force that their potential hostility carried, to enforce regulations and resolve disputes. Deborah Rosen argues that the First Seminole War allowed the U.S. to make a definitive statement about its sovereignty internationally by asserting its territorial sovereignty through both force and forceful negotiations, applying right of conquest to the territory of a European power (Spain), and unilaterally declaring its ability to determine the rights of Native peoples. See Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Deborah A. Rosen, *Border Law: The First Seminole War and American Nationhood*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

most dominant critiques of Atlantic history was that it failed to incorporate Native peoples as anything other than peripheral figures. Recent scholarship has managed to integrate Native peoples into Atlantic frameworks without marginalizing them by highlighting indigenous transatlantic communications and movement.<sup>14</sup> However, most discussions of Native peoples and transatlantic networks predate the revolutions that created independent Euroamerican republics. As a result, the impression left by much of the existing historiography is that the severing of relationships between empires and their colonies made transatlantic connections either useless to or impossible for Native peoples. In particular, scholars tend to presume that American independence effectively cut off Native peoples' access to transatlantic communications, at least in the trans-Appalachian region that became the focus of the United States' colonial efforts.

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<sup>14</sup> The historiography of the Spanish Empire has long noted indigenous peoples' movement through the Atlantic and the transatlantic communications of Native peoples in the form of royal petitions. Most recently, Nancy van Deusen has expanded upon this work by examining indigenous slaves brought to Castile who petitioned the Crown for their freedom. With respect to the British Empire, Jenny Hale Pulsipher highlights New England Indians' appeals to the English Crown for intervention and adjudication in disputes with colonists and colonial authorities. Scholars such as van Deusen, Brett Rushforth, and Linford Fisher have also explored how indigenous slaveries and slave trading influenced the Atlantic through the movement of bodies, the forging of alliances and connections, and by forcing alterations in colonial and imperial policies and legal structures to account for Indian slavery. Both Jace Weaver and Alden Vaughan have detailed the myriad ways in which Native peoples crossed the Atlantic as diplomats, pupils, and slaves. Denise Bossy and Julie Anne Sweet have examined the education of indigenous youths in London. These youths' communities and families sent them across the ocean with the intention that they would employ their learning to serve as leaders, diplomats, and translators upon returning.

Denise I. Bossy, "Spiritual Diplomacy, the Yamasees, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel: Reinterpreting Prince George's Eighteenth-Century Voyage to England," *Early American Studies* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 366-401; Nancy E. Van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Linford D. Fisher, "Dangerous Designs": The 1676 Barbados Act to Prohibit New England Indian Slave Importation," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (Jan. 2014): 99-124; Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Julie Anne Sweet, "Tooanahow: The Maturation of the Next Yamacraw Leader," *Native South* 8 (2015): 89-111; Alden T. Vaughan, *Transatlantic Encounters: American Indians in Britain, 1500-1776* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

In contrast, I demonstrate that Creeks regularly sent petitions, and occasionally ambassadors, to British and Spanish authorities in Whitehall and Madrid to communicate their demands and pleas for assistance. Though they are not the focus of my work, examples suggesting similar cases for Cherokees, Shawnees, and other groups arise through its text as well. Even without making journeys to Europe, Native peoples sought to construct and maintain Atlantic networks and traveled across the American continents and the Caribbean to do so. Often, they formed important and crucial chains in Atlantic networks, finding them vital to their own political and diplomatic projects rooted in the American continent. Direct and indirect transatlantic communications formed a regular part of Creek diplomacy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

If this exploration of transatlantic connections suggests a means of better incorporating Creeks into Atlantic history, it also highlights the drawbacks of continental perspectives. Continental historians have rightly argued that Atlantic perspectives tend to marginalize Native people and ignore the power they held throughout the Americas well into the Postcontact era.<sup>15</sup> However, in its drive to correct Atlantic scholarship, continental history has established a dichotomy between coastal “European...toeholds” and Native “continental cores” that itself can obscure a complex reality. At a basic level, this argument ignores Native peoples who were in fact coastal in orientation. Daniel

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<sup>15</sup> Most vocally, Juliana Barr and Kathleen DuVal have advanced this argument in their publications, and Paul Cohen has published an essay critiquing Atlantic frameworks with respect to Native history. Territories that Europeans regarded as unknown and vacant were the sites of expansive Native polities, most of them enmeshed in their own social, political, and diplomatic worlds far removed from Europeans or Euroamericans. The very sites of European settlement generally found themselves at the mercy of their Native neighbors throughout the early modern era, struggling to survive in a landscape defined and dominated by Native power. See Juliana Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the ‘Borderlands’ of the Early Southwest,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (Jan. 2011): 5-46; Barr, “The Red Continent and the Cant of the Coastline,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (Jul. 2012): 521-6; Paul Cohen, “Was there an Amerindian Atlantic? Reflections on the Limits of a Historiographical Concept,” *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008): 388-410; Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

Mandell, and more recently Nancy Shoemaker, have written about Narragansetts, Mashpees, Mohegans, and others who made the Atlantic coast of present-day New England their home and relied upon the mobility that the sea offered to maintain communal and economic autonomy down to the present. Karl Offen, in his work on the Mosquitos of Central America, identifies an indigenous people who utilized their position on the Gulf of Mexico to form connections with the British Caribbean that they in turn employed against Spanish colonizers.<sup>16</sup>

Like Offen, I demonstrate the importance of the coastline to a Native population. The Creeks, one of the Native polities that possessed a “continental core,” developed an appreciation for the sea throughout the eighteenth century. From the 1740s onward, Creek hunting parties began to frequent the Florida coast and Creek communities began to relocate there. I demonstrate that as geopolitical shuffling took place upon the North American continent in the aftermath of mid-century imperial wars, Creeks utilized the coastline to make new connections to replace the ones they lost. Extending their terrestrial and riverine mobility to the open sea, Creeks both engaged with the broader Atlantic and used it as a tool of power against Native and European rivals alike.

On a broader level, one must consider how exchange, diplomacy, travel, captivity, and communication brought Native peoples into Atlantic networks soon after contact. Although their perspectives, sovereignty, and power remained grounded in interior of the Americas, the connections provided by both Atlantic and continental networks quickly

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.; Daniel Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Karl Offen, “El mapeo de la Mosquita colonial y las prácticas espaciales de los pueblos mosquitos,” *Mesoamérica* 50 (2008): 1-36; Offen, “O mapeas o te mapean: mapeo indígena y negro en América Latina.” *Tabula Rasa* 10 (2009): 165-189.



became critical to these continental struggles. Native peoples looked to Atlantic and continental trade networks for goods that conveyed prestige and spiritual power, particularly firearms that proved decisive in struggles with their neighbors. The availability of these items often depended upon commercial and political developments in the broader Atlantic. Just as Europeans came to depend upon Native goodwill and protection to maintain their colonial footholds, Native peoples came to rely upon the supplies and connections provided by colonists.<sup>17</sup>

This dynamic of interdependence describes the world that Creeks inhabited and explains their drive to repair, maintain, and foster new connections across both the continent and the Atlantic simultaneously. With these connections, Creek communities had acquired such strength that the safety and security of their Native and Euroamerican neighbors depended upon their goodwill. Yet, in a world of interdependence and interconnectedness, the loss of material, political, and diplomatic resources could prove fatal. If one's connections evaporated, or worse, shifted towards one's rivals, one's strength would fade as well. Creeks realized how powerful transatlantic ties had made them and realized that they became vulnerable in their absence.<sup>18</sup>

Another aim of this work is to challenge the centrality of the American Revolution to early American history. Most works on mid-to-late eighteenth century Anglo-America, and even those on Native peoples in the trans-Appalachian region, privilege the Revolution in their periodization. For early Americanists, the Revolution

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<sup>17</sup> David Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Numerous scholars have employed the concept of interdependence to discuss Euro-Native relationships. For examples, see DuVal, *Native Ground*, 8; DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 2015), xx-xxiii; Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001); Daniel Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1992).

often marks the end of the “colonial era” and the beginning of a new period in early American history. For studies of the United States this chronology makes sense, but in many cases it is inappropriate for wider studies of North America. First, as many scholars have observed, for Native peoples the colonial era never ended. American policies represented a continuation and expansion of the colonization efforts of Europeans, culminating in a gradual imposition of U.S. political authority and jurisdiction over Native territories and peoples over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, the American Revolution did not represent a definitive turning point in the broader chronology of Euroamerican colonization in North America. Although the United States eventually came to overpower Native peoples, the fact of American independence did not assure this future order. Indeed, little changed in the decades immediately following the Revolution. For much of the 1780s and 1790s, the United States proved more vulnerable to Native attacks and less capable of asserting themselves in negotiations with Native peoples than they had as British colonies. Constitutional reforms strengthened the states’ ability to carry out negotiations and defend themselves. Still, American leaders could not successfully prosecute their aims of dominating Native peoples or their lands. Until the 1810s, Native peoples in the trans-Appalachian region maintained their political sovereignty and most of their territory, forced Americans to

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<sup>19</sup> Juliana Barr articulated this argument in her recent *WMQ* essay, but the idea stretches back much further, originating with Native activists and intellectuals protesting modern-day colonialism. Historians such as Jeffrey Ostler and Paige Raibmon had argued for using the lens of colonialism to study Native peoples’ engagement and experiences with U.S. (and Canadian) policymakers, officials, and citizens. See Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 2-5; Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

Bethel Saler and Gray Whaley both apply the framework of colonialism and empire to the study of U.S. colonization efforts in modern-day Wisconsin and Oregon, respectively. See Bethel Saler, *The Settlers’ Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America’s Old Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Gray H. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee: U.S. Empire and the Transformation of an Indigenous World, 1792-1859* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2010).

recognize this fact in negotiations, and continued to build useful connections that extended across the continent and the Atlantic.

Not until the second decade of the nineteenth century did the United States acquire the power and confidence to begin to impose their will upon Native societies. Even then, that process depended upon the withering of Native peoples' transatlantic ties. As such, I argue that the War of 1812 and associated conflicts such as the First Seminole War formed the true historical pivot for trans-Appalachian Native peoples. Through this study of the Creeks, I aim to show how the peoples of this region adapted to the geopolitical changes wrought by the American Revolution as they had those of the Seven Years' War and events prior. By pursuing vital connections, working to maintain them, and manipulating divides among their Euroamerican rivals, the Creeks continued to project power and influence throughout the region they called home and fend off challenges posed by land-hungry colonists into the 1810s.

Finally, this work seeks to add to the historiography of the British and Spanish empires in North America by acknowledging the place of the Gulf South in the ambitions of each and the effects that empire-wide phenomena had upon that region. With the notable exception of J. Leitch Wright's *Britain and the American Frontier*, scholars have mostly ignored the deep connections between British officials' ambitions in the Great Lakes and the Gulf South in the era between the end of the American Revolution and the beginning of the War of 1812. This work shows that the region remained of interest to neighboring colonial officials and rogue adventurers throughout the period, and of at least peripheral concern to imperial authorities in Britain. Again excepting Wright, most works that have dealt with British interests in the Gulf South during the War of 1812 have

treated events in that region as separate from their more famed intrigues in the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes region. I argue that attention to the networks and actions of Native peoples demonstrate that British involvement in the Great Lakes region and Gulf South were intimately connected with one another through Creek and Cherokee ties with Shawnees, Miamis, and other Ohio Valley peoples connected to British Canada and Quebec.<sup>20</sup>

Spanish innovations with specific regard to Florida and Louisiana and British innovations in Upper Canada have also gone underappreciated. The barrier policy in these provinces fit into a broader program of frontier defense common across the Americas in the late eighteenth century. Among others, Juliana Barr, Brian DeLay, and Pekka Hämäläinen have demonstrated how Spanish officials in Texas relied upon Apaches and other Native peoples to protect their garrisons and communities from Comanche raids. David Weber noted that Spanish officials in Florida and along the northern margins of New Spain followed Native customs of gift exchange, particularly the issuing of medals, attempting to accomplish with persuasion what they could not with force. Moving much further south, Hal Langfur shows how Portuguese officials in Minas Gerais relied on the indigenous peoples of the Eastern Sertão, not to protect the colony from attack, but to police the colonial population. In a policy somewhat reminiscent of British intentions behind the Proclamation Line of 1763 in North America, the peoples of the sertão were to prevent colonists from expanding westward, beyond the reach of colonial authorities and into lands officials wished to eventually exploit for themselves.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> J. Leitch Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier, 1783-1815* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975).

<sup>21</sup> Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian*

While the practice of relying upon Native allies to defend colonies dated back to the beginnings of Euro-Native contact, in the late eighteenth century officials at the highest levels of power acknowledged imperial limitations to an unprecedented extent by designating certain lands as closed to colonization. Whether in Creek country, the Ohio Valley, Apachería, or the Eastern Sertão, sovereign Native spaces received official sanction under the guise of barriers or buffer zones by Europeans desperate to combat their enemies and control their own colonists.

Chapter 1 shows how a number of Creek communities attempted to maintain their array of diplomatic networks in the wake of the Seven Years' War, sending emissaries to Spanish Cuba in an attempt to avoid reliance upon British networks and British-connected communities. Chapter 2 explores the aftermath of these efforts, when Creek leader Alexander McGillivray usurped other Creeks' efforts to build Spanish connections, placing himself at their center. McGillivray attempted to use these connections to amass a unified authority over the Creek towns and assume leadership over a broad alliance of various Native peoples. Chapters 3 and 4 turn back to the same Creek towns discussed in chapter 1. In an inversion of their prior efforts, they attempted to use British imperial networks centered on the Bahamas to combat Spanish authorities and communities with Spanish connections.

Chapter 5 explores the ultimate failure of both British and Spanish networks, with the result that Creeks lost a significant degree of political and diplomatic leverage in the mid-1790s. The diplomacy of the United States mirrored Creek efforts, as during this era

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*Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Hal Langfur, *The Forbidden Lands: Colonial Identity, Frontier Violence, and the Persistence of Brazil's Eastern Indians, 1750-1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); David Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

the new nation succeeded in creating a centralized authority for the sake of enforcing treaty agreements, and in consequence began to strengthen their relationships with the imperial regimes of Europe. Chapter 6 concludes by examining the last gasp of Creek internationalism prior to Removal as Creeks split among themselves over the political and socioeconomic future of their communities. When the two parties in this dispute fell out, they relied on American and Anglo-Spanish connections, respectively. Both sets of connections disappointed, as the latter failed their allies, whereas the former demanded substantial concessions that seriously compromised Creek autonomy and Creek sovereignty.

This work relies upon a vast array of sources. Only by analyzing all of them together can one obtain a comprehensive vision of the tangled webs of Creek networks and of the myriad and competing agendas of this assemblage of communities. These documents lie in far-flung archives in places such as Seville, London, Ottawa, Washington, Nassau, and New Orleans. Their authorship is incredibly diverse, ranging from high-ranking imperial officials and cabinet members to ordinary traders, soldiers, and Creeks themselves. The documents were recorded in multiple languages, mostly English and Spanish, with the occasional French and a sprinkling of Muskogee terminology. That the archives holding these materials are so geographically and linguistically diverse and their authorship so varied is no coincidence. Creeks were not the equestrian nomads of Pekka Hämäläinen's Comanche Empire, the "wandering peoples" of Cynthia Radding's Sonora, or even the migratory Shawnees of Stephen Warren and Sami Lakomäki's works, but they were nevertheless remarkably mobile. Creeks sought out anyone they could think of, whomever they were and wherever they

may be, if they believed that person would prove a valuable contact or connection. This more than anything served as the defining mark of Creek diplomacy and ultimately Creek sovereignty in a world where connections proved more important than ever.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*; Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Warren, *The Worlds the Shawnees Made*; Lakomäki, *Gathering Together*.

## Chapter 1

### **“Bring them what they lack”: Spanish-Creek Exchange and Alliance Making in a Maritime Borderland, 1763**

Sometime in late 1777, José Bermúdez sailed his schooner, *San Antonio*, into Tampa Bay on a routine fishing voyage. Cuban fishermen regularly traveled into the Gulf of Mexico to fish throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and Bermúdez was making a trip that he and other captains had taken on numerous occasions. When he neared the bay, he encountered a group of people who also traveled to Tampa regularly: fifty Creek Indians “of both sexes” who had traveled from the region then known as Apalachee, roughly comprising the eastern half of the Florida panhandle. They approached the schooner in canoes, waving to the ship captain so that he might allow them to come aboard. Bermúdez balked at allowing all of the party onto his boat, but agreed to take twelve people, including the two leaders of the party, Tunapé and Tolope. The demand of these Creeks was to be taken to Havana to have an audience with the Spanish governor.<sup>1</sup>

On December 13, Bermúdez, Tunapé, Tolope and the rest of the crew and passengers disembarked at Havana. Tunapé took charge of his delegation and quickly obtained an audience with Governor Diego José Navarro. Tunapé reminded Navarro that he and his townspeople had possession of the old Spanish Fort San Marcos de Apalachee,

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<sup>1</sup> “Declaraciones del Patrón José Bermúdez, y el Cazique Tunapé,” December 22, 1777, Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Papeles de Cuba (hereafter PC), leg. 1290, ff. 365-69, Sevilla, Spain. Much of the correspondence examined here has been transcribed, translated, and published online. See “Synopsis of Official Spanish Correspondence Pertaining to Relations with the Uchiz Indians, 1771-1783,” *Florida History Online*, <http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize/index.html>; “The Indian Frontier in British East Florida; Letters to Governor James Grant from British Soldiers and Indian Traders,” *Florida History Online*, <http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/Grant/index.html>.



or St. Marks, located in Apalachee Bay and abandoned by its British garrison nearly ten years prior. He repeated an offer that he had made twice previously, by way of emissaries: “that the Spaniards come so that he could turn [the fort] over to them.” However, he anticipated yet another rejection, noting that “[t]his did not seem convenient to the Governor” on past occasions. Therefore, he made a counter-offer: for the Governor “to give them two war Drums and a Flag with the [Coat of] Arms of the King [of Spain]...the former so that he can assemble his people and the latter to raise so that all those who see it know that the *castillo* [Fort St. Marks] belongs to the Great King of Spain and will be defended until the last drop of their blood has been spilled.”<sup>2</sup>

Tunapé’s journey and his offer were not unique. Between the late 1760s and the early 1780s, hundreds of Creeks made the long journey to Havana, and dozens of Cuban fishing boats ferried them across. He and his party serve as just one example of Creeks who journeyed into Florida and met with Cuban fishermen all along the Gulf Coast. Creeks and Spanish Cubans alike traveled into the coastal and marine regions between Apalachee and Havana as it suited them, and both took advantage of the space to negotiate and participate in exchanges with one another. Though neither group would have framed it in these terms, Creek-Cuban contacts converted the Gulf of Mexico into a maritime borderland.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Other authors have identified regions which performed functions similar to that of the Gulf of Mexico, and have employed similar concepts to explain their dynamics. Most noteworthy is Karl Offen, who has revealed how the Mosquito Indians tied an indigenous continental space to a broad Atlantic network. The Mosquitos, located along the coast of present-day Nicaragua, held commercial and diplomatic ties with British colonists that extended across the Caribbean to Jamaica. Much like the Creek-Spanish relationship, Mosquitos worked to preserve their ties with British colonists when the latter left the Mosquito Coast in the 1780s, unhindered by the expanse of sea which separated Jamaica and Mosquitia. See Offen, “El mapeo de la Mosquita colonial”; Offen, “O mapeas o te mapean.”

I employ the term “maritime borderland” to describe spaces and zones of interaction which function as borderlands, but happen to be located in large bodies of water and along their coastal areas. Maritime borderlands are not simply thoroughfares which facilitate interaction by providing lanes of transit; rather, they are sites of interaction themselves. In the Gulf and along its coasts, Creeks and Spanish Cubans traded, hunted, fished, talked, and formed social relationships. They did not simply travel to this area; they inhabited it for long periods at a time. Cuban fishermen spent up to five months per year along the Florida Gulf Coast, setting up camps, or *ranchos*, on shore in

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Michael Jarvis uses the term "Atlantic commons" to explain the role of Bermuda in the Atlantic World. Under this concept, Jarvis argues that maritime spaces held a central place in trans-Atlantic networks, that regions such as Bermuda were the sites of social, commercial, and intellectual interaction which linked Europe to mainland America and the Caribbean. See Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History of Culture, 2010), esp. 1-9, 370.

With regard to the Gulf itself, Gilbert Din's *War on the Gulf Coast* focuses on political and military dynamics in Apalachee, albeit during the historical period immediately following that covered in the present study. While not framed as a borderlands history, Din's work highlights the contested nature of the Apalachee region, and its ties to the United States, Creek Country, the Spanish Empire, and the British Caribbean during the late eighteenth century. Particularly helpful is Din's contextualization of Apalachee as part of the broader Gulf region. See Gilbert C. Din, *War on the Gulf Coast: The Spanish Fight against William Augustus Bowles* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012); For a review which examines Din's work from the perspective of borderlands scholarship, see Jessica Bergen, review of *War on the Gulf Coast*, by Gilbert Din, *H-Borderlands* (Sept. 2012), accessed February 12, 2013, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=35499>.

As for the term “maritime borderland,” a number of scholars in Southeast Asian studies have employed it to explain the networks formed between societies bordering the South China Sea. Historian Aims McGuinness also employs the term to describe Panama's role in “connecting the Atlantic and Pacific worlds” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The concept seems to be seeping its way into general curriculums, somewhat intuitively. A recent textbook in Native American history has entitled its chapter on Florida “La Florida: A Maritime Borderland” as means of communicating its position on the periphery of the Spanish and British Empires in the sixteenth century. See Noboru Ishikawa, *Between Frontiers: Nation and Identity in a Southeast Asian Borderland* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 15-16; Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 5; David Rosenberg, “The Maritime Borderlands: Terrorism, Piracy, Pollution, and Poaching in the South China Sea.” In *The Borderlands of Southeast Asia: Geopolitics, Terrorism, and Globalization*, edited by James Clad, Sean M. McDonald, and Bruce Vaughn (Washington: National Defense University Press, 2011): 107-26; Kenneth W. Townsend and Mark Nicholas, eds., *First Americans: A History of Native Peoples*, Combined volume (New York: Pearson, 2013).

order to dry and salt their catch. Likewise, Creeks months hunting, camping, and fishing on shore, and joined the Cubans on their voyages once they arrived on the Florida coast.<sup>4</sup>

Although Cuban fishermen and Creek hunters spent extensive periods of time in these maritime borderlands, these areas were peripheral to both societies. The Creeks' ties extended far inland to their particular *tvlofv* (town) and *etvlwvke* (tribal communities or tribal towns) of origin, some of these being nearly two hundred miles from the nearest seacoast.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary British agents divided the Creeks into two generalized groups, the Upper Creeks and the Lower Creeks. While the complexity of Creek political and social life defies such simplistic categorization, these terms match up well with the geographical loci of Creek settlement at the time. Most of the Creeks who visited Havana were Lower Creeks, whose core region of settlement lay along the Chattahoochee River on the modern-day Georgia-Alabama border, with a number of smaller communities on the Flint River, which branched off from the Chattahoochee near its source. The Upper

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<sup>4</sup> Numerous works have covered the relationship between Spanish colonists and the Creek towns, but few conduct a serious exploration of their ties into the late eighteenth century. Steven C. Hahn documents the “triple-nation diplomacy” of Creeks in the early eighteenth century, including their negotiations with Spanish officials. Joseph Hall has perhaps the best analysis available on Spanish-Creek diplomacy and exchange, but his work also concludes in the mid-eighteenth century. Claudio Saunt’s *A New Order of Things* bridges the gap between the early and late eighteenth century, but focuses upon social and economic transformations among the Creeks. David Corkran’s *The Creek Frontier* has one of the most thorough examinations of Creek-Spanish contacts between 1763 and 1783, but is largely narrative in tone and does not engage in extensive analysis. See David Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 266-84; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*; Hall, *Zamumo’s Gifts*; Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

A number of works have mentioned the Creek-Cuba contacts, but few have explored them in depth. The most thorough and recent study is in Claudio Saunt, *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), ch. 8. Other studies are: Boyd and José Navarro Latorre, “Spanish Interest in British Florida,” 92-130; Stephen FF. Covington, “The Cuban Fishing *Ranchos*: A Spanish Enclave within British Florida,” in William S. Coker and Robert R. Rea, eds., *Anglo-Spanish Confrontation on the Gulf Coast during the American Revolution* (Pensacola: Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference, 1982), 20-21; John Worth, “Creolization in Southwest Florida: Cuban Fishermen and ‘Spanish Indians,’ ca. 1766-1841,” *Historical Archaeology* 46, no. 1 (2012), 142-60. Worth in particular is notable for his argument that the Creeks and Cubans formed what he calls a “creolized” community in south Florida by the early nineteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Martin and Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee* s.vv. “*etvlwv*”; “*tvlofv*.”

Creeks, in turn, were concentrated along the Tallapoosa and Coosa Rivers in present-day Alabama. The Upper Creeks were further divided into three ethno-linguistic categories: the Tallapoosas, the Abikas, and the Alabamas.<sup>6</sup>

Aside from these core areas, Creek Country comprised an extensive range of territory which extended east to the Ocmulgee River, southeast to the St. Johns River in Florida, and due south to Apalachee, Tampa Bay, and the Gulf. A number of burgeoning Creek settlements existed in these regions, such the inhabitants of Tunapé's *tvlofv* in Apalachee and the nascent Seminole communities in northwestern peninsular Florida. These were all populated by migrants from the heart of Creek Country. The Seminoles were mostly migrants from the Lower Creeks, particularly Oconee, whereas the Creeks in Apalachee appear to have been Upper Creeks. Through interaction and exchange, the Creeks had far-flung networks extending throughout the Eastern Woodlands, west to the Mississippi River, east to the Atlantic ports of South Carolina and Georgia, and north to the Shawnees and other Native peoples of the Ohio Valley.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Spanish sources indicate the vast majority of the Creek visitors as hailing from “la Provincia de Caveta,” a term which they used to refer to the Muskogee-, Hitchiti-, and Yuchi-speaking communities surrounding the Lower Creek town of Coweta. By the 1760s Spanish officials employed a broad definition of the term, as they used in it reference to all Creek settlements in the vicinity of the Apalachicola River basin, including Tunapé’s community. They used this term alongside the term “Uchizes” (a Spanish rendition of “Ochese Creeks,” a seventeenth-century English name for the Lower Creeks) as a reference for Lower Creeks in general. Regarding the Upper Creek visitors, Spanish officials delineated town and ethnic groupings by using the terms “Tallapoosas” and “Abikas,” but provided no further specificity as to their individual origins. In most cases, I have only been able to link individual Creeks to a specific *tvlofv* or *etvlwv* by cross-referencing English sources. This has not proved possible for all of the visitors listed in the Spanish documentation. See Boyd and Latorre, “Spanish Interest in British Florida,” 100, n. 1; Verner W. Crane, “The Origin of the Name of the Creek Indians,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 5, no. 3 (Dec. 1918): 340-41; Albert S. Gatschet, *A Migration Legend of the Creek Indians* (Philadelphia: D. G. Brinton, 1884): 156; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 91, 135-36, 167, 177-79.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief description of Creek socio-political organization, see Willard B. Walker, “Creek Confederacy Before Removal,” *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 14: Southeast, eds. Raymond Fogelson and William Sturtevant (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institute: 2004), 373-75, 382-85, 391-92. I use the term “Seminole” solely to refer to the Native communities in the Alachua prairie, since this is the only group I have seen the name applied to during this period. The Seminoles were generally Lower Creek migrants, mostly from Oconee, whereas the Apalachee Creeks appear to have been Upper Creeks originally. Evidence for this latter claim comes not only from documentary evidence which places

The vast majority of Creek territory served as hunting grounds, and Creeks guarded them vigilantly. They spent roughly four months out of each year, spanning from late October to late February, chasing game throughout the woodlands of the Southeast. Deer were the most important game for the Creeks, and there was a bustling market for their skins in Europe, which Creeks and other Southeastern Indians took advantage of. Overhunting helped to reduce the Southeast's deer population over the course of the eighteenth century, a fact which precipitated the Creeks' travels further and further afield in search of game. Sparsely-populated peninsular Florida was the prime destination for these expanded hunting expeditions, and as a result these lands held increased importance for Creeks in the late eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Creeks controlled most of Florida and were not shy about reminding Europeans of the fact. They allowed colonists to establish posts along the coastline, but asserted their control over the range and tenor of such settlements. In 1764, when a band of Alabamas got into a dispute with the commander of the Spanish garrison at Pensacola, the leader of the Alabama group warned the Spanish lieutenant that "this was not the land of the Spaniards, but theirs," and that he lacked the power to enforce his will upon them.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, when Spanish garrisons turned over Pensacola, St. Marks, and St. Augustine to British officials, Lower Creek and Seminole leaders insisted that the British remain close to Florida's shoreline. Even then, they asserted that they had only lent this land to the

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Tunapé in the Upper Creek towns prior to his migration to Apalachee (see note 15), but also a recent archaeological study which ties artifacts found in the Apalachicola River region to Upper Creek forms of pottery; see April J. Buffington, "Creek/Seminole archaeology in the Apalachicola River Valley, northwest Florida," M.A. thesis, University of South Florida, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 67-70.

<sup>9</sup> Testimony of Antonio de Torres regarding Lt. Pedro Ximeno, Pensacola, August 1, 1764, Archivo General de la Nación [Mexico; hereafter AGN], Marina, v. 17, ff. 1-12, Spellman Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, reel 144G.

Spanish and intended to observe the same terms with Great Britain. Tunapé's offer to reoccupy St. Marks fit within this pattern of behavior. Creeks welcomed the European presence in Florida and the alliances and trade it provided, as long as they retained ultimate control over the land, and as long as Europeans remained confined to small coastal outposts. This Creek insistence on a restricted and localized European presence helped ensure that Gulf remained a borderland.<sup>10</sup>

As for the Cuban fishermen, they held economic ties and participated in communication networks that extended throughout Cuba, the Caribbean, and across the Atlantic Ocean. They spent up to five months in the fishing camps, or *ranchos*, that they established along the Florida Gulf Coast. The fishing season ran from late autumn to late winter each year. During the spring and summer, the fishermen moved to secure supplies of salt for their fishing operations, traveling primarily to Cayo Sal, an island just northeast of Havana, and Punto de Hicacos, on the north Cuban coast. The fish they obtained fed the inhabitants of Havana as well as Cuba's hinterland, which linked them to the island's numerous plantations and ranches. Cuba itself was situated within the nexus of Atlantic commerce, and in particular along the route that transported specie and goods between New Spain (Mexico) and metropolitan Spain. Whatever informal exchange occurred between Creeks and Spaniards fit within this extensive network, as the products the fishermen traded would have been items acquired from a number of places throughout the Atlantic World, especially metropolitan Spain and Great Britain. The fishermen were also the vital linkages between the Creeks and Spanish colonial

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<sup>10</sup> "Congress at Pensacola with the Upper and Lower Creeks," May 26 – June 4, 1765, in John T. Juricek, ed., *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789*, Vol. 12, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776* (hereafter *GFT*), (Frederick MD: University Publications of America, 2002), 256-73; "Proceedings of the First Picolata Congress, Picolata," November 15-20, 1765, in Juricek, *GFT*, 454-65.

officials. The Creeks themselves usually came to meet colonial officials via the transportation provided by the fishermen. Word of the Creek visitors then passed through these officials to ministers across the Atlantic in the Spanish royal court. Thus, the Gulf of Mexico provided a location in which two networks converged, one Atlantic, even global, in scope and the other centered on Creek Country and continental in nature.<sup>11</sup>

If the coincidence of the Cuban fishing ranchos and Creek hunting expeditions explains how the Gulf developed into a maritime borderland, it does not reveal why the connection between the two became so important. For the Spanish monarchy, the Creek visits to Havana came at a time in which the Crown was eager for any opportunity to reconnect with its lost territory in North America. Records from the Spanish *Ministro de las Indias* indicate that one of King Carlos III's primary goals abroad was the re-occupation of Florida. His reasons were twofold. One was based upon the imperial project of strengthening Spanish commercial power and colonial revenues in the Americas. Carlos and other imperial officials thought that Spain could profit from trade with North American Indians, much as the French and British did. He saw the Creeks' demand for Spanish trade as a logical place to begin his program of revitalizing the Indian trade.

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on the commercial and settlement patterns of the fishermen and their ranchos, see Covington, "Trade Relations between Southwestern Florida and Cuba, 1600-1840," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 38 (Oct. 1959): 117-19; Worth, "Creolization in Southwest Florida," 145-46. Commercial activity in Havana exploded during the period of this study, as the Spanish Crown removed numerous trade restrictions that had applied to the port city. For an explanation of Havana's place within Atlantic commercial networks, see Alan Kuethe, "La desregulación comercial y la reforma imperial en la época de Carlos III: los casos de Nueva España y Cuba," *Historia Mexicana* 41, no. 2 (Oct. – Dec. 1991), 265-92; Kuethe, "Havana in the Eighteenth Century," in *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World*, eds. Franklin K. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 13-39; Barbara H. Stein and Stanley J. Stein, *Apogee of Empire: Spain and New Spain in the Age of Carlos III, 1759-1789* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

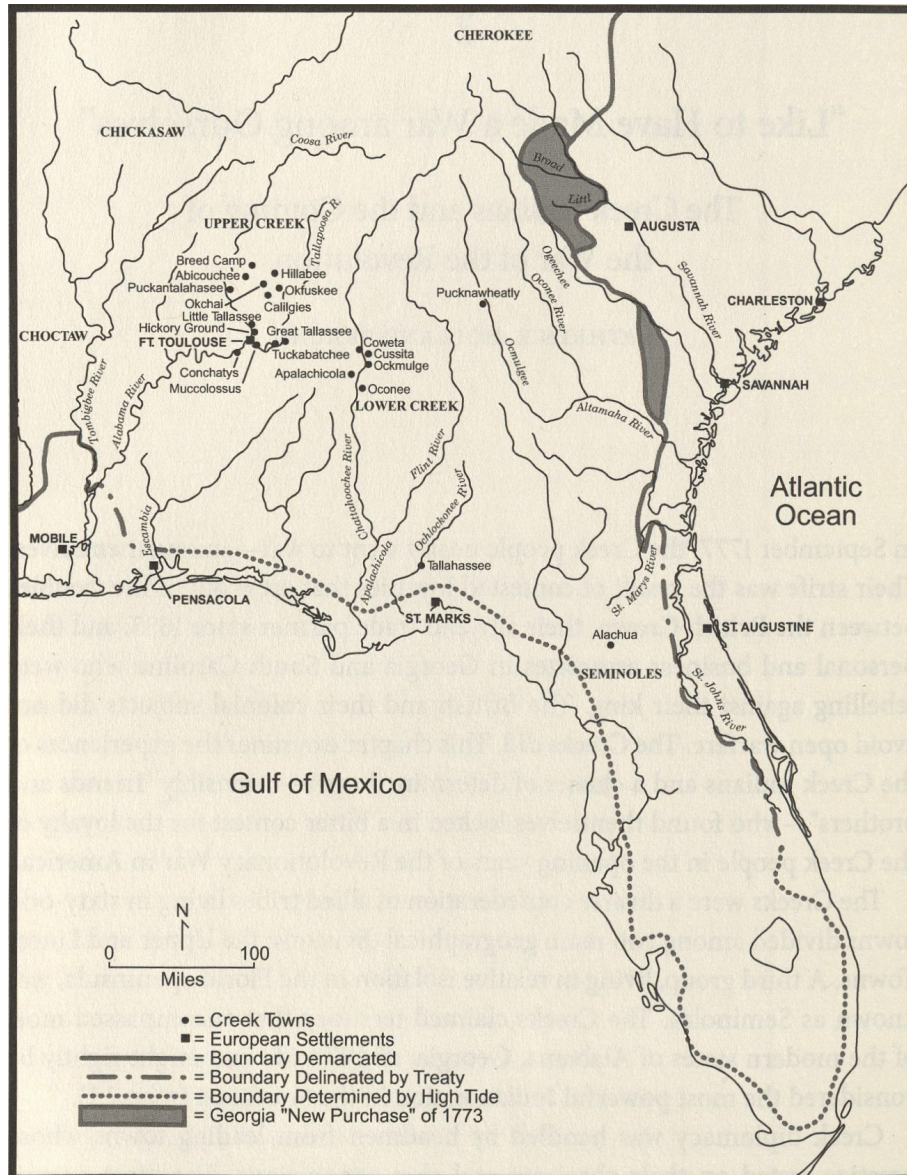


Figure 1. Map of British and Creek territory ca. 1764-75. This map shows the boundary established by British and Creek leaders in the 1760s and gives an idea of the extent of Creek-controlled territory at this time. The actual British presence in Florida remained constricted to a few towns, posts, and plantations along parts of the shoreline and on the St. Johns River in East Florida. In effect, Creeks still maintained control of most of the Florida coast, as well as the peninsula's interior. One can see Fort St. Marks and Tallahassee, Tunapé's *tvlofv*, in the eastern portion of the Florida panhandle.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Map from Kathryn E. Holland Braund, " 'Like to Have Made a War among Ourselves': The Creek Indians and the Coming of the War of Revolution," in Gene A. Smith and Sylvia L. Hilton, eds., *Nexus of Empire: Negotiating Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 40.



The second line of reasoning behind Spanish gifting was Carlos's intention of using Florida as a base to protect Spanish shipping in the Gulf of Mexico. Carlos believed that Creeks could operate as proxy forces by attacking British colonists and paving the way for a Spanish invasion of Florida. This idea came not from imperial strategists, but from the Creeks themselves. As such, the connections provided by the fishing ranchos allowed Creek peoples to have a direct influence on Spanish imperial policy in the region. Their ideas, combined with Spain's broader policy goals, gave imperial officials ample reason to seek an exchange-based alliance with Creek peoples.<sup>13</sup>

For Lower Creeks, the journeys to Havana were a novelty but the practice of cultivating alliances with European colonial regimes was anything but. Over the course of the early eighteenth century, leaders of the Lower Creek *etvlwv* Coweta developed a policy of "triple-nation diplomacy" as a means of asserting their autonomy and importance in the region. Cowetas would tease the possibility of an alliance with British, Spanish, and French agents, soliciting trade and gifts from all three. In effect, the Lower Creek towns would keep all three colonial regimes competing against one another for their allegiance without allowing any one of them to gain too strong of an influence over their affairs. Moreover, Coweta and other Lower Creek leaders would acquire sizeable quantities of trade goods that would allow them to augment their own power locally, by

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph de Gálvez to Diego José Navarro, 29 Aug. 1779, AGI, "Reales órdenes reservadas del Ministerio de Indias." PC, leg. 1290, ff. 181-84. For the Crown's attempts to reform imperial Indian policy, and in particular its attempts to use commerce and exchange as a means of improving relations with Native peoples throughout the Americas, see David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). For Carlos's attempts to reform the Spanish imperial economy in general, see Stein and Stein, *Apogee of Empire*.

redistributing these goods to the members of one's own *etv/wv* as well to surrounding communities.<sup>14</sup>

This pattern in Lower Creek history explains why they both initiated and dominated the Creek-Cuba connection, as the practice fell within this pattern of fostering imperial competition and channeling it to their benefit. At Havana, Creek emissaries would receive gifts from the Cuban governor and barter deerskins with them. Creeks went to Havana with the express purpose of obtaining vast stores of goods, most of which they would redistribute. Lower Creeks made these trips despite the fact that British traders and officials resided much closer to their communities. In fact, many of the participating leaders also held talks with and received gifts from British agents. These actions suggest that Lower Creeks were trying to preserve imperial competition between British and Spanish in the region and the benefits it accrued, as recent events had jeopardized this policy. After the Seven Years' War ended in 1763, geopolitical realignment altered the economic and diplomatic landscape for most Creeks, and they feared that British colonists would become more aggressive in the absence of a French or Spanish threat. These fears proved well-founded. In the ensuing years, Creeks found themselves flooded with demands from officials, unscrupulous traders and speculators for land and increasing acquiescence to colonial authorities. With nowhere else to turn for trade goods, and with colonial officials less willing to regale their leaders with gifts, Creek families also became increasingly indebted to British traders.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 13-26.

<sup>15</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 100-02, 104-18; Clarence Carter, "British Policy toward the American Indians in the South, 1763-8," *The English Historical Review* 33, no. 129 (1918), 37-39, 44-49; William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeast Spanish Borderlands* (Pensacola: University of West Florida Press, 1986), 7-8; Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 58-59, 229-48, 253-54, 273-78; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 115-19; J. Leitch Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles: The*

Tunapé's travels to Cuba occurred within this context of mounting Creek uneasiness. While not the only Creek leader to make such trips to Havana, among them he was exceptional, for he was the only one with long-running ties to the Spaniards. Tunapé was also somewhat anomalous in that he appears to have been a Tallapoosa, one of the groups comprising the Upper Creeks. In testimony provided to an interpreter at Cuba, Tunapé claimed that he had been sent to live with the Spaniards in St. Augustine at a very young age, after his "father" (probably his maternal uncle) died.<sup>16</sup> Sometime thereafter, he must have returned to Creek Country, for in the early 1750s British officials had approached him with a commission and an offer to displace the leader of Coweta, Chigelly, who had proved resistant to various British demands. According to testimony, Tunapé made a dramatic attempt to persuade the Cowetas to accept him as their leader, promising that the British would protect them from their enemies and provide them with an ample supply of arms and trade goods. He even went so far as to claim that he had traveled to London and received his commission from the king himself, harnessing the symbolic power of transatlantic and maritime travel to support his case. The Cowetas

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*Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 111-12.

<sup>16</sup> This occurred sometime between 1718 and 1734, for Tunapé mentioned that Antonio de Benavides had been the governor while he served there, and these are the dates of Benavides's governorship. Regarding the identity of Tunapé's parental figure, the Creeks' matrilineal system often confused Europeans. Maternal uncles were the primary male guardians of a child, and as such, European often mistook mentions of them as references to a father. See Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 226; Hall, *Zamumo's Gifts*, 130. For the evidence indicating that Tunapé was a Tallapoosa, see Raimundo Alonzo de Arrivas to Fulgencio García de Solís, Picolata, July 17, 1754, AGN, Historia, v. 436, exp. 4, ff. 6-8, Spellman Collection, reel 144G; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 208-209; Saunt, "The English has now a Mind to make Slaves of them all': Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problem of Slavery," *American Indian Quarterly* 22 (Winter 1998): 160-61.

were unmoved and Chigelly and his associates dispatched the would-be-usurper with a mixture of poisonous herbs that left him incapacitated for weeks, if not months.<sup>17</sup>

It is possible that Tunapé's fiasco at Coweta convinced him to return to Florida and to seek out the Spanish once again. During the Seven Years' War, Tunapé had camped near the Spanish fort at St. Marks and routinely communicated with the garrison there. Eventually, he and a number of followers permanently moved to the area, setting up the *tvlofv* of Tallahassee at a location thirty miles from St. Marks, in the vicinity of present-day Tallahassee, Florida.<sup>18</sup> As leader of the new community, he maintained a relationship with the Spanish garrison until it evacuated the fort in 1764. Tunapé and other Creeks came to visit the fort and obtained provisions from the Spanish soldiers. In a separate testimony, a British officer claimed that Spanish officials distributed over 800 pesos worth of goods annually to the Creeks near the fort. As such, the Creeks in this

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<sup>17</sup> I have not found evidence identifying who offered Tunapé this commission and why. Steven Hahn indicates that the individuals who did so were Georgians, and implies that the offer was connected to Georgian attempts to obtain a land cession from various Creek leaders. Arrivas to Solis, Picolata, July 17, 1754, AGN, Historia, v. 436, exp. 4, ff. 6-8, Spellman Collection, reel 144G; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 208-09; Saunt, "Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problem of Slavery," 160-61.

<sup>18</sup> The Muskogee name *Tvlvhassee Tvllofv* (Tallahassee Talofa) roughly translates to "old town." This is likely a reference to the site's former status as the home of a major Apalache community. British officials reinforce this interpretation, as they generally referred to Tunapé's town as "Apalachee Old Fields." See James Pampellone, "Names of the Indian Towns, Number of Gun Men, and the miles distant from St. Mark's Fort Apalaché," Apalachee, January 21, 1765, James Grant of Ballindalloch Papers (hereafter JGP) reel 8, f. 23, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; "Treaty of Picolata," November 18, 1765, *GFT*, 464-66; Juan Miguel Calvo, "Declaration of Ynculaiche," Havana, October 15, 1780, AGI, PC, leg. 1300, ff. 428-29; Boyd, "A Map of the Road from Pensacola to St. Augustine, 1778," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 17 (Jul. 1938), 22-23; Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interest in British Florida," 107, n. 8; William Bright, *Native American Placenames of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), s.v. "Tallahassee"; Gatschet, *Migration Legend of the Creek Indians*, 56, 72; Benjamin Hawkins, *Creek Confederacy, and a Sketch of the Creek Country* (Savannah: 1848), 41, 55; Martin and Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, s.vv. "etvlwv," "Tallahassee," "Tvlvhasse," "tvlofv," "vhasse"; John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 407-12.

region had become accustomed to extensive and regular outlays of gifts from the Spanish.<sup>19</sup>

From the very beginning of the post-war period, the Creeks residing in Apalachee proved willing to travel to Havana for goods and provisions. Delays in the relief of the Spanish garrison at St. Marks kept it there until February 1764, long after the Spaniards' provisions had run out. Captain Ventura Díaz, the Spanish commander at St. Marks, had to request emergency supplies from Cuba for his men and had little to give to the Creeks who came calling at the fort. Three Creeks then went to Havana to obtain their supplies, returning to Apalachee quite satisfied with their haul and thanking the Cuban Governor, the Conde de Ricla, for accommodating their requests. According to Díaz, the Apalachee Creeks would remain firmly attached to the Spanish as long as they continued to receive goods and supplies. As he exclaimed to Ricla, the Creeks were "still here [at St. Marks] and will remain until the three barrels of rum [that they received in Havana] give the last breath." He boasted that they would spread word about the Cuban governor's generosity from town to town, and that many would leave the province with him. There was an element of bravado to Díaz's statements, but also a bit of truth. Some days after the return of the Creeks from Havana, a band of thirty-nine Creeks came to St. Marks inquiring

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<sup>19</sup> Captain John Harries, who assumed command at St. Marks after its transfer to British authority, reported the Spanish as expending £200 on Indian gifts per year. The figure in pesos provided is an estimation based on Adrian Pearce's late-eighteenth-century exchange rate of £1 = 4.44 pesos. Don Ventura Díaz to the Count of Ricla, Apalachee, in Boyd, "From A Remote Frontier: Letters and Documents Pertaining to San Marcos de Apalache, 1763-1769, During the British Occupation of Florida," Part I, *FHQ* 19 (Jan. 1941), 192-93; John Harries to Thomas Gage, Apalachee, May 11, 1764, in Boyd, "A Remote Frontier," Part III, *FHQ* 20 (Jul. 1941): 89; Pampellone, "Names of the Indian Towns," JGP, reel 8, f. 23; Declarations of the Patron José Bermúdez and the Cacique Tunapé, December 22, 1777, AGI, "Reales órdenes reservadas del Ministerio de Indias," PC, leg. 1290, ff. 365-69; Adrian Pearce, *British Trade in Spanish America, 1763-1808* (Liverpool, UK: University Press, 2008), xvi.

about their compatriots' visit to the Cuban capital. Word of the Spaniards' generosity had piqued Creek interest in Havana.<sup>20</sup>

Havana's inclination to curry favor with the Apalachee Creeks may have encouraged their assertiveness towards the incoming British. The British garrison that occupied Fort St. Marks in February 1764 received a tepid welcome. Prior to even taking his post there, Captain John Harries expressed serious concern over his Creek neighbors. Harries requested an increased supply of provisions, particularly rum and tobacco, to pacify the Creeks' demands for gifts. For a time, the garrison managed an uneasy coexistence with the Creeks through such offerings. The fort's commanders make note of the Indians assisting them and bringing them venison and turkey on an intermittent basis, though the Creeks often complained when they were offered little more than bread in exchange for this service. When British Indian agent John Stuart came to Apalachee in September, the Creeks there welcomed him, but also reminded him that they had lent, not ceded, the territory to his nation.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> While Díaz himself did not mention any Creeks being among the evacuees, Steven Hahn points to two Creek towns, Escambe and Puntarrasa, which had established themselves in the panhandle prior to 1753, carried on extensive relations with the Spanish soldiers as Pensacola, and became heavily acculturated with regard to Spanish naming customs, the Catholic religion, and the Castilian language. He identifies these Creeks as having left with the Pensacola garrison at war's end. Díaz to Riela, Apalachee, January 19, 1764 and January 21, 1764, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part I, 200, 206; Robert L. Gold, "The Settlement of the Pensacola Indians in New Spain, 1763-1770," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 45 (Nov. 1965): 567-68; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 237-38.

<sup>21</sup> For the relationship between Apalachee Creeks and the garrison, see John Harries to Geoffrey Amherst, Apalachee, December 11, 1763 and December 14, 1763, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part II, *FHQ* 19 (April 1941), 403-06; Harries to Gage, Apalachee, February 25, 1764, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part III, 84; James Pampellone to Gage, Apalachee, October 18, 1764, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part V, *FHQ* 20 (Jan. 1942), 295-96; Pampellone to Gage, Apalachee, December 6, 1764, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part V, 299-301; James Grant, St. Augustine, June 21, 1766, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part VI, *FHQ* 20 (April 1942): 385-86; Ensign Wright to Frederick Haldimand, Apalachee, August 14, 1767, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part VII, *FHQ* 21 (July 1942), 48; George Swettenham to Grant, Apalachee, December 1765 and January 31, 1766, JGP, reel 25, ff. 20-22 and reel 10, ff. 53-54. For Stuart's talk, see John Stuart to the Headmen of Tamasle, Chiscalaloufa, Puckanawhitla, Utchise, and Apalachee Old Fields, Apalachee, September 15, 1764, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part IV, *FHQ* 20 (Oct. 1941): 205-07 and in Juricek, *GFT*, 453.

The chameleon-like Tunapé, however, seems to have gotten along with the garrison better than most of its Creek neighbors. He went out of his way to help British soldiers, escorting Lieutenant George Swettenham in a 1765 journey from Picolata (on the St. Johns River in eastern Florida) to take his post as commander at St. Marks and offered to deliver expresses for the garrison. He also attended and assented to the treaty councils held at Picolata in 1765 and 1767, which confirmed Britain's right to establish posts on the Florida coast. East Florida Governor James Grant reported sending him away from the second congress "in perfect good humor," giving him a commission as a "captain." It appears that Tunapé hoped to forge a relationship with British soldiers and officials to replace the one he had with the old Spanish garrison.<sup>22</sup> Yet the British occupation of the fort did not last long. Neither General Thomas Gage, the British commanding officer in North America, nor Governor Grant saw much use in St. Marks. It provided no concrete military or strategic advantage and communications proved difficult due to its remoteness. Moreover, the fort had been in poor condition when the British arrived and suffered further damage by a hurricane in 1766. Britain's sizeable post-war debts and overextended empire led it to search for cost-cutting opportunities, and the St. Marks garrison provided a logical target for imperial contraction. At some point between 1768 and 1770, the British garrison abandoned the fort.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For Tunapé's assistance to the garrison, see Swettenham to Grant, Apalachee, December 1765, JGP, reel 25, ff. 20-22; Swettenham to Grant, Apalachee, January 31, 1766, JGP, reel 10, ff. 53-54. For his participation in the treaty councils, see "Treaty of Picolata," November 18, 1765, in Juricek, *GFT*, 466; "Proceedings of the Second Picolata Congress," November 21-23, 1767, in Juricek, *GFT*, 470-74; James Grant to Ensign Wright, St. Augustine, February 23, 1768, JGP, reel 2, ff. 108-09.

<sup>23</sup> British discussions concerning the maintenance of a garrison at the fort ended in 1768. The 1770 date comes from the testimony of a Creek party to the Governor of Cuba in the 1770s. For the Creek testimony, see Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interest in British Florida," 100-01, esp. n. 2. For British discussions of the post's utility, condition, and abandonment, see R. E. Pittman to Haldimand, no date or location, in Boyd, "Apalachee During the British Occupation," *FHQ* 12 (Jan. 1934), 114-22; Harries to Geoffrey Amherst, Apalachee, December 11, 1763 and December 14, 1763, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part II, 403-

Tunapé's travels to Havana seem to be tied to the British departure from St. Marks. Despite the fact that Cowetas and other Lower Creeks had been traveling to Cuba since 1766, Tunapé does not seem to have reached out to the Cubans prior to 1773. By the latter date, the British departure had left his community without allies and without a source of trade goods. Cuba's proximity, and the frequent trips of Spanish fishermen from Cuba to the Florida Gulf Coast, made Havana a logical target for Tunapé's entreaties. Undoubtedly, Tunapé's prior history with the Spanish at St. Marks factored into his decision to seek a relationship with the governor of Cuba. Over the next few years, the aspiring leader began sending messengers to plead with Spaniards for supplies.

The first documented instance of Tunapé making contact with officials in Cuba occurred in February 1773. That month, an Apalachee Creek *tvstvnvke* (head warrior) named Estimaslayche and another *tvstvnvke* named Lajaliqui from "Uchize Talofa" paid a visit to the Spanish governor at Havana, the Marquis de la Torre.<sup>24</sup> The visit of Estimaslayche and Lajaliqui was unique in that they journeyed to Cuba in their own boat, rather than hitch a ride with the fishermen frequenting the gulf. They arrived at the port of Havana unannounced, unable to speak Spanish, and without an interpreter. Local officials, wondering why two Indians had shown up at their port, dispatched a man

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06; Harries to Gage, Apalachee, February 25, 1764, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part III, 84; William Jenkins to Gage, St. Augustine, Jan. 13, 1767, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part VI, 390-91; Gage to Grant, New York, April 30, 1767, JGP, reel 13, ff. 283-85; Grant to Gage, St. Augustine, June 30, 1767, JGP, reel 1, ff. 328-29; Gage to Grant, New York, June 25, 1768, JGP, reel 15, ff. 305-06 and in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part VIII, *FHQ* 21 (Oct. 1942), 140-41. Grant to Gage, St. Augustine, August 25, 1768, JGP, reel 1, ff. 363-64 and in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part VIII, 142-43; Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, St. Augustine, September 28, 1768, JGP, reel 1, f. 371; Grant to Haldimand, October 3, 1768, in Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Part VIII, 144-45.

<sup>24</sup> Spanish sources referred to Estimaslayche as "*Capitán*" (war captain or head warrior) and to Lajaliqui as "*Cacique*" (headman or chief), respectively. For *tvstvnvke*, usually spelled "tustunnugee" or "tastanaki" by Europeans, see Martin and Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, s.v. "*tvstvnvke*."



named Juan Josef Eligio de la Puente, whom they regarded as an expert on Florida and its Native peoples, to meet with them.<sup>25</sup>

Through the use of a translator provided by Eligio de la Puente, Estimaslayche claimed to be delivering a message authorized by his "Emperor," later revealed as Tunapé.<sup>26</sup> By way of his messenger, Tunapé asked the Spanish for a military alliance against the British and invited the Spanish to re-occupy San Marcos de Apalache. Estimaslayche complained of the abuses of the British, calling them "*malos hombres*" (bad men) who constantly told lies and tried to incite the Indian nations to kill one another. With Spanish arms and assistance, he estimated that the Creeks of Apalachee and the Chattahoochee and Flint River communities could collectively drive the British out of Florida with ease. Tunapé had pledged that, if he received the necessary munitions, he would use them to make war upon the British and allow the Spanish to repopulate Florida. In essence, Tunapé claimed the right to regulate settlement throughout the region. Having been party to the 1765 Treaty of Picolata, which ceded the Florida seacoast to Great Britain, Tunapé clearly believed that treaty mutable. In his eyes, the

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<sup>25</sup> Eligio de la Puente served as principal auditor for the *Tribunal de Cuentas* in Havana and had served as the chief officer of the *Real Contaduría* for Spanish Florida, both of which were offices that handled the colonial governments' accounts and expenditures. The government agent had resided in Florida for many years prior to the 1763-64 Spanish evacuation and had a vast knowledge of the Florida terrain and its Native peoples. Juan Josef Eligio de la Puente, "Relación de los Gastos hechos, por la Real Hazienda, en los Regalos, Rancho, y manutención de 14 Yndios de Nación Uchizes de la Providencia de Cabeta," Havana, March 4, 1773, AGI, PC, leg. 1164, f 252-54; "Brief, Dealing with Various Communications from the Governor of Cuba on the Subject of Trade with the Uchise Indians, Extracted for the Council of Indies," Havana, February 27, 1778, in Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interest in British Florida," 100-01; Charles Arnade, "Florida Keys: English or Spanish in 1763?," *Tequesta* 15 (1955): 42. For evidence that Cuban officials regarded Eligio de la Puente as an expert on both the Creeks and the Florida region, see Navarro to José de Gálvez, Havana, April 10, 1778, in Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interest in British Florida," 120-21.

<sup>26</sup> Tunapé made his own visit to Havana almost six years later and referred back to Estimaslayche and Lajaliqui, stating that he had previously sent them to invite the Spaniards to come to San Marcos de Apalache. See "Declaraciones del Patrón José Bermúdez, y el Cazique Tunapé," interpreter Tadeo de los Ríos, Havana, December 22, 1777, AGI, PC, 1290, f 365-69.

seacoast was still Creek territory and his group had the right to determine who inhabited it.<sup>27</sup>

Tunapé's message is notable not only for its momentous offer, but also for the sophistication with which Estimasleyche delivered it. The speech began with an allegorical appeal to King Carlos that extolled the abilities of the Spanish military. Estimasleyche, speaking for Tunapé, argued that "before [the king's] power and force, the many Nations that cover the Earth tremble and cower, as is generally admitted by the many Natives of the extensive Provinces formerly of the Empire of Moctezuma [i.e., Mexico]." For such a great empire, he argued, "it would not be difficult to destroy the English of Florida and have His Majesty's Christian Vassals come to live there." The speech revealed a remarkable familiarity with Spanish history and discourse, one that suggests a Spanish education. Estimasleyche's origins remain unclear, but Tunapé had spent many years among Spaniards at St. Augustine and St. Marks and may have acquired familiarity with Spanish cultural and historical traditions. Tunapé likely crafted the reference to Montezuma and instructed Estimasleyche to deliver it in his talk. The speech not only appealed to Spanish history, but also played upon Spanish dreams of imperial grandeur and martial glory. Despite its setbacks in a series of recent wars, the Spanish Crown still considered itself a major world power and cultivated its history as the great conqueror of the Americas. That Tunapé knew of and referenced Montezuma proves that not only was he aware of portions of Spanish imperial history, but also understood its appeal within the context of Spain's recent military defeats. By contrasting former Spanish conquests with its loss of Florida, Tunapé pointed out Spain's imperial

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<sup>27</sup> Eligio de la Puente to the Marquis de la Torre, March 6, 1773, AGI, PC, leg. 1164, f. 248-51; "Proceedings of the First Picolata Congress, Picolata," November 15-20, 1765, in Juricek, *GFT*, 454-65.

decline, and attempted to use it as a means to promote a potential alliance, or at least to obtain favors from officials in Cuba.<sup>28</sup>

Tunapé's actions show how the geopolitical peculiarities of Florida and the Gulf of Mexico fostered diplomatic, social, and cultural interactions between Spaniards and Creeks. St. Augustine and St. Marks had served as Spanish outposts in Creek territory, particularly after Creek war parties defeated the Timucuan, Apalachee, and other Native peoples living in northern Florida during the first three decades of the eighteenth century. Creeks did not seek to drive Spaniards out of this territory, instead using them to their advantage via exchange networks. Tunapé formed his contacts with Spanish colonists in this political climate, being sent as a young boy to live among the Spanish in order to solidify his kin's diplomatic connections. During this period of time, Tunapé acquired knowledge and formed bonds he would draw upon later in life, for the same purpose. By offering Fort St. Marks to Spanish colonists, he also continued its use as an instrument of alliance building. The Gulf of Mexico's status as a permeable boundary between Creek territory and Spanish territory, between Apalachee and Cuba, made the revitalization of Tunapé's connections with Spaniards possible. Because Spaniards and Creeks shared the Gulf and because they chose to embrace the region as a zone of interaction rather than one of conflict, the relationship between the two continued when it could have languished. Instead of being separated by five hundred miles of sea, Creeks and Spaniards were united by it.

Cross-Gulf transit would remain the primary means of interaction between Spaniard and Creek in spite of Tunapé's offer to reoccupy St. Marks. Although intrigued

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<sup>28</sup> Eligio de la Puente to the Marquis de la Torre, March 6, 1773, AGI, PC, leg. 1164, ff. 248-51; José de Gálvez to Navarro, August 29, 1779, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 181-84.

by the offer to resume their post in Apalachee, Spanish officials in Cuba knew that they had to decline it. Still smarting from its defeat in 1763, Spain lacked the military strength and financial resources necessary for a war against Britain. As such a conflict likely would have resulted from a direct assault on British Florida, de la Torre judged the placing of Spanish forces in the province infeasible. Even if they had wanted to accept such an offer, they would have required approval from the king and his ministers in Spain and probably lacked the resources on hand to attempt such an undertaking. Eligio de la Puente had the task of politely declining Tunapé's entreaties. Since the governor wanted to preserve a potential ally in the event of a North American conflict, Eligio de la Puente needed to appear appreciative of his offer. Yet, he could not admit that Spain's weakness was the reason for declining. The Spanish regime was hoping to prove that it was still a viable and influential power, a task that would have been undermined by such an admission. Eligio de la Puente excused Governor de la Torre's response by mentioning the supposed friendship that existed between the Spanish and English as a result of the peace treaty of 1763. He explained that the two enjoyed "*la mexor paz y amistad*" (the greatest peace and friendship) and that it would be a breach of treaty and of the Spanish King's honor to suddenly wreck that relationship.<sup>29</sup>

Eligio de la Puente's dissimulation elided the fact that the Spanish Crown and military were anxious for a chance to humiliate Britain. In fact, they would jump at the opportunity just two years later, when they began providing clandestine aid to rebels in Britain's North American colonies. However, the response gave the Crown the flexibility to consider future action. It allowed the Spanish to avoid committing to an attack on the

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<sup>29</sup> Eligio de la Puente to de la Torre, March 6, 1773, AGI, PC, leg. 1164, ff. 248-51.

British, yet it kept open the possibility of future military action alongside Creeks. However, there is also no indication that Tunapé's professions of loyalty and zeal were genuine. In fact, such an attitude would not fit with his past behavior. Tunapé was apt to solicit favors from both British and Spanish officials and his main prerogative seems to have been securing a power base in Apalachee. He clearly aspired to a leadership role, and to achieve that required connections to the broader Atlantic world and the prestige that entailed. An amiable Spanish presence at St. Marks could help Tunapé meet his needs, and perhaps even to gain greater influence by becoming the conduit for Spanish supplies to a number of disaffected Creeks.<sup>30</sup>

If the acquisition of gifts was Tunapé's prime objective, his mission succeeded. Eligio de la Puente and Governor de la Torre housed and fed Estimaslayche, Lajaliqui, and their twelve companions for nineteen days. The Cubans then loaded the Creeks with a large supply of goods and provisions to take with them back to Florida. They obtained foodstuffs such as *aguardiente de caña* (a sugar cane liquor), *bizcocho* (a type of sweet bread or pastry), salted beef and pork, squash, and sweet potatoes. Each visitor received articles of clothing, such as shirts, handkerchiefs, ribbons, *sombreros*, shoes, and tailor-made long coats. They also acquired razors, scissors, mirrors, combs, sewing needles, and small quantities of tools such as carpenter's planes, hatchets, branding irons, handsaws, and more. In addition, Cuban officials provided goods for them to distribute to their *tvlofylke* (townspeople), loading them with large quantities of pipes, tobacco, and blue-colored woolen cloth. In total, Estimaslayche and Lajaliqui's visit brought in 1,103

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<sup>30</sup> Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 282-87; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 111-12.

pesos' worth of goods from officials in Cuba, a sum that the latter charged to the Royal Treasury.<sup>31</sup>

Though the Spanish colonial government at Cuba did not meet the Creeks' request to move into Florida, it did make financial efforts to keep them happy. While de la Torre and the Minister of the Indies Julián de Arriaga both approved of the expenditure on gifts in this instance, they did not explicitly state why. However, on other occasions both officials remarked that the expenditures were necessary because Spanish fishermen operating in the Gulf feared for their lives and livelihoods. The province relied upon Gulf Coast fishing for food, particularly during Lent, when Catholics could not eat meat according to religious law. Colonists in Cuba had depleted their waters of fish stock, compelling fishermen to look to Florida to meet the populace's needs. Yet, the fishermen told de la Torre that the Creek hunters along the Florida coast threatened to harm them if they did not bring the Creeks to see the governor. Whether or not such stories were true, Cuban officials cannot be faulted for taking them seriously. Throughout the Seven Years' War, a British-allied Creek war party had preyed upon Cuban fishing vessels along the Gulf Coast, even kidnapping the crew of one such vessel at Key West in 1762. The Gulf had not always been a peaceful borderland.<sup>32</sup>

As his province depended upon Gulf Coast fishing, de la Torre must have felt compelled to take measures to protect the fishermen. Despite their claims of helplessness and poverty, the Creeks frequenting the Gulf Coast were more than capable of posing a threat to stray colonists should the governor not satisfy their demands. Thus, de la Torre

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<sup>31</sup> Eligio de la Puente, March 4, 1773, AGI, PC, leg. 1164, ff. 252-54; de la Torre to Julián de Arriaga, March 28, 1773, AGI, PC, leg. 1164, ff. 246; Martin and Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, s.v. "tvlofylke."

<sup>32</sup> Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 230-31; Worth, "Creolization in Southwest Florida," 144.

may have given gifts and presents to the Creek visitors in order to placate them and prevent their attacking the fishermen. The potential dangers that these fishermen faced highlight the borderland aspects of the Florida Gulf Coast. The site had served as a locus for regular and friendly contact between the Creeks and the Spaniards, but it could easily turn into a site of conflict if relations deteriorated. It was a shared ground in which both peoples operated, but whether it harbored peace or war depended on a series of negotiations between individuals. By placating Creeks, de la Torre ensured that peaceful interaction in the Gulf would continue, and that Creeks and Cubans would share in the region's benefits.<sup>33</sup>

Tunapé did not cease his entreaties towards Spanish Cuba, prompting his December 1777 visit in person. Prior to repeating his offers of trade and alliance, Tunapé gave an autobiographical speech in which he professed a long-held loyalty to the Spanish Crown. He claimed that his maternal uncle had exhorted him to stay steadfast in his attachment to the Spanish from his birth. This man died when Tunapé was only nine or ten years old and was the one who sent him to live with the Spanish at St. Augustine. He claimed the Spanish at St. Augustine taught him how to use firearms and then sent him to serve with the St. Marks garrison. In Tunapé's words, "[t]here he remained, obeying what his Commander and the Governor of Florida ordered with the greatest punctuality and love, serving them exceptionally by delivering Letters from one point to another, in

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<sup>33</sup> Eligio de la Puente to de la Torre, Havana, March 6, 1773, AGI, PC, leg. 1164, f 248-51; Julián de Arriaga to de la Torre, Aranjuez, June 21, 1774, AGI, PC, leg. 1213, f. 95; de la Torre to Arriaga, Havana, May 4, 1775 and September 28, 1775, AGI, PC, leg. 1220, ff. 243-44, 491-92; Covington, "Trade Relations between Southwestern Florida and Cuba," 114.

which role he occupied himself for close to twenty years.” He consistently excised his relationships with British officials from this history.<sup>34</sup>

To emphasize his valor and loyalty to the Spanish, Tunapé mentioned an incident from 1758. That year a strong hurricane flooded the fort and killed almost the entire garrison at St. Marks. Tunapé professed that he had to “recover the dead, bury them so they would not be eaten by the Wolves and watch over the Cannons...and other equipment which remained there without anyone to guard it.” After a Spanish relief force arrived, Tunapé “not only punctually returned to them what he had recovered, but remained there,” helping to guard the fort and providing the garrison with meat, corn, beans, and squash for their subsistence. Here, Tunapé painted his personal history as one of continuous service and friendship towards the Spanish. Prior to making any request of the officials in Cuba, he clearly wanted to convince them that he merited their attention and favor, by demonstrating himself as a strong Spanish partisan and valuable ally.<sup>35</sup>

Tunapé argued that his Spanish loyalty had never wavered and claimed to have opposed the English garrison throughout its entire stay at St. Marks. He told Spanish officials that he “had determined to...impede the establishment of said English on any part of the West Coast and parts of the East Coast [of Florida].” Tunapé made the bold claim that he had in fact caused the garrison’s departure from the fort. He wanted the Spanish to believe that he had employed his men “so that no one of [the British] garrison could go out to catch Fish or Oysters, or to hunt Birds or other Animals.” Due to their

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<sup>34</sup> “Declaraciones del Patrón José Bermúdez y el Cacique Tunapé,” December 22, 1777, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 365-69.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. A British report supports the circumstantial details of Tunapé’s claim, noting the occurrence of the hurricane, the flooding of the fort, and the deaths of forty men. See Boyd, “The Fortifications at San Marcos de Apalache,” *FHQ* 15, no. 1 (Jul. 1936), 11-12.



“depriving [the garrison] of these things,” Tunapé boasted, “[the garrison] had grown bored, spiked their cannons, and fled.” According to the account, Tunapé and his men moved in and took control of the fort and Tunapé eventually sent Estimasleyche and Lajaliqui to Havana, offering the Spanish repossession of St. Marks.<sup>36</sup>

Tunapé’s men, of course, had not evicted the garrison; it had abandoned the site of its own accord. Far from being hostile to the garrison, Tunapé had cooperated with it. Such lies and omissions furthered his diplomatic goals. By portraying himself as a defender of the Spanish and a vehement enemy of the British, Tunapé parlayed his professions of loyalty into a request for goods and supplies. He explained that his people lacked gunpowder, musket balls, muskets, hatchets, spades, food, clothing, and other necessities, and pleaded that the king offer what he saw fit. Tunapé argued that his *tvlofvike* would need arms and munitions to assault the British and claimed that Spain could secure the loyalty of the Creeks for generations with such gifts. He expressed a hope that “the children who are being born and those who were still young when...the Spaniards retreated...could come to know them, trade with them and receive their affection.” As a gentle but emphatic warning, Tunapé noted that his people “will be lost [to the Spaniards] with the passage of time, and then they will be won over by the English” if the governor were to do nothing. Tunapé insisted that a Spanish return to St. Marks was vital to securing the loyalty of his *tvlofvike* and their kinsmen and neighbors, all of whom would be crucial to Spanish imperial prospects in the region.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “Declaraciones del Patrón José Bermúdez y el Cacique Tunapé,” December 22, 1777, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 365-69.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

As added incentive, Tunapé suggested that the Creeks might prove receptive to Catholic evangelization. He asserted that in his and surrounding communities, “there are many Christians, and wanting that all are born as such, he would ask that they would be sent a Priest to baptize them, teach the Doctrine, confess them and attend [to them] when they die.” Tunapé likely had no real concern for Christianizing his people, as this religious zeal had not appeared in him on prior occasions. However, he would have known the central role that evangelization, conversion, and the Catholic missions had played in the Spanish administration of Florida. Once again, Tunapé showed that he knew what kind of language would appeal Spanish officials and that he was willing to employ it to his advantage. In this well-crafted speech, Tunapé had issued an implicit threat to the Spanish governor, but softened the hostile tone of this passage with fawning praise of Spanish civilization.<sup>38</sup>

As in 1773, Spanish officials in Cuba declined Tunapé’s offer to reoccupy St. Marks, but gave the Creek visitors most of the supplies they had requested. Tunapé’s party received goods for themselves and the thirty-five other Creeks that they claimed were awaiting them on the shores of Tampa Bay. These consisted of the same items that Spanish officials in Cuba routinely gave to Creeks who visited Havana, only in much larger quantities. While the Spaniards did not give them guns, they provided the Creek party with sixty pounds of gunpowder, 1,100 musket balls, 120 flint stones, and various kinds of hatchets, machetes, and chisels. Other items came in the supply as well, including various types of cloth, shirts, handkerchiefs, razors, nails, sewing needles,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

cauldrons, combs, and soap. They also lodged the Creeks for twenty-nine days and paid a captain named José Bermúdez to carry them back to Tampa.<sup>39</sup>

All in all, the cost of Tunapé's visit totaled nearly 1000 pesos, a sum that prompted Governor Navarro to complain to the Minister of the Indies. Spanish colonial officials were not blind to Tunapé's strategy. Navarro claimed that he and other Indians were "reiterating the same old pretensions" of loyalty to Spain and the governor hoped to establish commerce with the residents of Apalachee in lieu of gifts in order to preclude their frequent visits. A regular exchange of goods never materialized, as Creeks continually solicited presents instead of trade, privileging the former for their diplomatic significance just as much as their material benefit. The Marquis de la Torre, Navarro's predecessor, had complained that the Creek visits were "*inútiles*" (useless), costing the Crown thousands of pesos each year without providing any tangible value. He had ordered the fishermen not to take aboard any more Indians in an attempt to end their frequent visits. De la Torre had expressed confidence that he had solved the problem, but within the year the Indians were visiting Havana once again. According to the fishermen, groups of Creeks would insist upon returning to Cuba with them, intimating that they had serious matters to discuss with the governor. Navarro explained that the fishermen feared "extortion" if they rebuffed the Creeks' requests. By April 1776 de la Torre had resigned himself to the Creeks' visits, and Navarro inherited the problem, handling it with no more success than his predecessor. For Spaniards in Cuba, Creeks were persistent and unwelcome guests.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Juan Josefa Eligio de la Puente, Havana, January 12, 1778, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 374-75.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*; Navarro to José de Gálvez, Havana, January 15, 1778, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 360-62; de la Torre to José de Gálvez, 11 April 1776, AGI, PC, leg. 1221, f. 311; de la Torre to Julián de Arriaga, 4 May 1775, AGI, PC, leg. 1220, ff. 243-44.

Pleased with the presents they acquired, many Creeks from the Apalachee and Chattahoochee River communities continued to frequent the Florida coast, hoping to entice Spanish fishermen take them to Havana. The outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776 added further impetus to this traffic, as the conflict disrupted the supply lines emanating from South Carolina and Georgia. On average, Havana hosted three different groups of Creeks per year, which cost the Spanish treasury over 1,700 pesos annually between 1774 and 1778. Most of the visitors were Lower Creeks of various backgrounds. Of these, the most significant was Escochabé, the *mēkko* (chief or political leader of an *etvlwv*) of Coweta, the most powerful community on the Chattahoochee River.<sup>41</sup>

By the late 1770s, a number of Upper Creek Tallapoosas also made occasional visits to Cuba. One Tallapoosa came to Havana with Tunapé in 1777; prior to that instance, groups of Tallapoosas came to the city on their own on three different occasions. The visits of these Tallapoosas show that even within the regional ethno-linguistic groupings of Creek Country, diplomatic leanings could vary from town to town or clan to clan. Whereas most Lower Creeks hoped to maintain ties with Americans and Spaniards as well as the British, most Tallapoosa leaders privileged their connections to

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<sup>41</sup> Many Cowetas associated with Escochabé went to Havana repeatedly, for the purpose of obtaining gifts and establishing alliances. See Boyd, "Spanish Interest in British Florida," 93-94; Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 265-91. A plethora of documents in the collection edited by John T. Juricek make reference to Escochabé's visits to Cuba. For some examples see John Stuart and Wright to Lower Creek Headmen, Savannah, July 27, 1768, in Juricek, *GFT*, 47-49; John Stuart to Thomas Gage, Charles Town, August 22, 1768, in Juricek, *GFT*, 49-50; Lower Creek Headmen to John Stuart and Wright, Chihaw, September 18, 1768, in Juricek, *GFT*, 60-61; Lower Creek Headmen to John Stuart, October 1, 1768, in Juricek, *GFT*, 63; "Congress with the Lower Creeks at Augusta: Proceedings Following the Treaty," October 14, 1768, in Juricek, *GFT*, 75. More documents related to Escochabé are located within the James Grant Papers, as well as among the Papeles de Cuba in the Archivo General de las Indias. For "mēkko," usually spelled "micco" or "mico," see Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, s.v. "mēkko."

Loyalists and British officials. Yet, these instances of Tallapoosa-Cuba contact show that individual loyalties and agendas could vary greatly.<sup>42</sup>

Unfortunately, none of the Tallapoosas gave recorded testimony that may have indicated their reasons for traveling to Havana, but one may surmise a few motivations. These individuals may have been inspired by a dislike of Britain's representatives among the Upper Creeks, rivalries with established community leaders, or by disruptions in the supply of trade goods occasioned by the American Revolution. Alternatively, they may have been aspiring leaders, like Tunapé, hoping to utilize new connections to enhance their power and prestige in their communities. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that word spread quickly of the Lower Creeks' and Apalachee Creeks' activities in the Gulf, and proved sufficiently enticing for a number of Tallapoosas to make the long journey south.

Some of the visitors may have been the remnants of populations who the Lower Creeks had absorbed over the course of the eighteenth century, either through conquest or by offering protection from their foes. A man named Ynculaiche journeyed to Havana in early 1777, accompanied Tunapé on his voyage later that year, and returned a third time in 1780. Spanish officials referred to him as a Tamasle, or Tamatle, which was the name

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<sup>42</sup> For evidence of the Tallapoosa presence in Havana and with the Cuban fishermen, see Arriaga to de la Torre, El Pardo, January 18, 1775 and February 12, 1775, AGI, PC, leg. 1213, f. 337, 363; Rafael de la Luz, Havana, February 16, 1775 and May 10, 1775, AGI, PC, leg. 1220, ff. 247, 282; Juan Josef Eligio de la Puente, Havana, January 12, 1778, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 374-75.

For evidence regarding the British affinities of Tallapoosa leaders, especially their most influential chiefs, Emisteseguo and Alexander McGillivray, see Braund, " 'Like to Have Made a War among Ourselves': The Creek Indians and the Coming of the War of the Revolution," in *Nexus of Empire: Negotiating Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s*, ed. Gene A. Smith and Sylvia L. Hilton (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 44-45; Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 294-308.

For the disruptions caused by the Revolution, see Braund, "The Creek Indians and the Coming of the War of Revolution," 39-62; Jim Picuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1773-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2008), 73-76.

of a Yamasee community that had moved from present-day South Carolina to Apalachee in the 1710s. The Tamasle Yamasees had lived in Apalachee during the first Spanish period and suffered under Creek assaults on the Spanish missions. Thereafter, many of them were forced to seek refuge among the Lower Creeks. A *tvlofv* named Tamasle was situated at the forks of the Chattahoochee River. It is likely that this is the town from which Ynculaiche came and the name might signify that it harbored a Yamasee community. Rich in agricultural resources, Apalachee was a hospitable region, one that the Yamasees had once called home. Regardless of their ethnic identity, the Tamasles played a prominent role in the Havana traffic and worked closely with the Cowetas, accompanying them on many voyages.<sup>43</sup>

If Ynculaiche's community is difficult to investigate, other travelers' origins are even more mysterious. Another man who had accompanied Tunapé in 1777 was Chanillá, who came from the village of Taluja. Chanillá's testimony states that "*su Real*" was located in Tampa Bay, but it is unclear whether this was a reference to a permanent *tvlofv* or a temporary hunting camp. There were five women present with Chanillá's party at Tampa, which suggests a permanent settlement, as Creek women did not typically accompany men on hunting expeditions. The lack of details surrounding Chanillá and his

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<sup>43</sup> Spanish officials referred to Ynculaiche's village as San Luís, a reference to the old mission of San Luís de Tamasle. A survey conducted by a British officer identified a village by the name of "Tamathly" as residing at the forks of the Chattahoochee in 1778. Eligio de la Puente, Havana, May 16, 1777, AGI, PC, leg. 1222, ff. 748-49; Eligio de la Puente, Havana, January 12, 1778, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 374-75; Calvo, "Declaración de Ynculaiche," Havana, October 15, 1780, AGI, PC, leg. 1300, ff. 428-29; Boyd, "A Map of the Road from Pensacola to St. Augustine, 1778," 22; Worth, "Yamasee," *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 14: Southeast, 245-52. Examples of Tamasle-Coweta joint voyages to Havana are documented in Escochabé to Stuart, Chihaw, May 3, 1769, in Juricek, *GFT*, 88; de la Luz, Havana, May 2, 1775, AGI, PC, leg. 1220, ff. 280-81; Declaración del Capitán Francisco Pelaez y el Yndio Chanillá de Nación Uchiz," Havana, May 5, 1777, AGI, PC, leg. 1222, ff. 701-03.

village serves as a reminder that mysteries abound with regard to Native history in eighteenth-century Florida.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever their provenance, this motley crew of Creek explorers owed their annual haul to Spanish desires for future military assistance. Oddly enough, when the Spanish did end up invading Florida in 1779, they made no use of the Creeks. Governor Don Diego José Navarro sent out two expeditions to Apalachee in 1779 and 1780 in anticipation of a Spanish military invasion. The man charged with these expeditions, Don Juan Francisco Ruiz del Canto, was to inform the Creeks in the region of Spain's decision to go to war with Britain, and to distribute gifts among any headmen who happened to show up at Fort St. Marks. On his first mission, a large party of close to 250 Creek men and women, including Tunapé, gathered to meet him and accept his gifts. A leader named Nitajatique, speaking on behalf of the crowd, assured Ruiz del Canto that the Spaniards would have free usage of Fort St. Marks and all of the territory in the Florida panhandle. Ruiz del Canto thanked the Creeks for their support, distributed his gifts, and returned to Cuba.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Eligio de la Puente, "Declaración del Capitán Francisco Pelaez y el Yndio Chanillá," Havana, May 5, 1777, AGI, PC, leg. 1222, ff. 701-03.

<sup>45</sup> In his report, Governor Navarro stated that Nitajatique was from the town of "Cazuque." It is unclear where this town was. Tunapé's deference to Nitajatique suggests that the latter was the more powerful and respected leader. See "Instrucción de lo que ha de observar y executar don Francisco Ruiz del Canto," Havana, July 22, 1779, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, f 678-81; Juan Francisco Ruiz del Canto, "Relación de lo acaecido en la expedición al Castillo de San Marcos de Abalache," Havana, September 26, 1779, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, f 221-23; Eligio de la Puente, "Cuenta del costo de los Víveres, efectos, y géneros entregados a Don Francisco Ruiz del Canto," Havana, September 30, 1779, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 24-25; "Ynstrucción de lo que ha de observar y executar Don Juan Francisco Ruiz del Canto," Havana, December 16, 1779, AGI, PC, leg. 1291, ff. 22-23; Navarro to José de Gálvez, Havana, December 22, 1779, AGI, PC, leg. 1291, ff. 20-21; Ruiz del Canto, "Relación de lo acaecido," Havana, February 14, 1780, AGI, PC, leg. 1233, ff. 630-35; Eligio de la Puente to Navarro, Havana, April 1, 1778, in Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interest in British Florida," 121-123; Eligio de la Puente, "Cuenta de Costo de los Víveres, Géneros, y efectos entregados a don Francisco Ruiz del Canto," Havana, February 19, 1780, AGI, PC, leg. 1291, ff. 24-25.

**Table 1**  
**Expenditures Made by the Governors of Cuba in Transporting,  
Housing, Feeding, and Gift-Giving to the Creeks, 1773–1781<sup>\*</sup>**

<i>Year</i>	<i>1773</i>	<i>1774</i>	<i>1775</i>	<i>1776</i>	<i>1777</i>	<i>1778</i>	<i>1779</i>	<i>1780</i>	<i>1781</i>
Cost (in pesos)	1,104	870	1,853	1,000	1,821	3,388	4,522	9,586	478***
Number of Creek parties visiting	1	2	5	3	3	3	n/a**	1**	1
Total number of Creek visitors	14	23	64	59	17	61	n/a**	9**	5

\* All totals have been rounded to the nearest peso. All data come from records found in *Archivo General de Indias*, under the *Papeles de Cuba* collection, in files *see note 1 from article text* 1164, 1212–13, 1218, 1220–22, 1290–91, and 1300.

\*\* In 1779 and 1780 Governor Diego José de Navarro sent Francisco Ruiz del Canto on missions to distribute presents to the Chattahoochee and Flint River Creeks via the Apalachee villages. The expenditures made for these presents are included in the totals for those years. No Creeks appear to have visited Havana in 1779.

\*\*\* In March 1781 Navarro noted that he had given Juan Josef Eligio de la Puente 4805 pesos and 6 reales to fund presents for the Creeks. It is unclear whether this total was simply a summation of previously itemized expenditures or represented an entirely new expenditure.

Ruiz del Canto’s second mission proceeded much the same as his first, though there is no mention of Tunapé. Indeed, after the first mission, Tunapé vanishes from the written historical record. He reappears but briefly in a 1790 document as a sickly elder, unable to attend a meeting of his *tvlofv*’s council because of his infirmity. In his advanced age and poor health Tunapé had lived to see the fruits of his labors rewarded. Spanish forces had reoccupied Fort St. Marks, and his community had resumed its former relationship with them.



The Ruiz del Canto ventures cost the Royal Treasury a considerable sum of money, yet Spanish officials never followed upon their diplomacy by calling the Creeks to arms.<sup>46</sup> The Spaniards' failure to employ the Creeks in any sort of military capacity was not for lack of desire on the part of many Creeks. In October 1780, a few months prior to a Franco-Spanish siege of British Pensacola, Ynculaiche begged Spanish officials to employ groups of Cowetas, Tallapoosas, and Abikas in the attack. The tvstvnvke Estimaslaiyche had previously spent three months at St. Marks with 150 men, awaiting the Spanish. Running out of provisions and tired of waiting for the Spanish, Estimaslaiyche eventually turned back. He claimed that some Tallapoosas and Abikas had gone searching for the Spanish force at Pensacola, only to find nothing but Englishmen there. For at least some Creeks, there appears to have been a genuine willingness to help Spanish forces reoccupy their old posts in Florida.<sup>47</sup>

That the Spanish invaders never took advantage of these offers of assistance can be boiled down to tactical considerations. Despite the number of Lower Creeks and Apalachee Creeks who had expressed interest in aiding a Spanish invasion, British commanders had a greater number of Tallapoosas, Choctaws, and Seminoles ready to help them defend their posts. Spanish commander Bernardo de Gálvez recognized this,

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<sup>46</sup> On presents and provisions alone, Ruiz del Canto had incurred 2,318 pesos in expenses during his first expedition. Yet, the goods themselves only accounted for half of Ruiz del Canto's costs, as he charged Navarro and the Royal Treasury 2,204 pesos for transportation-related expenses, the majority of which were for the rental of the schooner used in the expedition. In total the whole mission occasioned an expenditure of 4,522 pesos. In the second expedition, Navarro provided Ruiz del Canto with over 5,000 pesos worth of goods and food, including guns and ammunition, to bring to the Creek headmen. Eligio de la Puente, "Cuenta del costo de los Víveres, efectos, y géneros entregados a Don Francisco Ruiz del Canto," Havana, September 30, 1779, AGI, PC, leg. 1290, ff. 24-25; Eligio de la Puente, "Cuenta de Costo de los Víveres, Géneros, y efectos entregados a don Francisco Ruiz del Canto," Havana, February 19, 1780, AGI, PC, leg. 1291, ff. 24-25.

<sup>47</sup> Juan Miguel Calvo, "Declaración de Ynculaiche," Havana, October 15, 1780, AGI, PC, leg. 1300, ff. 428-29; Eligio de la Puente, "Relación de los gastos cauzados por el Yndio de Nación Uchis nombrado Ynculaiche," Havana, January 28, 1781, AGI, PC, leg. 1300, ff. 427-30.

and decided not to make any attempt at drawing Native peoples into his invasion plans. Instead, he tried to convince British commander John Campbell that neither side should accept the help of Indian auxiliaries. Playing upon stereotypes of Native barbarity, Gálvez claimed that an Indian-free battlefield would be a more civilized one and reduce the possibility of atrocities. The tactic was calculated to play to Gálvez's advantages. His Franco-Spanish force was better armed and outmanned Campbell's British and German troops more than twofold. Without Campbell's sizeable contingent of Native allies, his relative strength would have been even greater. Even after Campbell declined Gálvez's proposal, Gálvez continued to refrain from employing Creeks and other Native peoples in battle, vainly hoping to prevent his opponent from doing the same. Campbell shrewdly declined Gálvez's proposition and the Upper Creek contingent at Pensacola helped British forces hold out under siege for two months, until a gunpowder explosion caused by a Spanish shell destroyed the walls of the British fort.<sup>48</sup>

After the war, Spanish officials continued to struggle to place their Southeastern Indian policy into practice. The commercial arrangements that were to serve as the

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<sup>48</sup> Including militia, the Franco-Spanish force had about 7,000 men, whereas the non-Native forces at Campbell's disposal numbered around 3,000. Campbell had a little more than 500 Native allies at the siege of Pensacola, whereas Spain's supporters among the Creeks, if assembled, may have numbered less than half that. A 1765 British census estimated that all of the villages in the lower Apalachicola River basin, including Tunapé's, possessed 129 warriors combined, and another census from the previous year claimed that Coweta, the most pro-Spanish of the Lower Creek towns, could send out 150 warriors. It would not be wise to assume that every single warrior from these communities would choose to fight alongside Spanish forces either, as individual inclinations could vary greatly.

For the censuses, see Pampellone, "Names of the Indian Towns," Apalachee, January 21, 1765, JGP, reel 8, f. 23; "List of Towns and Gun Men in the Creek Nation," St. Augustine, August, 30, 1764, JGP, reel 7, ff. 35-36, second copy in f. 107.

For the Siege of Pensacola, see Bernardo de Gálvez, "Conquista de Pensacola," Archivo General de Simancas, Secretaria de Despacha de Guerra, Floridas y Luisiana, SGU, leg. 6913, f. 47, Valladolid, Spain; Gálvez, *Diario de las Operaciones...baxo las Ordenes del Mariscal del Campo D. Bernardo de Gálvez*, Facsimile, ed. N. Orwin Rush (Tallahassee, 1966); John Walton Caughey, *Bernardo de Gálvez in Louisiana, 1776-1783* (Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing Co., 1972), 189, 207; Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 204-213, 256-57; N. Orwin Rush, *The Battle of Pensacola: March 9 to May 8, 1781* (Tallahassee: Rose Printing Co., 1966).

linchpin of the Spanish-Creek relationship did not develop to Spain's liking. Once the chaos of war began to settle, José de Gálvez set about devising a means for Spain to take part in and hopefully dominate the Southeastern Indian trade. To manage the trade, he appointed Gilbert Antoine de Saint-Maxent, a merchant, planter, and militia commander from Louisiana. Yet, Saint-Maxent's initial outlay for the business met an unfortunate fate. A British warship captured Saint-Maxent's vessel on its return from having purchased goods in Europe. The warship seized the cargo intended for the trade and brought him prisoner to Jamaica. While there, Saint-Maxent engaged in some form of business with his captors and local merchants. Word of this leaked upon his release and Saint-Maxent stood accused of engaging in smuggling during his captivity. In December 1783, the Crown issued a decree ordering his arrest and seizing all of his assets. The Crown eventually had to contract the trade to a firm run by Anglo-American Loyalists, Pantón, Leslie, & Company, to handle trade with the Creeks, thwarting its attempts to stimulate national industry.<sup>49</sup>

If not productive in securing the Creeks as long-term trading partners for the Spanish, these contacts had a positive benefit for Tunapé and the other emissaries who journeyed to Cuba. From 1766 to 1781, Creeks who wished to brave the trip down the Florida Gulf Coast could ride to Havana in a Spanish schooner and come back with a plentiful quantity of goods, food, and other provisions. The supply from Cuba remained

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<sup>49</sup> José de Gálvez to Bernardo de Gálvez, San Lorenzo, October 30, 1781, AGI, PC, leg. 182A, f 633-36; José de Gálvez to Bernardo de Gálvez, El Pardo, March 18, 1782, AGI, PC, leg. 182A, f 637-38; José de Gálvez to Martín Navarro, El Pardo, March 18, 1782, AGI, PC, leg. 182<sup>a</sup>, ff. 639-44; Navarro to José de Gálvez, New Orleans, April 16, 1784, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, leg. 2609, f 533-38; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 12-13. For more on Maxent, see Coleman, James J., *Gilbert Antoine de St. Maxent: The Spanish-Frenchman of New Orleans* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing House, 1968); Abelardo Levaggi, "Aplicación de la política española de tratados a los indios de la Nueva España y sus confines: el caso de la Luisiana y las Floridas (1781-1790)," *Revista de Investigaciones Jurídicas* (Escuela Libre de Derecho, Mexico) 20, no. 2 (1996), 372-77.

steady and reliable, as the governors never turned a Creek party away without gifts, despite the Marquis de la Torre's threats to do so. Spanish gifts proved especially vital in the years 1775-1781, when the American Revolution disrupted trade routes and communications between Britain's Atlantic Seaboard colonies and the Creek towns. During this period, the Tallapoosas even conducted their own Havana visits, as they too had felt the pinch of shortages. They continued to visit Cuba up until the end of hostilities in 1781, and in these wartime visits often received up to thousands of pesos worth of goods.<sup>50</sup>

For the Spanish Crown, the Creek-Cuba connection had greatly diminished in importance by early 1780s. Ten years prior, an alliance with the Apalachee Creeks had held out the possibility of securing deerskins and naval stores, and the potential of covert intervention in the American Revolution. By supplying Creek forces, Spanish officials could have struck a double blow to Great Britain in the mid-1770s with minimal effort, potentially depriving Britain of its Florida posts while also distracting its forces from their struggle against rebellious colonists further north. At the very least, the proposed arming of Creek allies reveals that Spanish officials considered creative means of intervening in the Revolution from its very beginning. Along with its better-known efforts to covertly fund Patriot forces, the supplying of Creeks in Florida represents Spanish ingenuity in attempting to take advantage of growing anti-British sentiment among the continent's inhabitants, without becoming engaged in war.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> In the years 1773-1781, the Crown spent almost 25,000 pesos on the various Creek visits. See Table 1.

<sup>51</sup> Boyd and Latorre, "Spanish Interest in British Florida," 92-99; Thomas E. Chávez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States: An Intrinsic Gift* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 102; Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 28-29. While Boyd titled his work "Spanish Interest in British Florida, and in the Progress of the American Revolution," he did not make a strong effort to contextualize

Spanish officials declined to take advantage of either of these opportunities, but not for lack of interest. Initially, they feared provoking British attacks. After Spain had declared war on Great Britain in 1779, Spanish leaders hesitated to employ Native allies in a military capacity for tactical reasons. For the Apalachee Creeks, their relationship with Spanish Cuba represented a means of breaking from the supposed Anglo-American vise grip over the trade and diplomatic opportunities of Southeastern Indians. Tunapé's band demonstrated that Britons held no monopoly on Southeastern Indians' trade.

Yet, in the midst of pursuing their own agendas, Spaniards, Lower Creeks, and Apalachee Creeks participated in a process that transformed a maritime space into a borderland. The fishermen and hunters that met along the Gulf Coast formed tight bonds with one another. These bonds only grew over time; by the early nineteenth century, the Cuban ranchos became permanent communities in south Florida, where the fishermen and migrant Creeks intermarried, and began to fashion their own unique society.<sup>52</sup> The contacts established in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, in a region on the periphery of both Creek Country and the Spanish Empire, formed the foundation for this society. Within the Gulf of Mexico and along its coast, Creeks and Spaniards came together and negotiated, traded, and formed alliances, crafting their own unique space, bringing two worlds together while creating their own.

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the Spanish-Creek connections within the Revolution, nor do the piece make much mention of the Revolution itself.

<sup>52</sup> Worth, "Creolization in Southwest Florida," 142-43.

## Chapter 2

### **“My warriors are Victorious over the Americans in every quarter”: Creek Alliances Confront the American Republic, 1784-88**

In the winter of 1786-7, the area between the Oconee and Okmulgee Rivers in modern-day Georgia was a war zone. All along the western borders of the United States, the Anglo-American population was expanding rapidly and spilling over into Indian lands. Scholars commonly portray the Early Republic period as one in which the United States quickly overwhelmed Native peoples. Pointing to U.S. victories over Native peoples in the 1790s and 1810s, most overarching studies of the period portray the era between 1783 and 1815 as one of rapid and irreversible Native decline. Moreover, they often approach this history matter-of-factly, as if American independence predetermined Native desolation. Looking backwards from a world in which the United States has expanded its political, economic, and legal powers to the shores of the Pacific, scholarly treatments of the conflicts of the Early Republic adopt the air of a narrative rushing to its inevitable conclusion.

A close analysis of events on the ground reveals a different story. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the Creek counter-attacks and counter-offensives that paralyzed Georgia in the mid-to-late 1780s. Creek forces not only repelled attempts to seize their hunting grounds upon and across the Oconee, but took the fight well into Georgia proper. They even advanced as far as the Cumberland Valley to their north, where they and their allies shattered a number of Anglo-American settlements. The militias of Georgia and the would-be states of Franklin and Cumberland were helpless to stop them. By spring 1787, Georgia's officials sued for peace as Creeks had forced them to rely on diplomacy in their attempts to secure the Oconee lands.

The Creeks were waging a successful war, in large part due to British goods and weapons routed through Spanish ports. They were not alone: Native peoples in the Ohio Valley carried on their own struggle against American aggressors, benefitting from British arms pouring in from traders in the Great Lakes region. Just as Creeks routed the Georgia militia, the efforts of Ohio Valley Indians culminated in a defeat of American forces so humiliating that it earned the Americans' commanding general a court martial. Collectively, the efforts of these groups highlight two major points: the relative weakness of and lack of cohesion among the United States and the ability of Creeks and other Native peoples to find independent sources of trade and maintain transatlantic diplomatic connections.

In the decade following American independence, eastern North America housed a kaleidoscope of sovereign peoples engaged in a contest to define their place in the continent's future order. Much of the scholarship on this period adopts a teleological view oriented towards the political growth and development of the U.S. nation-state. From the perspective of U.S. political history, the period is one of failed experimentation that proved instructive, leading to the creation of a stronger, more effective federal government. In Creek and other Native histories, the immediate post-revolutionary years unleashed Anglo-American aggression on the peoples of the trans-Appalachian region and cut off their access to European colonial powers. This prevented Native peoples from benefitting from the competition between Euroamerican colonial empires and initiated a steady and consistent erosion of Native sovereignties culminating in Indian Removal in the 1830s. These perspectives presume the endurance and eventual dominance of the United States over much of the continent, but from the vantage point of contemporaries nothing indicated the imminent defeat of Native peoples and the U.S.'s mere survival lay very much in doubt.

The experiences of the 1780s suggest that Native peoples had the means and ability to protect their sovereignty and that the United States might have disintegrated altogether. Creeks exemplify the success of Native network building in the years immediately following U.S. independence, especially in contrast to U.S. diplomacy. Observers in Spain and Britain suspected that the United States would fragment into weak and warring polities, most of which would eventually fall under the influence of one of the two empires. They worked to sow dissent among citizens in the western portions of the nation and ignored most demands and protests from U.S. state and national governments. In contrast, colonial officials and agents of both empires formed military, economic, and territorial agreements with Creeks and other Native peoples, often working in tandem with them to destabilize the American states.

In many ways, Creeks and other Native peoples were more successful than the United States in their diplomatic endeavors. Whereas the United States failed to secure commercial agreements with European powers, Creek leaders, Spanish officials, and Loyalist traders had set up an effective network for supplying the Creeks with munitions and European trade goods. Whereas the United States proved incapable of enforcing its interpretation of the nation's boundaries with British Canada and Spanish Florida and Louisiana, the Native peoples of the trans-Appalachian region convinced British and Spanish agents that it was in their interest to defend Native territorial boundaries, as Native peoples could help defend their colonies and accelerate the dismembering of the United States.



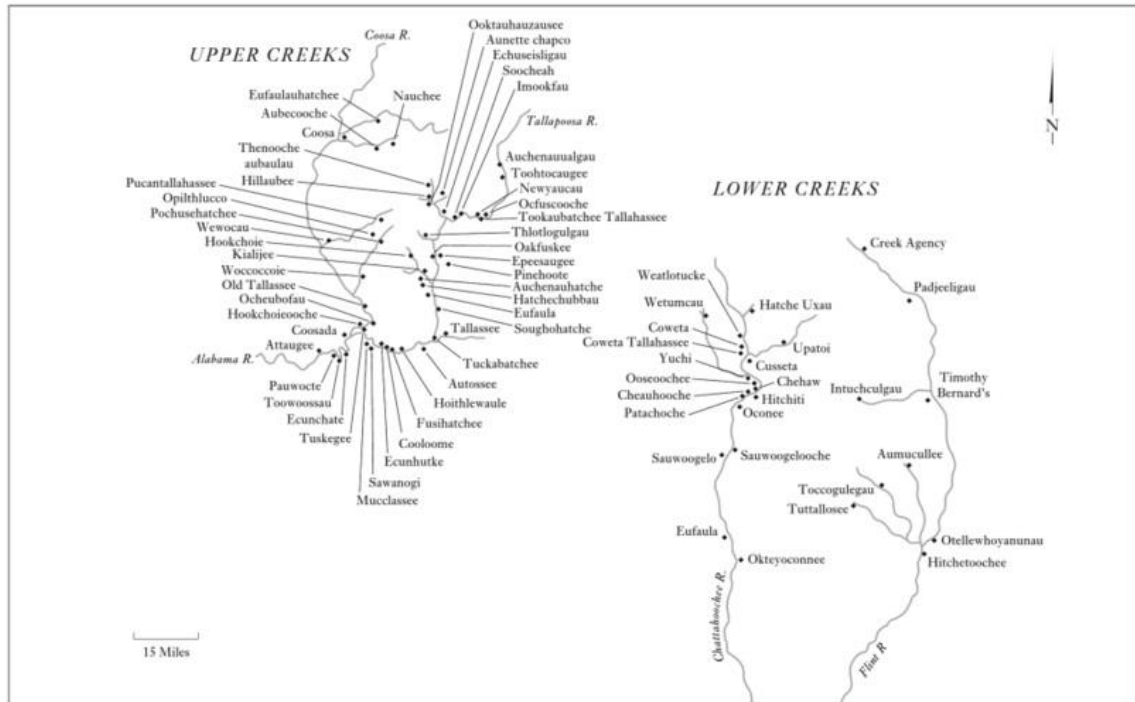


Figure 2. Map of the Upper and Lower Creeks ca. 1800.<sup>1</sup>

The intersections of U.S. and Creek territorial claims exemplify the successes of the latter and the failings of the former. American leaders considered Creeks as occupying territory that at least partially fell under U.S. jurisdiction. They complained of the funneling of British and Spanish arms and gifts to Native peoples, objecting to it as a violation of American sovereignty, but to no avail. As Eliga Gould and others have argued, the United States failed to convince European nations to treat Americans as equals and thus failed secure agreements and treaties protecting American rights and sovereignty on the seas and within American territorial claims. If Creeks did not quite secure recognition as equals in

<sup>1</sup> Map adapted from Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 29. The spellings for the communities listed, drawn from U.S. agent to the Creeks Benjamin Hawkins' writings, differ in some instances from the spellings I use in this work. Most notably, I spell "Ooseochee" as "Osuchee."

the eyes of European officials and diplomats, they forged beneficial relationships that supported elements of their territorial and political sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

Far from isolated, Creeks expanded their connections to the wider world throughout the 1780s. They had adapted to the rise of an aggressive American nation-state by broadening and strengthening their transatlantic networks. Try as they might to dominate Creeks and their lands, the United States found themselves forced to observe what Leonard Sadosky has referred to as the diplomacy of the North American borderlands. Americans had to respect Native sovereignties and negotiate solutions with Native leaders rather than impose them. While the states' inability to collectively marshal their resources and coordinate policy certainly played a significant role, Creeks and other Native peoples exploited U.S. weakness through effective diplomacy and warfare. From the vantage point of 1787, nothing at all appeared inevitable about Americans' eventual control of the trans-Appalachian region. Native peoples, working in tandem with European imperial regimes, formed an effective bulwark against American expansion.<sup>3</sup>

### AN ANGLO-SPANISH NETWORK

Somewhat paradoxically, the Creek relationship with Spanish Florida extended from their ties to two longstanding rivals, Great Britain and Spain, which as recently as 1783 were at war with each other in Florida. The Apalachee Creeks' efforts in Cuba had convinced the Spanish imperial government that the Creeks, or at least a significant portion of them, were potential allies. Crown officials invested heavily in the Indian trade and

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<sup>2</sup> Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*; Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World*; Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*.

<sup>3</sup> Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*.

crafted a defensive strategy that featured the Creeks as their first line of defense against the new American republic. The governor of East Florida, Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, articulated this strategy when asking the Creeks to serve as “a barrier between the Colonies of His Majesty and the American States.” Zéspedes elaborated to his superiors upon his belief that “the friendship of the Indians will form a Barrier, not inconsiderable against the designs of the Americans.” Spanish officials formulated this plan because they knew that Americans coveted territories claimed by Spain. Immediately after the American peace treaty with Great Britain, U.S. diplomats demanded that Spain provide access to the mouth of Mississippi River and disputed Spain’s interpretation of Florida’s northern boundary. Some Americans openly threatened to seize territory and the right of navigation by force, and Spanish officials worried that a weak American government could not, and perhaps would not attempt to, restrain them.<sup>4</sup>

Men like Zéspedes saw the forging of alliances with Native peoples as the easiest and most practical way of preventing assaults upon their thinly-populated and poorly-funded colonies along the Mississippi River and Gulf Coast. To access Spanish claims, Americans would require free passage through Native lands. Rather than build up a large military establishment to protect against aggressions, Spanish officials realized that convincing the Indians themselves to deny Americans passage would prove much easier and cheaper. These officials also perceived that most Native polities in the region resented and frequently quarreled with Americans. Creeks, as the most numerous, powerful, and

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<sup>4</sup> Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes to Alexander McGillivray, St. Augustine, September 2, 1784, AGI, PC, leg. 158A, ff. 8-9; McGillivray to Zéspedes, Little Tallassee, October 2, 1784, AGI, PC, leg. 150, ff. 71-72; Zéspedes to Conde de Gálvez, St. Augustine, September 16, 1785, AGI, PC, leg. 150, ff. 431-32; David J. Weber, “Conflicts and Accommodations: Hispanic and Anglo-American Borders in Historical Perspective, 1670-1853,” *Journal of the Southwest* 39, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 5-8.

strategically positioned of these Native peoples, would form the most crucial component of this alliance. In turn, Spanish efforts to form the intended “barrier” depended on their cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

Spanish officials realized that in order to secure Native alliances, they needed the cooperation of merchants and traders with connections to Native leaders, as well as a reliable supply of Indian trade goods. When Zéspedes articulated his plan, he noted that “the most effective means, in addition to regaling and provisioning [the Indians], to secure their inclination, would be to offer them the Exchange of their Peltries, for various European goods, as the English nation had done.” Imperial officials in Madrid anticipated the need for new Native trade networks and had contracted with French Louisiana merchant Gilbert Antoine de Saint-Maxent for this purpose. Unfortunately, the catastrophe which befell Saint-Maxent upon his return from Europe scuttled these plans, leaving Spanish officials in dire need of an alternative.<sup>6</sup>

Saint-Maxent’s failure created an opportunity for British Loyalists to maintain their place in the trade. Zéspedes recommended that the Crown rely on a Loyalist firm named Panton, Leslie, and Company. During the war, what remained of the British colonial establishment came to rely on company director William Panton to provide arms, ammunition, and supplies to their increasingly anxious Native allies. Unprepared to offer gifts and trade to Creeks and Seminoles upon his arrival in 1784, Zéspedes also came to depend on the company. In his own words, the governor “obtained assistance of the English” in managing Indian relations, remarking that he “thought it wise not to interfere

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<sup>5</sup> Zéspedes to Conde de Gálvez, St. Augustine, September 16, 1785, AGI, PC, leg. 150, ff. 431-32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. For more on Saint-Maxent, see chapter 1.

with this trade.” Panton and Leslie very much wished to remain in Florida and continue their mercantile business, while Spain very much needed to fulfill a crucial component of its diplomacy in the region. Despite the recent hostilities between Britain and Spain, ties of mutual interest bound the Loyalist merchants and Spanish officials to one another.<sup>7</sup>

Creeks and Seminoles’ own preferences served as the deciding factor in pushing the new Spanish colonial government into a partnership with Panton, Leslie, and Company. When Zéspedes arrived to assume the governorship of East Florida, he found the outgoing British administration beset by angry Creeks and Seminoles. While men like Escuchapé and Tunapé had rejected British traders and sought out Spanish networks during the war, other mēkkvlke had built their reputations upon British networks and despaired of their crumbling. They sought to understand why British officials would so abruptly sever ties they had spent decades building. In the absence of a compelling explanation, these Creeks and Seminoles interpreted British actions as a betrayal. Speaking of the evacuation in terms of the British abandoning them to their enemies, they often used enslavement as a metaphor for their anticipated treatment at the hands of the Americans and Spaniards. Creek and Seminole visitors to St. Augustine voiced concerns that the British Crown intended to “give to the Virginians & Spaniards as a present all the indian warriors; friends & lands to be divided between them.” One bewildered Creek leader asked “Is the Great King conquered, or does he mean to abandon us? – Or does he intend to sell his friends as slaves, or to give our lands to his and our Enemies?” By drawing upon the language of enslavement, Creeks not only attempted to convey the gravity of Britain’s decision, they also signaled their

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<sup>7</sup> Zéspedes to Juan de Urriza, St. Augustine, September 16, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1634-36; William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola: University of West Florida, 1986), chs. 1-3, esp. pp. 31-37, 49-50.

distrust of both the Americans and the Spaniards, who many of them had fought against during the war. In such episodes, Creeks and Seminoles made it clear that they feared the repercussions of a British evacuation and considered British officials derelict in their duty to help protect their allies.<sup>8</sup>

What made the Creek and Seminole response to the British evacuation more than a nuisance was the threat of violence that accompanied it. Both Briton and Spaniard stood in danger of their wrath. Seminole mēkko Cowkeeper vowed “Vengeance against the King that gave away their Country,” but also promised to “kill every Spaniard that offers to set his head out of [St. Augustine].” The British Superintendent of Indian Affairs in East Florida worried that Creeks would “wreak their vengeance on the unfortunate unhappy residents” of the colony before they could evacuate. Understanding and even sympathizing with their anger but unable to do anything to change imperial policy, he hoped “to moderate the rage & resentment of such who may conceive they are abandoned, after our repeated assurances never to forsake them.” Meanwhile, the outgoing British governor feared for the lives of incoming Spaniards. He reported to his superiors that the Creeks and Seminoles’ “aversion to the Spaniards is insurmountable and...peace with them cannot last long.” The impending evacuation had created an explosive situation that threatened to shed blood all across the Florida landscape.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Oath of Evfala Tvstvnvke, St. Augustine, May 10, 1783, Guy Carleton Papers (hereafter GCP), no. 7654, microfilm, National Archives, Kew, London, UK (hereafter NA-UK); Okaiegigie [Thomas Perryman] and Fine Bones to Tonym, Col. Archibald McArthur, and Brown, St. Augustine, May 15, 1783, NA-UK, Colonial Office Papers (hereafter CO) 5-560, ff. 309-10.

<sup>9</sup> An anonymous “correspondent in St. Augustine” to Captain Bissett, St. Augustine, May 20, 1783, NA-UK, CO 5-560, ff. 423-24; Thomas Brown to Sir Guy Carleton, St. Augustine, April 26, 1783, GCP, no. 7556; Brown to Carleton, September 12, 1783, GCP, no. 9098; Patrick Tonym to Thomas Townshend, St. Augustine, May 15, 1783, NA-UK, CO 5-560, ff. 292-95.

The vociferous reaction of Creeks and Seminoles to the transfer of East Florida convinced both British and Spanish officials that the peace and stability of the region depended upon the retention of Panton and Leslie's trading enterprise. Zéspedes worked with Panton and Leslie and the outgoing British administration to secure the peaceful transfer of the colony to Spanish authority. Zéspedes authorized Panton and Leslie to continue their trade, even issuing them passports so that they could procure goods from the Bahamas to supply Creek and Seminole visitors to St. Augustine, Pensacola, and St. Marks. He also used company officials as intermediaries in negotiations with the Creeks and Seminoles. This policy culminated in Zéspedes sending John Leslie to deliver a speech to Seminole leaders inviting them to come to St. Augustine and speak with the new governor. Thanks to Leslie's intervention, the Seminoles accepted the proposal and the two sides held an amicable meeting at the end of September 1784. In return for their service, Zéspedes agreed to support the company's petition for a permanent trade concession in East Florida, convinced that it would prove a great benefit to his administration.<sup>10</sup>

Panton and Leslie's networks played an equally important role in securing the good graces of Spanish officials in West Florida and Louisiana. The merchants quickly forged ties with Alexander McGillivray, an Upper Creek *mēkko* who possessed a talent for earning the trust of colonial officials. The son of a Scottish Loyalist trader and the Creek daughter of a prominent *mēkko*, McGillivray exemplified how the patrilineal nature of European societies could compliment the matrilineal customs of the Creeks

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<sup>10</sup> Zéspedes, Passports for William Panton, St. Augustine, September 10, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1599-1605; Zéspedes to Arturo O'Neill, St. Augustine, September 12, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1609-26; Zéspedes to Seminoles, St. Augustine, September 7, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1585-91. Zéspedes to Seminoles, St. Augustine, September 30, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1662-70; Zéspedes to Tonym, St. Augustine, March 21, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1167-68; Zéspedes to José de Gálvez, St. Augustine, March 22, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1171-76.

with regard to diplomacy and political leadership. His status as the son of a powerful and respected trader caught the attention of British officials during the Revolution, as they appointed him a commissary and deputy agent in the Indian department. His belonging to a chiefly lineage and the powerful Wind clan (*Hotvlkvlke*, or “people of the wind”) via matrilineal descent earned him prestige within Upper Creek society. Passing his childhood among his mother’s family at Ocē Vpofv (the Hickory Ground) and his adolescence receiving a British education in Charles Town, McGillivray’s upbringing prepared him to thrive in both European and Creek societies.<sup>11</sup>

McGillivray’s background and familial and political connections led Panton and Spanish officials to view him as an invaluable partner. Unversed in Creek diplomatic norms and lacking experienced translators, Spanish colonial governors had to rely on men like McGillivray, who could make negotiations between themselves and Creeks mutually intelligible. What distinguished McGillivray from an ordinary agent or interpreter, however, was his possessing of actual political authority among the Creeks themselves. Colonial governors believed that he would provide them with the quickest and easiest means of developing influence within Creek country. Like British officials before them, Spanish officials were quick to secure McGillivray’s influence with a commission in the Spanish service. Granting him the title of commissary, the governor of Louisiana offered McGillivray an annual salary of 600 pesos in exchange for securing their interests among the Creeks. With the Spanish colonial establishment eager to cultivate ties with McGillivray, Panton realized that he could use the situation to secure

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<sup>11</sup> Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 22-26; DuVal, *Independence Lost*, 24-34; David Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire: The Struggle for Mastery in the Louisiana-Florida Borderlands, 1762-1803* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015), 209-10.



his own position. The Loyalist merchant offered McGillivray a 12.5 percent interest in his company. In exchange, McGillivray helped to convince the governor of Louisiana to support the company's petition for a permanent contract with the Spanish government. To seal their agreement, Pantón apparently offered the governor and intendant of Louisiana a joint 25 percent interest in the company.<sup>12</sup>

While the company cultivated leading Spanish officials, the decision of many Loyalist to remain in Native communities ensured that their networks would remain intact. Both groups had chosen to remain behind in Native communities despite the withdrawal of their sovereigns' forces. Their decision highlights how national and monarchical loyalties mattered much less to these traders than the commercial and familial networks they built on the ground in North America. They followed their livelihoods, rather than their national flags, in mapping their future. Creek women's role in the trade served as the vital linchpin that kept Loyalist traders grounded in Creek communities. To enter the trade, many traders required connections with prominent Creek families and clans, which they achieved by marrying Creek women. Yet, matrilocality in Creek society stipulated that husbands live with their wives' families, and placed much of their property at the disposal of the wife's family. This meant that the Loyalist traders' familial, commercial, and economic lives depended upon their permanent integration into Creek communities. Without even considering the genuine ties of affection and partnership that developed in many of these pairings, the losses that one would incur in attempting to extricate oneself from these networks must have dissuaded most traders from leaving. Traders' permanence

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<sup>12</sup> Esteban Miró to Conde de Gálvez, New Orleans, August 1, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1509-22 and 1523-32; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 52-70; Abelardo Levaggi, "Aplicación de la política española de tratados a los indios de la Nueva España y sus confines: el caso de la Luisiana y las Floridas (1781-1790)," *Revista de Investigaciones Jurídicas* (Escuela Libre de Derecho, Mexico) 20, no. 2 (1996): 377-85.

in Creek communities kept both Panton and Leslie and Creek networks intact on a local level. For Spanish officials, it made the business of establishing Creek trade and diplomacy as simple as assuming their British counterparts' place in a pre-existing establishment.<sup>13</sup>

While this level of official cooperation between British subjects and Spanish officials appears peculiar in the history of the relationship between those two empires, in a certain sense it was entirely fitting with Spanish policy in the region. In assuming Britain's claim over the territory along the northern shore of the Gulf of Mexico, Spain essentially followed the same policy as it had with Louisiana a generation earlier. There, they faced the problem of winning over French-allied Choctaws. Though British officials would make major inroads with the Choctaws, what relationship Spanish officials managed to preserve with their communities relied on French merchants, soldiers, traders, and agents. The aforementioned retention of Gilbert Antoine de Saint-Maxent as merchant to the Indian trade serves as one example of this policy, while the employment of sublieutenant Juan de la Villebeuvre and trader-interpreter Simon Favre provide others. In fact, Villebeuvre and Favre remained involved with Spanish administration throughout the 1790s, and they would help the Choctaws through yet another transition, as Panton and Leslie began to assume Saint-Maxent's responsibility over their trade. Together, the continued presence of trusted connections reassured Choctaws that the everyday face of Spanish colonization would differ little from that of the French regime, and Spanish policies had the same effect among the Creeks and Seminoles.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 169-70; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 114-15, 136-37.

<sup>14</sup> Gilbert C. Din, "For Defense of Country and the Glory of Arms': Army Officers in Spanish Louisiana, 1766-1803," *Louisiana History* 43, no. 1 (winter 2002): 11; Jack D. L. Holmes, "Juan de la Villebeuvre and Spanish Indian Policy in West Florida, 1784-1797," *FHQ* 58, no. 4 (Apr. 1980): 387-99.

Conspicuous in their absence throughout this reshuffling of Creek diplomatic and trade networks were American merchants and traders. As if to underscore the weakness and vulnerability of the United States, Creek and Loyalist trade networks actually recovered from the war faster than those of Americans in the region. The break with Great Britain had severed their primary source of credit and merchandise and unlike Creeks, they would not repair or replace those connections for some time. Moreover, American traders paled in both means and numbers in comparison to their Loyalist counterparts. Most traders, and particularly most traders of considerable means, had supported the Crown and Parliament during the late conflict, the lone exception of significance being George Galphin, who ran a trading post at Galphinton along the Savannah River. The intimate connection between trade, diplomacy, and alliances in Creek society compounded matters, as Creeks tended view Americans as threatening, hostile people. Throughout the former colonies, the land-hungry frontiersmen who harassed Native peoples had sided with the revolution. Most Georgians found the meager markets in both Creek country and the U.S. an insufficient enticement to peaceful relations with Creeks. Instead, they pushed their new state government, both during the war and after, to cajole land cessions from the Creeks. As a result, Creeks generally rejected Americans in favor of Loyalist traders and firms. Americans factored into Creek networks as antagonists much more frequently than as partners, in the form of individuals, families, and state officials all seeking to chip away at Creek hunting grounds.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Paulett refers to Georgia's turn away from the Indian trade as a "new understanding in geography," a shift from the multilateral, multicultural geography of the deerskin trade to a geography of conquest and displacement, as Georgians began envisioning a landscape devoid of Indians altogether. See Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 169-70; Robert Paulett, *An Empire of Small Places: Mapping the*

## THE NEXUS OF CONTINENTAL AND ATLANTIC NETWORKS

That the arrangement between Spain and Panton, Leslie, and Company helped further Spanish imperial goals is clear. Less obvious is how the company allowed Creeks to pursue their own diplomatic agendas. This is where Alexander McGillivray's ability to combine personal ambition with Creek needs proved key. McGillivray certainly used his ties to the company to his personal advantage. In addition to bolstering his standing as a leader among the Creeks, mercantile connections brought him wealth. Anglo-American influences led McGillivray to become a planter and connections to Panton and Leslie allowed him to import slaves, tools, and goods and export produce much more easily than would have been possible otherwise. Perhaps the most influential interpretation of McGillivray's role in the region's history has emphasized these aspects of his personal and professional ambitions. While noting his clan membership and Creek matrilineage, Claudio Saunt argues for McGillivray being "deeply alienated from most Creek traditions and from the vast majority of the Creek people" based upon his desire to promote plantation agriculture and a more centralized political order. Certainly, as Saunt demonstrates, McGillivray's political and economic ambitions laid the foundation for a series of divisive and ultimately self-destructive conflicts among Creeks in later decades.<sup>16</sup>

However, McGillivray also fiercely defended the territorial sovereignty of the Creeks as a whole, a project which attracted many Creeks to work in tandem with him in

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*Southeastern Anglo-Indian Trade, 1732-1795* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), 175-9; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 114-5, 136-7.

<sup>16</sup> Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 69. David Narrett's recent work views McGillivray's actions in much the same light. See Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, ch. 9.

the post-revolutionary years. Though McGillivray pursued this goal with the aim of assuming leadership over a united Creek nation-state, other Creek communities and leaders shared his dedication toward defending Creek territory and political autonomy. In evaluating McGillivray's diplomacy, Saunt draws a sharp divide between the written word of treaties and "actions, promises, and memory," stating that McGillivray cared for the former and other Creeks for the latter. Yet Saunt's work discounts the extent to which the two overlapped. Treaty councils consisted of extensive negotiations, with verbal and performative components that confirmed and added meaning to the written word. The post-revolutionary treaty negotiations between Creeks and Americans and Creeks and Spaniards show other Creek leaders working alongside McGillivray towards the same diplomatic goals. If McGillivray fretted over the written terms of treaty negotiations more than most Creeks of his time, they were of one mind with regard to securing the territorial boundaries of Creek lands.<sup>17</sup>

Most Creek leaders' prime goal in the immediate postwar years involved ensuring that the Creek towns lost no lands to the Georgians. To help accomplish this they hoped to obtain Congress' recognition of the inviolability of Creek territory. In Spain, McGillivray saw the diplomatic means of fending off American aggression, but in Pantón, Leslie, and Company he saw the material means of doing so. Among Pantón, Leslie, and Company's imports were supplies of muskets, gunpowder, and lead, ostensibly used by the Creeks for hunting but with clear military applications. When colonists from Georgia attempted to occupy lands on the Oconee River and sponsored an attempt to have McGillivray assassinated, he convinced Pantón and Spanish officials that

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

Creeks needed to resist such incursions in order to negotiate a peace that would guarantee their territory. If they allowed Georgians to violate Creek lands, McGillivray warned, Spanish outposts, towns, and plantations would be next. To protect themselves and Spanish Florida from the Americans, McGillivray claimed he needed six-hundred pounds of gunpowder. He and the traders associated with Panton, Leslie, and Company began arming Creeks willing to attack and raid Georgian settlements on the contested Oconee lands.<sup>18</sup>

Thereafter, McGillivray learned that Americans residing along the Cumberland River had murdered a group of French traders with close ties to both the Cherokees and the Creeks. Viewing this too as a provocation, McGillivray and other Creek leaders approved of and armed a war party of five to six hundred men “to go Ravage the Settlement of Cumberland & destroy their Houses [and] Plantations.” That fall, McGillivray reported back that “my warriors...destroyed the principal part of the Standing Crops of Corn &<sup>c</sup>. together with the best buildings in the Settlement...[and] the last inhabitants of Cumberland are retreated to the frontier of N<sup>o</sup> Carolina & Virginia.” McGillivray also helped organize an attack on an American trader, William Davenport, and a number of Cumberland colonists who had gone to reside among the Chickasaws.

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<sup>18</sup> For McGillivray’s early policy and how it affected Creek fortunes in the immediate postwar years, see McGillivray to McLatchy, Little Tallassee, Oct. 4, 1784, PLC, reel 1, ff. 1671-75; McGillivray to McLatchy, Little Tallassee, Dec. 25, 1784, PLC, reel 2, ff. 28-40; Benjamin Hawkins, Andrew Pickens, Joseph Martin and Lachlan McIntosh to Charles Thomson, Keowee, SC, Nov. 17, 1785, *American State Papers: Indian Affairs* (hereafter ASP-IA), eds. Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clarke (Washington: Gales and Seaton: 1832), 1:16; Panton to McGillivray, Pensacola, Jun. 8, 1791, cited in James Innerarity to John Forbes, Pensacola, Nov. 22, 1806, PLC, reel 6, ff. 809-10. For McGillivray’s preparations for war, see McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, Oct. 10, 1785, PLC, reel 2, ff. 695-701; McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, Mar. 8, 1786, PLC, reel 2, ff. 912-16; McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, May 1, 1786, PLC, reel 2, ff. 1044-68; McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, Oct. 30, 1786, PLC, reel 2, ff. 1479-84; McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, Mar. 4, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 105-09; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, chs. 4-5; Watson, “Continuity in Commerce,” 551; Watson, “Strivings for Sovereignty,” 404-07.

There, they attempted to build a fort along the Mississippi River and sought to form an alliance with the Chickasaws to rival that of the Creeks, Spaniards, and Loyalists.

Viewing the Americans' presence on the Mississippi as threatening to Creek country, McGillivray sent a party to assassinate Davenport, who he accused of attempting to assassinate him. Within months, Creek forces had destroyed the lines of American colonization to their east and were pushing their assaults into Georgia. By January 1788, McGillivray was able to note that "My warriors are Victorious over the Americans in every quarter...they have given the Georgians repeated defeats, & there is not a Single building now Standing on the Contested lands."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For the Cumberland attacks, see McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, Jul. 10, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 599-603; McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, October 4, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 951-964. Conflict in the region continued for the next few months, particularly when Creeks discovered a surveying party out to examine new lands; see McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, Mar. 28, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1594-1606. For the action against the Americans in Chickasaw territory, see McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, Jul. 25, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 637-39; McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, Oct. 4, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 951-64; McGillivray to Zéspedes, Little Tallassee, Oct. 6, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 968-72.

For the summary report on Creek actions in winter 1787-1788, see McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, Jan. 10, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1343-47. For confirmation of Creek progress from Georgia leaders, and those of the would-be state of Franklin, see Gen. Elijah Clarke to Gov. George Mathews, Wilkes County, GA, Apr. 13, 1787, "Creek Indian Letters, Talks, and Treaties, 1705-1829" (hereafter CIL), Georgia Department of Archives and History (hereafter GDAH), Morrow, Georgia, typescript, compiled by Louise Caroline Frederick Hays, 148-49; James Robertson to John Sevier, Nashville, Aug. 1, 1787, forwarded to Mathews, Aug. 7, 1787, CIL, 157; Sevier to Mathews, Mount Pleasant, Aug. 30, 1787, CIL, 158; Clarke to Gov. George Handley, Augusta, Feb. 2, 1788, CIL, 164; Clarke to Handley, Washington, GA, Feb. 8, 1788, CIL, 166; Benjamin Lanier to Handley, Ogeechee Fort, Feb. 14, 1788, CIL, 167; Clarke to Handley, Washington, GA, Mar. 26, 1788, CIL, 166.

By early 1788, Georgians were concerned for the safety of residents as far eastward as Liberty and Chatham Counties, and would be so for at least the next year or so; see Gov. Handley to Gen. Mathews, Augusta, Apr. 2, 1788, GDAH, "Governor's Letter Books and Orders, 1786-1789," 162-64; Col. D. Stewart to Col. James Maxwell, Newport, Liberty County, GA, Sep. 26, 1788, CIL, 181-82; John M. Berrien to Brig. Gen. James Jackson, Sans Souci, Sep. 30, 1788, CIL, 185-86; Jackson to Handley, [Savannah], Oct. 3, 1788, CIL, 187-88; Richard Winn, Andrew Pickens, and George Mathews to Alexander McGillivray and the Headmen and Warriors of the Creek Nation, Hopewell on Keowee, Nov. 28, 1788, CIL, 189-91; Maxwell to Col. Benjamin Fishbourn, [undisclosed location, likely Maxwell, Liberty County, GA], May 30, 1789, CIL, 206. Also see Randolph C. Downes, "Creek-American Relations, 1790-1795," *The Journal of Southern History* 8, no. 3 (Aug. 1942): 351-53; Benjamin W. Griffith, *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 39; George Stiggins, *Creek Indian History: A Historical Narrative of the Genealogy, Traditions, and Downfall of the Isposcoga or Creek Indian Tribe of Indians*, introduction and notes by William Stokes Wyman, edited by Virginia Pounds Brown (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 77; Thomas D. Watson, "Strivings for Sovereignty: Alexander McGillivray, Creek Warfare, and Diplomacy, 1783-1790," *FHQ* 58, no. 4 (Apr.

The correspondence of American officials and colonists makes palpable the panic and insecurity the felt under the assault of the alliance, as well as the insistence of Creeks and Cherokees that they be taken seriously as Americans' equals. As early as 1784, American officials received news from Cumberland and "Kentuck" that "the Indians are daily Committing Hostilities...and it is Evedently known to be the Creeks and Cherokees in Conjunction."<sup>20</sup> In 1786, Virginian Joseph Martin, who worked as an agent among the Cherokees and played a key role in the colonization of Kentucky and the Cumberland River basin, reported that "the accounts from the Cherokee Country are somewhat alarming." Militia colonels John Donelson and William Christian, both hardened explorers and soldiers who had gone out to handle the Chickamauga threat, had been killed, their forces dispersed, and "People seem[ed] greatly alarmed on the frontiers." Not only were Chickamaugas led by Bloody Warrior and Dragging Canoe conducting non-stop attacks on the Cumberlanders, but there were rumors that "the Creeks would endeavor to break up Cumberland this Summer" and that "they wanted the Cherokees to join them, saying *they would led the White people know they could go to war in armies as well as they could* [emphasis mine]." As this statement shows, Creeks and Cherokees brought a significant level of confidence and assertiveness to their military actions and diplomatic negotiations. They wanted not only to clear trans-Appalachia of Anglo-

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1980): 405-07; J. Leitch Wright, "British Designs on the Old Southwest: Foreign Intrigue on the Florida Frontier, 1783-1803," *FHQ* 44, no.4 (Apr. 1966): 268; Wright, "Creek-American Treaty of 1790: Alexander McGillivray and The Diplomacy of the Old Southwest," *GHQ* 51, no. 4 (Dec. 1967): 382.

<sup>20</sup> John Woods to Gov. John Houstoun, Washington Country, North Carolina [Franklin], October 16, 1784, CIL, 68.



Americans but also to demonstrate that they possessed capabilities and rights on par with Euroamericans.<sup>21</sup>

The Creek and Chickamauga Cherokee threat did not subside over the ensuing months. In May 1787, Colonel Anthony Bledsoe reported more killings and received word from Upper Cherokee leader Old Tassel that “the Creeks and all the Northern Tribes of Indians is Determined on War this Summer, and...are determined on breaking up the Kentucky and Cumberland settlements this Summer.” The threat of attack and lack of security among colonists was so great that it forced North Carolina Colonel James Robertson to keep his militia in Cumberland on full-time duty and promise them pay to prevent their desertion. While Upper and Lower Creeks attacked from the south, Chickamauga Cherokees moved in from the east, and Shawnees punished the Kentucky settlers from the north. Under assault from three directions, the American settlements in present-day Tennessee and Kentucky stood in serious danger of destruction.<sup>22</sup>

Creek actions throughout the late 1780s point to broader diplomatic initiatives connecting the Native worlds of the Eastern Woodlands. Warriors from other Native polities and communities fought alongside Creeks throughout this period. In their assaults on American posts, Creeks fought alongside Chickamauga Cherokees living along the southern reaches of the Tennessee River. In fact, the attacks on Cumberland functioned as part of a Chickamauga campaign that predated Creek actions. As soon as Americans had begun to flood into the region, the Chickamauga Cherokees embarked on a series of

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<sup>21</sup> Joseph Martin to Richard Caswell, Smith’s River, Henry County [Virginia], May 11, 1786, in SRNC, XVIII:604-06.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Bledsoe to Caswell, Sullivan County [Franklin, officially part of North Carolina], May 4, 1787, in SRNC, XX:692; Caswell to Evan Shelby, Kinston [North Carolina], May 31, 1787, in SRNC, XX:710-12; James Robertson to Caswell, Nashville, July 2, 1787, in SRNC, XX:730-31.

proactive strikes, designed to check American colonization before it could encircle them. When Creeks began to grow worried about American envoys among the Chickasaws and American movement into the Oconee River basin, they looked to Chickamaugas as allies. Together, the two parties joined their efforts into a cohesive push against the establishment of new American communities in the region.<sup>23</sup>

Shawnees also fought alongside Creeks and Chickamauga Cherokees in the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Ohio River valleys. The three groups fought alongside one another with regularity in this period. For the Creeks and Shawnees in particular, historical precedent for cooperation abounded. Multiple Shawnee bands and communities had persisted in the southeast for generations, living as neighbors to the Creeks on the Savannah River. These bands either returned to the Ohio Valley in the 1710s, or relocated to live among the Creeks. As late as the early nineteenth century, a distinct Shawnee community persisted in Creek country, most notably the Shawnee town of Sawanogee (or Sawanogi) on the Tallapoosa River. Close attention to intertribal histories reveals that sociocultural and strategic reasons for this connection abounded. Given their long and intertwined history, Creek and Shawnee cooperation should come as no surprise and it is a wonder that so few Euroamericans took note of it.<sup>24</sup>

Scholars have described the concerted actions of Eastern Woodlands peoples during this period as the beginnings of a broader pan-Indianism, but it is important not to overstate the degree of cultural and political consolidation among Native allies. During

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<sup>23</sup> Tyler Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation: Town, Region, and Nation among Eighteenth-Century Cherokees* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 161-76.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 99-110; Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 27, 30, 82, 97; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages*, 27, 151-55; Warren, *The Worlds the Shawnees Made*, chs. 4 and 9.

Pontiac's War in the 1760s, British observers often described the temporary alliances between Great Lakes and Ohio Valley Native peoples as a "confederacy." European and Euroamerican observers employed similar terminology during this period, in a manner that implied a more systematic unity of Native peoples than actually existed. McGillivray encouraged and sought to manipulate these sentiments to augment outsiders' perception of his power. To Spaniards and Americans, he proclaimed himself the leader of a "Grand Indian Confederacy of the Northern & Southern Nations." Evidence draws this claim into question. These alliances functioned a loose coordination of individual war parties without any significant level of political cohesion. Although their shared goals brought about a significant degree of convergence in method and strategy, Creeks, Shawnees, and Chickamauga Cherokees never developed a level of political organization or synergy that one might envision as a confederacy. Moreover, even the most credulous interpretation of historical evidence indicates that McGillivray's supposed confederacy did not extend beyond these three groups. Aside from Shawnees, no evidence indicates that any "Northern Nations" participated in these struggles.<sup>25</sup>

However, the alliance between Creeks, Shawnees, and Chickamauga Cherokees sheds light upon a complex Eastern Woodlands web of interconnected Native communities. Creeks were just one of many groups of people adapting and refashioning their world in the wake of the American Revolution and these peoples looked to one another for inspiration, assistance, and information. Native peoples further north than the

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<sup>25</sup> For an analysis of this period and that of Pontiac's War through the framework of pan-Indianism, and for contemporary uses of the term "confederacy," see Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*; Gregory Evans Dowd, *War Under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). For McGillivray's statement, see McGillivray to Miró, Pensacola, October 4, 1787, PLC, reel 2, ff. 1665-70.

Shawnees did attempt to engage with Creeks and Cherokees, highlighting the continental nature of Native diplomatic efforts. The grandiosity of McGillivray's claim almost certainly stems from a single congress which took place in 1787, when various Haudenosaunee, Shawnee, and Wyandot leaders came to Little Tallassee carrying a "Belt of Dwampum," which served as "the signal of peace on the part of 24 Nations and was entrusted to us by Our Supreme Council." The delegation came on behalf of what British and American observers labeled the "Western Confederacy," an effort organized by Shawnees, Wyandots, and Miamis to unite the Indian polities north of the Ohio River in a determination to push back against American colonization.<sup>26</sup>

That the loose alliances forming among Great Lakes and Ohio Valley peoples probed as far south as the Creeks and Cherokees represented a revolutionary step. Never before had Native peoples attempt to form an alliance which spanned nearly the entirety of the trans-Appalachian region. To a lesser extent than Shawnees, Haudenosaunee also had a historical presence in the southeast, conducting raids against Catawbas, Cherokees, and other peoples in the present-day Carolinas as early as the 1710s. As late as the 1760s, British officials spoke of a need to "put a stop to the Attacks of the Northern Indians upon the Cherokees," a testament to the regularity of their presence hundreds of miles from the Haudenosaunee homeland. Yet, never before had they or any other Native polity from the north attempted a coordination of martial and diplomatic efforts over such a vast stretch of territory. The Mohawk speaker for the group made their intentions clear, remarking

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<sup>26</sup> McGillivray to a correspondent in the Bahamas [possibly Thomas Brown], Little Tallassee, June 30, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 571-81. For the Western Confederacy, see Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, ch. 5; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*; Thomas Sugden, *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnees* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), chs. 7-9.

that the “Belt of Peace” which he brought functioned a request for “Our Brothers the Creeks” to join an alliance of all the peoples that already spanned “from the Great Falls [Niagara] to Detroit.”<sup>27</sup>

The wampum belt itself reveals another startling aspect of this diplomatic mission, in that it was completely refashioned beyond its original purpose. The Mohawk speaker explained that the belt

was given to us by our Fathers and Friends the English when they told us that a Peace have been concluded between themselves and the Americans, at the same time instructing us, and to all the red People...to cast our Instruments of War to one side [to make peace with the Americans as well]

The Haudenosaunee did not bring this belt to foster peace with Americans, however. Contrary to British agents’ intentions, they approved of the Creeks’ war against the Americans and asked that they help them form “a strong Wall of defense in order to protect Our Lands.” The Mohawk emissary explained that they had intended to comply with British agents’ wishes, but suspected that the Americans would not allow them to. “We obeyed the Advice of our Fathers...but always guarded our Weapons in sight of the Roofs of our Houses” in the chance they would need them “for the defense of our Homes, Women, and Children.” Sure enough, “a little after having convinced us to lay down our Arms the Americans began to commit usurpations on our Lands.” Unsatisfied with

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<sup>27</sup> McGillivray to a correspondent in the Bahamas [possibly Thomas Brown], Little Tallassee, June 30, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 571-81; Grant to Stuart, St. Augustine, August 21, 1766, JGP, reel 1, ff. 245-47. For historic Haudenosaunee activity in the southeast, see James H. Merrell, “‘Their Very Bones Shall Fight’: The Catawba-Iroquois Wars,” in Daniel K. Richter and Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 115-33; Theda Perdue, “Cherokee Relations with the Iroquois in the Eighteenth Century,” Richter and Merrell, *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, 135-49; Douglas W. Boyce, “‘As the Wind Scatters the Smoke’: The Tuscaroras in the Eighteenth Century,” in Richter and Merrell, *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, 151-63.

territory seized from the Haudenosaunee during the Revolution, Americans resumed efforts to usurp land in Iroquoia.<sup>28</sup>

The Mohawk delegate claimed that he and other Haudenosaunee had been inspired by Creek actions, resolving to resist American incursions by taking up arms once again. Having heard of “the disputes which you have had with the Georgians concerning your lands,” the delegation commended the Creeks’ “having been the first to make resistance against this Injustice” of the Americans. At a council of representatives from twenty-four different peoples and polities held near Detroit, they had resolved “to follow the example of our Bellicose and Numerous Brothers the Creeks” in taking up arms against the Americans, and invited the Creeks to attend their next council at Niagara Falls. Whether or not Creek exploits actually inspired these northern groups to act is debatable. The emissaries had come to Creek country with the mission of attracting Creek allies to their side and may have employed flattering language lauding Creek bravery as a means of furthering that goal. Yet the more important point from this incident is that Haudenosaunee saw common ground and common interests with Creeks, a people heretofore distant and relatively foreign to them. Euroamerican discourse homogenizing all Native peoples as “Indians” might blind modern readers to the momentousness of this development. Never before had these peoples so distant and distinct from one another, lacking ties of kinship, language, or culture, considered themselves to have common cause. That very same discourse which elided their differences created similar problems

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<sup>28</sup> McGillivray to a correspondent in the Bahamas [possibly Thomas Brown], Little Tallassee, June 30, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 571-81.

in their dealings with Europeans and Euroamericans. Native peoples of the Eastern Woodlands had begun to realize the shared interests this treatment created.<sup>29</sup>

The repurposing of diplomatic objects laid the groundwork for new alliances, reflecting the shifting contexts of the world they inhabited. Whereas British agents intended the wampum belt to represent peace with the Americans, the Haudenosaunee had considered it a symbol of the relationship which they and Native peoples throughout North America held with Britain. British agents had enjoined them to cease waging war on the Americans, but this agreement only remained viable if Americans lived up to their promise to do the same. In light of continued American aggression, Haudenosaunee reinterpreted this symbol of Anglo-Native unity to represent the cause which had foregrounded that unity in the first place: an alliance against the Americans. It was still a peace belt, but now that peace was defined by a common enemy. With this symbol of British friendship, Haudenosaunee hoped to unite all of the Native peoples of the Eastern Woodlands and persuade Britain to come to their aid once again. The Mohawk leader explained to the Creeks that “one of their War Captains had passed across the Great Waters to speak of these matters to our Fathers.” The expedition of which he spoke was that of Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, who had gone to Britain to negotiate with King George III in person. They promised to inform the Creeks of the outcome of his journey. In relating this information, the delegation hinted that if successful, Brant might be able to secure British aid for them all.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. For Brant’s voyage to Britain, see Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807: Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984), ch. 18; Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 254-55.

The assembled Creek leaders responded by making a legal argument undergirding efforts at a broad Anglo-Native alliance. The mēkkvike thanked the other delegates for their journey and reciprocated their sentiments, commenting that they too had refused to “cast aside, or bury our Arms” and had “kept them within view of the Roofs of our Houses.” Then, the Creek leaders attacked the legal philosophy with which American laid claim to Native territories, observing that

The Americans do not speak the truth when they say that our former Fathers the English have given them the lands of their Red Children: To the contrary, if the Americans had paid attention to the Talk which was sent among them, and the English, they would not be now attempting to take Lands from the Red People, since all as Children, and allies of the English, were included in the Peace, and permitted to rest peacefully in our possessions.

On its surface, this statement seems to betray a lack of understanding of the treaty’s terms. Far from enumerating them as allies falling under its protection, the Treaty of Paris failed to mention Native peoples altogether. Instead, it described all the territory between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River as lands belonging to the United States, establishing those two bodies of water as the new nation’s eastern and western boundaries. Carelessness on the British negotiators’ part, largely owing to a government in disarray at the end of the war, and American ambitions to lay legal claim to the trans-Appalachian region explain the omission.<sup>31</sup>

Creek leaders’ position reveals their understanding of how Americans interpreted the Treaty of Paris and their own legal arguments against it. For Creeks, the physical text of the document was irrelevant in the face of the nature of the relationships they had

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<sup>31</sup> McGillivray to a correspondent in the Bahamas [possibly Thomas Brown], Little Tallassee, June 30, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 571-81.



constructed with the British and the reality of their territorial sovereignty. It did not matter to them what a treaty negotiated by distant Americans and British, without their input or assent, stated. Although they framed the issue as one of American malevolence in their speech to the Haudenosaunee delegation, elsewhere Creek leaders, particularly McGillivray, made clear that Britain had no right to set such boundaries with the United States, seeing as they overlapped with the sovereign territories of Creeks and other Native peoples. They knew that they had been “allies of the English,” not subjects, and that no agreement which ceded away their rights without their consent held legitimacy.<sup>32</sup>

Ironically, for all of their work in helping to build the so-called “Western Confederacy,” the Grand River Mohawks shared responsibility for its collapse. Brant’s trip to London obtained generous compensation for Haudenosaunee losses during the American Revolution, but failed to secure guarantees of British support against the Americans. When conflict in the Ohio Valley escalated, the Six Nations refused to come to their allies’ aid. Brant sought compromise, feeling that the Confederacy stood little chance of victory without full British support and hoping to preserve his own role as the grand diplomat of the region. He tried and failed to serve as mediator between Ohio Valley Indians and the U.S. federal government. Brant also proved unable to persuade the British Governor General in Canada, Lord Dorchester, to provide arms and diplomatic support until it was too late. On their own, without greater manpower or material support, the Shawnees, Wyandots, Miamis, and other allies proved unable to carry on the struggle. The alliance between these groups effectively fell apart by the mid-1790s. The meeting at Niagara Falls never took place and none of the Ohio Valley or Great Lakes peoples, aside

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

from the Shawnees, ever reached out to the Creeks again. Aside from a handful of forays alongside Shawnee war parties, Creeks and Chickamauga Cherokees never played much of a role north of the Ohio River.<sup>33</sup>

## RIVAL NETWORKS

While their cooperation with northern peoples was sporadic and short-lived, the Creeks and Cherokees never built any kind of useful working relationship with their southern neighbors. At first glance, this may seem surprising, seeing as how American colonization of the Cumberland and Tennessee valleys theoretically threatened them all. However, the peoples of the southeast had spent much of their histories at odds with one another, separated by cultural, ethnic, and political differences. South of the Ohio River, the threat of American aggression had not yet reached the levels that it had in the north, meaning southeastern peoples had less incentive to cooperate with one another. Even north of the Ohio, the notion of pan-Nativism struggled through its infancy. Both the alliance of Pontiac's War and much of the "Western Confederacy" crumbled rather quickly, in part because the various members of these alliances had difficulty cooperating with one another. The Creeks and Chickamauga Cherokees were exceptional in their willingness to countenance a "Grand Indian Confederacy" in the first place, and the Creeks were the only southeastern people to persist in such visions. Decades later, when Tecumseh sought to revive the notion of a pan-Native alliance, the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Cherokees turned him away; only the Creeks received him.

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<sup>33</sup> Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 111-15; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 148-51, 161-66; Kelsey, *Joseph Brant*, ch. 20; Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 254-55, 281-93.

A survey of southeastern Native peoples shows that the Creeks had few friends among their neighbors. McGillivray made a push towards uniting these groups, hosting a council which some Cherokee and Chickasaw leaders attended at Little Tallassee in 1785. The temporary unity came as a result of Americans' interpretation of the Treaty of Paris. That congress resulted in a petition to the governor of West Florida disavowing American claims to territory based on the treaty. However, the collaboration fell apart when Creeks started warring with the Americans.<sup>34</sup>

Even with respect to the Cherokees, Creeks had only the Chickamaugas at their side. During the late 1770s, Cherokees had split over how to respond to American attacks. At the beginning of the American Revolution, Cherokees were alone among southeastern Native peoples to declare as a whole for the British war effort. They paid for that decision, as American forces laid waste to their crops and towns in the summer of 1776 while Loyalist and British forces proved incapable of providing any assistance. After the invasion, most Cherokees sought a negotiated peace as an opportunity to heal the damage Americans wrought. British and Loyalist allies appeared too undependable to risk further bloodshed. Those who favored continued war met with opposition from Cherokee elders and relocated to the southwest, further down the Tennessee River. The émigrés built new towns and launched new attacks on American communities, becoming the Chickamauga Cherokees, while Americans called those exiles who remained the Upper Cherokees.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> McGillivray on behalf of the Creeks, Chickasaws, and Cherokees to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, July 10, 1785, PLC, reel 2, ff. 476-83 and McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, July 24, 1785, PLC, reel 2, ff. 525-32.

<sup>35</sup> Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation*, 161-76; Thomas M. Hatley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), ch.17 and epilogue.

Despite the cultural and kinship bonds between Chickamauga and Upper Cherokees, the latter group's aversion to war made it unlikely that they would join the Creek-Chickamauga alliance. Upper Cherokees lamented the Chickamaugas' decision, and often sent emissaries to try to convince them to make peace. Sometimes, their frustration with the Chickamauga towns got the better of them. Overcome by the obstinacy of his brethren, Upper Cherokee leader Old Tassel told an American agent that he "thought it best [for the Americans] to go against [the Chickamaugas] and burn their towns, by which means they would return to their allegiance; that then [the Upper Cherokees] would have the power to govern them." Likewise, another Upper Cherokee leader, Little Turkey, rebuked the Chickamaugas by saying that "he was tired of talking to them...if they wanted to go to war, and he would sit still and look at them." Upper Cherokees made clear their disapproval of Chickamauga actions, trying and failing to shame them into making peace with their harangues.<sup>36</sup>

Other neighbors proved either indifferent or hostile to the Creeks and Chickamaugas. The Seminoles, largely composed of Creek migrants, remained aloof from their former kinsmen. No evidence indicates that Choctaws cooperated with Creeks at all and they held peaceful negotiations with both Americans and Spaniards. The Chickasaws proved to be the biggest problem of all for the Creek-Chickamauga alliance. Not only did they refuse to join the allies, they went so far as to court the American colonists and received American agents at Chickasaw Bluffs. The most prominent figure in this effort was Piomingo, whom McGillivray regarded as "a very troublesome fellow."

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<sup>36</sup> David Craig to William Blount, Knoxville, March 15, 1792, ASP-IA, 1:264-65; Joseph Martin to Henry Knox, Fort Patrick Henry, Sullivan County, North Carolina [Franklin], February 2, 1789, ASP-IA, 1:48.

Unlike McGillivray, Piomingo thought the best hope for his nation was to establish a strong relationship with the United States. He traveled to meet with John Sevier, the leader of a group of fledgling American communities in Franklin, a would-be state in what is now eastern Tennessee. Piomingo and other allies of his among Chickasaw leadership also signed a treaty with the American commissioners at Hopewell, North Carolina in 1786, a negotiation to which McGillivray and the Creeks were invited but did not attend as an act of protest.<sup>37</sup>

The actions of Chickasaw leaders problematize any attempt to construct a Native-U.S. binary when discussing the diplomatic relations of this period and reflect the range of opportunities and possibilities that contemporary historical actors envisioned in the wake of the American Revolution. While Chickasaws disliked American plans to build a fort at Chickasaw Bluffs and complained of American encroachments at times, they were invested in having American traders in Chickasaw country and saw little benefit to conflict with them. As early as 1784, an observer recorded Chickasaw leaders as stating that “they will not now nor never fight against Virginia [the Americans]” at a Spanish council. Unlike Creeks or Cherokees further east, Chickasaws did not yet feel threatened by Anglo-American colonists and thus saw less danger in treating with U.S. agents and traders. Rival connections played a significant part in this decision. Chickasaws’ Choctaw and Upper Creek neighbors had deeper ties with colonists and officials in Louisiana than they could hope to build as newer allies at a greater remove from the hubs of Spanish

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<sup>37</sup> For the Choctaws, see Greg O’Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750-1830* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), ch. 4. For the Chickasaws, see McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, June 24, 1789, in Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 238-40; Knox to McGillivray, [New York], February 17, 1792, ASP-IA, 1:246-47; William Blount to Knox, Knoxville, November 8, 1792, ASP-IA, 1:325-27; James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), ch. 8.

colonial activity. Some Chickasaws favored strengthening ties with agents emanating from Louisiana and Panton, Leslie, and Company would eventually play a significant role in supplying traders in Chickasaw country, particularly those who were Loyalist refugees. Still, a greater number of Chickasaws cultivated a place as Americans' preeminent allies in the region, preferring that role to accepting a position that would potentially see their power eclipsed by those of their neighbors.<sup>38</sup>

Chickasaws' potential Spanish allies also offered them little incentive. In negotiations with Spanish officials, Chickasaws complained of "the Businessman at Mobile [that] reject so many of the traders' skins that they cannot maintain the trade, with the prices of goods going up, and the prices of skins falling." At Spanish posts, the Chickasaws' traders could not obtain enough of a return on their deerskins to make Chickasaw efforts worthwhile, to provide for their families, or to acquire enough arms to defend against potential enemies. West Florida Governor Arturo O'Neill admitted that "Commerce at Mobile is in a deplorable state, and the friendship of the Chokedaws [Choctaws] and Chickasaws...is in a worse state, so that it will not be easy to win them again." Circumstances suggested that Chickasaws could not rely on Spaniards and their merchants alone, even if they wanted to. McGillivray repeatedly invited Chickasaws and Choctaws to join the Creek-Chickamauga alliance, but according to the American agent William Davenport they "refused to receive these talks without my presence and...refused to involve themselves in the War." While Davenport almost surely inflated his sense of self-importance in this letter to his superiors, the fact that Chickasaws

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<sup>38</sup> Unknown to Col. James Robertson, [no location], July 10, 1784, in *The State Records of North Carolina* [hereafter SRNC], ed. Walter Clark (Goldsboro, N.C.: Nash Brothers, 1886-1914), XVIII:83-84; Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, ch. 9.

continued to harbor him while rejecting McGillivray's talks signaled their intention to build relationships with Americans as well as Spaniards.<sup>39</sup>

Set on constructing a bipolar world where Native peoples, Spaniards, and Loyalists united against American influence, many Upper Creek leaders interpreted the circumspection of their Chickasaw neighbors as hostility. McGillivray and the Upper Creeks who supported him responded in a manner that sought to make neutrality impossible and threatened to engulf the entire region in violence. Upper Creek warriors tried to use force to prevent Choctaws and Chickasaws from negotiating with the Americans. Two Choctaw leaders, Tincti Mingo and Spokahouma, claiming to speak on behalf of the Chickasaws as well, complained that "the Creeks much harassed them on the Path" while the Chickasaw and Choctaw delegations traveled to negotiate with Americans at the Treaty of Hopewell in 1786. Benjamin Hawkins confronted McGillivray about similar claims, that Creeks had attacked the Choctaw party and stole their horses on the way to the treaty council. Creeks also violated Chickasaw territorial sovereignty to strike at Americans. During the Hopewell congress in 1786, Piomingo complained that there were "Creeks going to Cumberland to plunder the citizens, and very probably, to get some scalps." Considering this territory to be Chickasaw land, and the American presence there to be under their auspices, Piomingo stated that "although the Creeks were numerous...if they continued to rob and plunder his lands, his own, or the hunters and traders of the white people, he would take such steps as would be proper." As the Davenport murder shows, Creek warriors only grew bolder. In the years thereafter,

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<sup>39</sup> The "Chickasaw King" [Taski Etoke] and Franchimastabe to Miró, Yazoo, March 19, 1787, PLC, reel 2, ff. 177-79; O'Neill to Miró, Pensacola, July 20, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 628-29; Davenport to Sevier, Chickasaw Nation, July 28, 1786, PLC, reel 2, ff. 1615-16.

Upper Creeks began attacking American travelers that were crossing through the Chickasaw nation to settle along the Mississippi.<sup>40</sup>

While the Choctaws tried to remain aloof in the face of such insults, Creek actions drew many Chickasaws into the conflict on the American side. Chickasaws fought alongside a group of Franklinites who “fell in” with a Creek and Chickamauga war party in 1789. Two of them were killed, one “a relation of...Poy Mingo [Piomingo],” an event which only hardened the lines of battle. By the early 1790s, Chickasaw warriors led by Piomingo were cooperating with Cumberlanders and Franklinites to fend off Chickamauga and Creek attacks. What Chickasaws remained in favor of promoting ties with the merchants and officials of Louisiana seem to have stayed at home rather than fight against their neighbors. Largely due to Creek provocations, Chickasaws served as Americans’ lone Native allies in regional conflicts.<sup>41</sup>

Even among the Creeks, unity and cohesion proved temporary and conditional. McGillivray’s claim to the leadership of a unified Creek nation belied the political and cultural fabric of Creek country. Creeks had no tradition of obeying a centralized authority in either a political or military sense. Among Upper Creeks, McGillivray certainly had a large degree of influence and became the chosen diplomatic representative of most towns. As a group of Lower Creek leaders stated, the Upper Creeks in general, exclusive of the Okfuskees and Tallassees, had “chose hime [McGillivray] to Act for

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<sup>40</sup> Tincti Mingo and Spokahouma speech, Charleston, [no date], *Charleston Gazette*, March 10, 1786, AGI, PC, leg. 150, ff. 635-37; Hawkins to McGillivray, Seneca [South Carolina], January 8, 1786, in *Revolution and Confederation* (hereafter RC), ed. Colin G. Calloway, vol. XVIII of *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789*, (Bethesda, Md.: University Publications of America, 1994), 417-18; Piomingo to Hawkins, Pickens, and Martin, Hopewell, January 12, 1786, ASP-IA, 1:52; Carlos de Grand-Pré to Miró, Natchez, May 15, 1789, PLC, reel 5, ff. 176-78;

<sup>41</sup> McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, June 24, 1789, in Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 238-40.



them” in negotiations concerning boundary lines and external relations. Yet this would not have translated to a permanent position of authority over the Upper Creeks, nor would it have extended to other facets of Creek life and governance.<sup>42</sup>

Lower Creeks only cooperated with the Upper towns in starts and fits and often acted separately from them. By describing McGillivray as the representative and negotiator for the Upper Creeks, they made a statement regarding their own autonomy and independence. Their declaration clarified that Lower Creek communities represented themselves in negotiations and that McGillivray did not speak for them. However, their assertion does not signify that Lower Creek communities were opposed to McGillivray’s aims or that they refused to collaborate with him. Coweta leaders coordinated their military and diplomatic efforts with his, but in a negotiated manner that befit their status as his equals, not subordinates. McGillivray made sure that the Yvholv Mēkko of Coweta, also known as the Hallowing King, was informed of his plans.<sup>43</sup> He asked interpreter James Durozeaux to remain in contact with him and on at least one occasion, personally wrote to Yvholv Mēkko. McGillivray trusted Yvholv Mēkko to relate a speech he gave at Tuckabatchee to the American commissioners from memory, and the mēkko later distinguished himself with an impassioned speech against Georgia’s policies at the Treaty of Shoulderbone conference in 1786.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Lower Creek leaders to Gov. [Samuel Elbert] and Council, Cusseta, May 5, 1785, GDAH, DOC-1988, RG-SG-S 004-02-046, File II-Subjects-Indians-Creeks, Folder 8.

<sup>43</sup> “*Yvholv*” is a formal title used by warriors, usually spelled “Yahola” and translated as “Hallowing” by contemporaries, and “thought to refer to one responsible for giving a special whoop at the Green Corn” ceremony. Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, s.v. “Yvholv.”

<sup>44</sup> McGillivray to Durozeaux, Little Tallassee, September 2, 1785, CIL, 86-88; McGillivray to Durozeaux, Little Tallassee, September 12, 1785, CIL, 94-95; McGillivray to “the Holloing King” [Yvholv Mēkko], Tuckabatchee, April 14, 1786, CIL, 101. For Yvholv Mēkko’s performance at the Shoulderbone congress, see Proceedings of the Shoulderbone Congress, April 10, 1787, ASP-IA, 1:22-23; McGillivray to

Due to their proximity to the Oconee, Cowetas and other Lower Creeks would have been at the forefront of conflict in the disputed lands. A substantial number of Lower Creeks probably participated in the Cumberland and Franklin campaigns as well. The Cowetas in particular, in instances which will be documented later, were very active in cooperating with Chickamauga Cherokees, who were at the forefront of the Cumberland and Franklin assaults. Coweta's past also suggests that they would have cooperated with McGillivray, as the community had a history of conflict with American frontiersmen, as well as a diplomatic tradition of trying to maintain a balance of power among their European and Euro-American neighbors. Other sources hint at the varied alignment of individual communities. Testimony from Georgia trader and agent John Galphin reveals that he was detained by a Creek party passing through Okmulgee on a journey to Creek country. Galphin identified this party as having been composed of men from the Lower Creek towns of Eufala, Yuchi, Palachicola, Tuckabatchee, and Chehaw.<sup>45</sup>

Conversely, a number of Creeks from both Upper and Lower towns opposed the war effort and sought to negotiate with Americans. These figures generally fell into one of two groups. Powerful communities that had long benefited from diplomatic connections to their east proved reluctant to close off the paths to Georgia. Namely, leaders of the Lower Creek etvlwv of Cusseta and the Upper Creek etvlwvlike Okfuskee and Tallassee negotiated with the Georgians from the moment of American independence.

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O'Neill, Little Tallassee, April 18, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 317-23 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 149-51; James White to Henry Knox, Fayetteville, May 24, 1787, ASP-IA, 1:20-21.

<sup>45</sup> John Galphin oath, given to Col. Jonathan Clements, Burke County, Georgia, May 6, 1786, CIL, 104; Clements to Gov. Edward Telfair, Burke County, May 6, 1787, CIL, 103. For an extended analysis on this division among Creeks during and immediately after the American Revolution, see Bryan Rindfleisch, "'Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath': Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution," *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 581-604.

Tallassee mēkko Hopothle Mēkko<sup>46</sup>, also known as the Tame King and the Tallassee King, led this charge. A highly influential figure, West Florida Governor O’Neill referred to him as “the most Powerful indian who I have observed among those Nations” and placed the favor that he received from Americans on par with that which McGillivray had obtained from the British during the Revolution. In contrast to the Creek unity that McGillivray projected, Hopothle Mēkko recognized the political divisions in Creek country after the war, observing that “One half of his people lookd one way [towards Georgia] & one half the Other [towards Spanish Louisiana and Florida].” Hopothle Mēkko served as the most prominent leader of the group that signed a treaty with Georgia officials at Augusta in November 1783. Another influential leader, Nehē Mēkko, also known as the Fat King of Cusseta, joined him. The agreement served as the basis for subsequent Georgia claims to the Oconee territory, as it promised peace and renewed trade in exchange for the cession of lands along the river. Benefits accrued quickly to these two mēkklke. Shortly after the agreement, the Georgia House of Assembly singled out Hopothle Mēkko and Nehē Mēkko for “their fidelity and attachment to their white brethren during the late War, and for their acquiescence and support in the late acquired Cession” and appointed and appointed £50 for the purchase of presents for them.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> J. Leitch Wright presumes that Hopothle Mēkko was either Hitchiti or Yuchi rather than Muskogee, based upon the fact that he associated with Hitchitis and Yuchis in later years. Aside from being somewhat specious reasoning, this conclusion ignores that his and Tallassee’s closest allies during the years during and immediately after the American Revolution were the Muskogee communities of Okfuskee and Cusseta. Moreover, he did not associate with the Hitchiti, Yuchi, and Miccosukee contingent that formed ties with William Augustus Bowles in the later 1780s and early 1790s (chapters three and four). Finally, the odds were against a Hitchiti or Yuchi becoming the appointed speaker for the Creeks as a whole, a post Hopothle Mēkko obtained in the early 1800s (chapters five and six). See Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 334-35, n. 35.

<sup>47</sup> Colin G. Calloway, introduction to ch. 5, RC, 359-61; O’Neill to Ezpeleta, Pensacola, August 15, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 395-401; Tallassee King to the Governor of Georgia [John Houstoun] and the Executive Council, Augusta, September 20, 1784, GDAH, DOC-1988, RG-SG-S 004-02-046, File II-

In addition, aspiring leaders who lacked authority and status hoped to make a name for themselves by securing connections with Georgia in the wake of the Revolution. Aside from Hopothle Mēkko and Nehē Mēkko, most of the other signatories to the 1783 treaty were not prominent *mēkkvlke* and lacked the authority to make such a momentous decision on their own. This produced an agreement of dubious legality that other Creeks refused to recognize. Thus, the 1783 treaty followed a pattern that numerous colonists had tried and failed to employ under British rule, as officials from Britain and non-participating Creek *mēkkvlke* disavowed and refused to enforce such agreements. After independence, Congress took the place of Parliament, the Crown, and their representatives in the colonies, but the tension between varying levels of political authority on the issue of land cessions remained. Georgia colonists tried to fool Congress into believing that Creeks as a whole assented to the cession of their lands. Creek-Georgia relations would continue in this vein for the next few years. Georgians would recruit a minority of *mēkkvlke* and *tvstvnvke*, most of them not very influential, to sign off on the Oconee land cession and attempted to pass them off as the governing body of the Creek nation. Most Creeks would reject said treaties and repel Georgia colonists by force.<sup>48</sup>

The *mēkkvlke* and Georgia officials that negotiated these early agreements gambled on a number of assumptions. Georgia's negotiators hoped that neither Georgia citizens nor other Americans would look too closely at the terms of these treaties or care

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Subjects-Indians-Creeks, Folder 8; Treaty of Augusta, November 1, 1783, RC, 372-73; "Resolution of the Georgia House of Assembly," [Augusta], February 23, 1784, in RC, 378.

<sup>48</sup> Treaty of Augusta, November 1, 1783, RC, 372-73; James Rae to Lyman Hall, Augusta, September 24, 1783, CIL, 50.

how the state acquired its land. Moreover, they had to expect that parties of armed militia could fight back any Creek resistance that attempted to prevent them from taking possession of the Oconee lands. The mēkkvlke who negotiated with them counted on their networks flourishing, that they would secure peace on the margins of Creek country and a steady and reliable supply of trade goods. They might have anticipated that alternative connections with Loyalists and Spaniards would prove barren, which would leave them in a commanding diplomatic and political position. Finally, these mēkkvlke depended upon Georgia traders, merchants, and officials becoming reliable, capable, and trust-worthy negotiating partners. As subsequent events would demonstrate, most of these assumptions proved faulty.

Fraudulent treaty negotiations set the stage for manipulation of notions of Creek nationhood. For agreements such as the 1783 Treaty of Augusta to hold up under the scrutiny of outsiders, all parties involved had to adhere to the notion that the Creek negotiators represented the Creeks as a whole. For Georgia officials, this involved little more than touting whatever Creek delegates turned up as representatives of the Creek “nation.” However, for the Creeks who attended these councils, the gambit required them to exaggerate and misrepresent their own authority. When such agreements proved unpopular in Creek country, this tactic backfired on mēkkvlke and Georgia officials alike.

For example, in discussions with the Georgia state government held nearly a year after the 1783 treaty at Augusta, Hopothle Mēkko introduced himself and Nehē Mēkko not as vested authorities of the Creeks as a whole, but as representatives of their respective etlwlke. In reference to the Oconee cession they had agreed to a year prior, Hopothle Mēkko told Georgia authorities that “if he was to say that he had given the

lands up himself, he might tell a lie” and that “for those two [himself and Nehē Mēkko] to give up the land would not be proper.” Instead, he said that Georgia would have to send a person “to the head men of the nation with some Goods” and hold a “general treaty” with them. The “Second Man of the Cussetaws,” the next most powerful after Nehē Mēkko and speaking on his behalf, made a similar retreat from the treaty, claiming that the Upper Towns were divided in their attitudes toward the Americans, but that “the Lower Towns are for Peace” and had agreed to give up all lands east of the Oconee. By then both mēkkvlke had realized that Creek resistance to the cession had exposed their conduct the year previous. While possible that Georgia officials might have tricked the two mēkkvlke into believing that they were to follow up the treaty at Augusta with a series of agreements with other mēkkvlke, by the 1780s Creek leaders would have realized that Georgians would consider any signed treaty a valid act of cession no matter how many mēkkvlke were present. For that very reason, Creek leaders had insisted upon dealing with such matters in general councils. The more likely explanation is that Hopothle Mēkko and Nehē Mēkko had taken advantage of Georgia’s eagerness to acquire a land cession, then feigned misunderstanding when it became clear that most Creeks would not cooperate.<sup>49</sup>

The 1783 treaty and its fallout demonstrate both the potential benefits and risks regarding the malleable concept of Creek nationhood and the nature of its political authority. Treating the Creeks as a coherent political entity facilitated negotiations for Euroamericans and gave opportunistic Creek leaders the chance to secure powerful

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<sup>49</sup> Tallassee King to Houstoun and the Council, Augusta, September 22, 1784, GDAH, DOC-1988, RG-SG-S 004-02-046, File II-Subjects-Indians-Creeks, Folder 8; The Second Man of the Cussetas and other Creek Leaders to Houstoun and the Executive Council, Augusta, July 14, 1784, GDAH, DOC-1988, RG-SG-S 004-02-046, File II-Subjects-Indians-Creeks, Folder 8.

connections by claiming greater authority than they possessed. However, the lack of a real national political apparatus among the Creek towns made such agreements unenforceable when they did not rest on consent. In such cases, mēkkvlke risked the backlash of their townspeople as well as their counterparts across Creek country, while American officials risked wasting time and money on worthless treaties.

Whatever their diplomatic orientation or their methods of negotiation, Creek leaders responded to the new geopolitical order in North America by attempting to secure and expand their connections in a changing world. Like Creeks who sought out Cherokee and Shawnee allies, those figures who chose to negotiate with Georgia also formed connections with like-minded leaders from neighboring peoples. Public account statements show that from May to July 1784, and again in September 1784, the Georgia state government supplied a total of £100 worth of rum, tobacco, corn, and beef to “Fat King & his Gang,” which included not only Okfuskees and Tallassees and a few Choctaws. In his initial speech to the governor and his council, Hopothle Mēkko asserted that “himself & the Oakfuskees are as Brothers,” while “the Fatt King [Nehē Mēkko] & the Chickasaws have One fire,” with all parties acting as allies but separate and independent peoples in favor of dialog with American officials. Indeed, around the same time that Hopothle Mēkko and Nehē Mēkko negotiated their agreement with Georgia, a group of Chickasaw leaders were completing a treaty with representatives from Virginia. Okfuskee, Tallassee, and Cusseta never cultivated an alliance with like-minded Chickasaws the way that other Creek communities did with the Chickamauga Cherokees. Yet the words of their leaders make clear that Creeks and Chickasaws favoring alliances

with American states communicated with one another and recognized each other as sharing mutual interests.<sup>50</sup>

### RIVAL CREEK “NATIONS” UNITE

Creek etvlwvlke and individual Creek leaders, each following their own proclivities, chose to forge agreements with either Spanish or American officials, each of them claiming to be representatives of the “Creek Nation.” This tendency to harness the language of Creek nationalism, encouraged by Europeans and Euroamericans, grew apace in this period. In part, it stemmed from prior decades of Creek cooperation, where mēkkvvlke from various communities would receive delegates from their colonial neighbors and attempt to coordinate their responses to each. However, in prior times Creeks made clear that divisions existed among them, at the very least distinguishing between the diplomatic postures of the “Upper” and “Lower” towns and referring to a need for consensus among all communities involved in agreements. Such talk diminished in the 1780s, with mēkkvvlke or aspiring leaders increasingly referring to and claiming to represent the “Creek Nation” in its entirety. Creek leaders recognized that Europeans and Euroamericans wanted to negotiate with powerful figures that could weld towns and communities into large units of political sovereignty. They also perceived that the turmoil of the Revolution and the overhaul in political leadership it occasioned clouded their colonial neighbors’ already dim understanding of the political structure and diplomatic customs of Creek country. Ambitious figures thus took advantage of Spanish and

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<sup>50</sup> Account Statement, the Public of Georgia to Andrew Whitefield, July 10, 1784, in CIL, 58; Account Statement, the Public of Georgia to Andrew Whitefield, September 30, 1784, in CIL, 67; Tallassee King to the Governor of Georgia [John Houstoun] and the Executive Council, Augusta, September 20, 1784, GDAH, DOC-1988, RG-SG-S 004-02-046, File II-Subjects-Indians-Creeks, Folder 8; “Treaty of French Lick between Virginia and the Chickasaws,” in RC, 374-76.



American officials, pandering to their desire to find representatives who could make decisions for the Creeks in their entirety. Consulting two sets of written archives, one Spanish and one American, one thus perceives two “Creek Nations” consisting of two different groups of Creek leaders, each claiming an illusory national authority and each with a different set of prerogatives and diplomatic networks.

Hopothle Mēkko and Nehē Mēkko demonstrate how powerful the enticement of the language of Creek nationalism had become. In retreating from the Treaty of Augusta of 1783, both appealed to the localized nature of the town-based political sovereignties that governed Creek country. This posture would not last long, as Hopothle Mēkko and Nehē Mēkko reaffirmed the Oconee cession in two additional treaties, the Treaty of Galphinton of 1785 and the Treaty of Shoulderbone Creek of 1786. These treaties proved even more farcical than that of 1783, as the two men were the only two true *mēkkvlke* who showed up. The treaties fooled no one, not even the commissioners appointed by Congress to oversee the deliberations. Commissioners Benjamin Hawkins and Andrew Pickens complained that “although we had had assurances [from Georgia officials] that the chiefs of the Creek nation would meet us there...we were met only by the representatives of two towns who had been friendly to us...We did not think proper to enter into a treaty with the heads of these towns only.” Ignoring their objections and in essence disputing Congress’s ill-defined supervisory role, Georgia officials concluded a treaty anyway, conducting the negotiations after the congressional representatives left.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Treaty of Galphinton, November 12, 1785, in RC, 390-91; Benjamin Hawkins and Andrew Pickens to Charles Thomson, Seneca on Keowee, December 30, 1785, in RC, 410-12; Treaty of Shoulderbone Creek, November 3, 1786, in RC, 433-63.

The other parties that claimed to represent the Creek Nation asserted their claims to legitimacy by denouncing the Georgia treaties. McGillivray boasted that “not twenty Indians” attended the talks at Galphinton and that number merely out of “Curiosity.” He added that the only attendee “of any consequence” was Hopothle Mēkko, whom he dismissed as “but a roving beggar, going wherever he thinks he can get presents.” McGillivray argued that the delegation’s lack of numbers, lack of authority, and supposedly corrupt motives rendered any agreement they signed worthless. He sought to completely discredit his opposition, arguing that those Creeks who negotiated with Georgia did not represent the legitimate interests of the Creeks as a whole, implying that his own policies had broad appeal and tacit support.<sup>52</sup>

This rivalry between two separate groups of Creek communities and Creek leaders with two different diplomatic visions might have continued for some time, but Georgia soon alienated its negotiating partners. Frustrated that they could only secure the cooperation of a small number of Creek towns and unable to persuade the congressional commissioners to accept any treaties conducted thusly as legitimate, they decided to pressure the rest of the Creeks into complying with their demands by taking hostages from the delegations of the friendly towns. Worse, they initially tried to seize Hopothle Mēkko and Nehē Mēkko, the most powerful members of the delegation and their most useful allies, until they thought better of it and decided to hold lesser men instead: Chunocklie Mēkko of Coweta, Cuchas and Suckawockee of Cusseta, Emathlaocks of Rē Kackv (Broken Arrow), and Enautlaleche of “Swaglo,” or Oswagla.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, February 10, 1786, in Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 102-03.

<sup>53</sup> Treaty of Shoulderbone Creek, November 3, 1786, in RC, 433-36; Gov. Edward Telfair to William Few and “the other Delegates in Congress,” Augusta, November 15, 1786, GDAH, “Governor’s Letter

Georgia officials' hostage-taking scheme pushed already-hostile towns further away while alienating the communities inclined to negotiate with them. As a pressure tactic it failed miserably. The state's overestimation of its own power led it to believe that the other Creek communities would tremble in fear at this use of force. It also appears that the state's officials poorly understood the complex political structure of Creek country. Etvlwlke that had not sent representatives had no incentive to negotiate for the release of leaders from other towns. Although these communities recognized shared bonds and a vague articulation of a Creek identity, they would only consider an affair that affected them all jointly as "national" in character. Instead of enticing them to negotiate, the act had the effect of confirming those communities' suspicions of Americans and solidified their determination to attack American colonies and outposts wherever they popped up.

However, the hostage-taking did affect Cusseta, Tallassee, and the few other communities negotiating with Georgia. They responded with harsh words and hostile actions. Hopothle Mēkko had outright refused to remain as a hostage, "having thundred out a furious Talk" which "frightend the Georigans." Even his rival McGillivray could not help but show his respect, stating that "the Tame King for once in his life time behaved like a Man." He and the others who had been negotiating with Georgia joined the rest of the Creeks in turning to the Chickamauga Cherokees and Spanish officials in West Florida for connections and support. Upon Hopothle Mēkko's arrival in Pensacola, an overjoyed Governor O'Neill remarked that he "had never been able to influence him

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Books and Orders, 1786-1789," 6-7; Telfair to Joseph Martin, Augusta, November 28, 1786, GDAH, "Governor's Letter Books and Orders, 1786-1789," 7-8.

until now.” Georgia’s aggression had accomplished what Spanish money and diplomacy could not. The state’s alienation of Hopothle Mēkko proved more significant than anyone at the time would realize. Decades later, the mēkko would play a significant role in the Red Stick War by reaching out to the Bahamas for British support.<sup>54</sup>

Georgia’s attack on Creek negotiators reflected a general imperiousness and hostility in Americans’ dealings with potential Native allies. Leaders in Franklin mirrored Georgia in committing atrocities against Upper Cherokee leaders. In June 1788, members of the Franklin militia approached the Upper Cherokee town of Chilhowee “with a white flag to meet our old Chiefs.” Under the guise of talks, they then “treacherously put to death” a number of peace-minded Cherokee leaders. The dead included Old Tassel, an influential leader who had opposed the Chickamaugas and worked to improve Cherokee-American relations. His death, perhaps more than any other development, pushed the formerly hostile Upper and Chickamauga Cherokees into collaboration. Suddenly unified, Creeks and Cherokees turned out in force to take revenge upon American communities. In the fall of 1789, according to Cherokee agent Joseph Martin, 400 Creeks and 1200 Cherokees “marched against the frontiers ...stormed a fort and took 28 prisoners.” By 1788, resentment towards Americans had united both Creek and Cherokee country. In general, the collective experience of American persecution bridged political divisions within Native communities and cultivated a sense of shared interest among Native peoples that otherwise had little in common.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, December 3, 1786, in AGI Cuba, leg. 199 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 140-41; O’Neill to Ezpeleta, Pensacola, August 15, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 395-401. See chapter six for Hopothle Mēkko’s outreach to British leaders.

<sup>55</sup> Cherokee Leaders to King George III, Chattahoochee River near Coweta, May 6, 1789, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 296-99 and Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 4-7, ff. 181-84; Martin to Knox, Long Island on the

## DIPLOMACY AND PEACE

Despite the militancy of some Creeks and the general anger over Georgia's taking of hostages, few wanted to war with the Americans in perpetuity. Despite their strength, Americans still outnumbered Creeks and their inability to produce firearms or ammunition forced them to rely on outsiders for supplies. Most Creeks wanted a guarantee that their hunting grounds would remain as they were, along with the destruction of Georgia's settlements between the Okmulgee and Oconee. Violence raged because Georgia's citizens demanded the land and rejected the fact that it was not theirs to take. Georgians not only refused to evacuate the occupied lands, but insisted that Creeks cede further territory. As early as 1785, surveying parties began marking out territory beyond the Oconee, prompting Lower Creek leaders to complain. Recognizing this, the state's officials could not countenance any resolution that did not result in their citizens keeping the land they had taken. In a speech to Creek leaders at Cusseta, trader Timothy Barnard summed up the Georgian position when he stated that "we will not put a Stop to its being Settled as it is gone too far." Intransigence of this sort ensured that hostilities would continue for some time.<sup>56</sup>

Instead of giving up on their attempt to keep the Oconee lands, Georgia officials tried to outmaneuver Creeks by cultivating an alliance with their neighbors, the Choctaws. In a 1784 speech, Governor John Houstoun informed the Choctaws that if they wished to have a trade with Georgia, they "must secure our Traders a safe Passage at all

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Holstein, January 15, 1789, ASP-IA, 1:46-47. For more on Chilhowee, see Boulware, *Deconstruction of the Cherokee Nation*, 165.

<sup>56</sup> Timothy Barnard to Creek leaders, Cusseta, June 2, 1784, in "The Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard, 1784-1820," GDAH, Typescript, Louise Caroline Frederick Hays, compiler, 33 b-d; Lower Creek leaders to Gov. [Samuel Elbert] and Council, Cusseta, May 5, 1785, GDAH, DOC-1988, RG-SG-S 004-02-046, File II-Subjects-Indians-Creeks, Folder 8.

times thro' the Creeks." Although the governor insisted that this request did not signify that he expected "the Creeks will stop Us," his demand that the Choctaws "settle a Treaty...that they never shall stop Us, And that in Case any of their people ever do, you will look upon it as your Quarrel more than our's" betrayed his feelings on the matter. As Creek attacks on traders had become a common occurrence even in more peaceful times, Houstoun probably knew that some sort of impediment to trade was inevitable. The governor likely hoped to draw the Choctaws into Georgia's conflict and force the Creeks to fight two different enemies on two different fronts.<sup>57</sup>

That same year, Barnard threatened the Creeks with the prospect of a Cherokee military alliance, claiming that "the Cherokees has been with us offering to assist us against our friends the Creeks but we refused their offer." The implication was clear: if the Creeks were not cooperative, the Georgians could choose to wage war upon them and they would have the Cherokees' assistance. It was also a lie, for nothing indicates that any Cherokees wished to move against the Creeks at this time. The Chickamaugas were hostile to the Americans and actively cooperating with Creek warriors. The Upper Cherokees sought to avoid conflict in general. The lies and machinations of Georgians of all classes, from their officials, to their traders, down to their ordinary citizens, sought to intimidate, manipulate, and murder to secure their hold over the Oconee territory.<sup>58</sup>

To Alexander McGillivray, this refusal to reconsider the status of the Oconee lands justified the refusal of most Creeks to attend further talks and their use of force to dislodge the Oconee settlers. In a letter to commissioner Andrew Pickens, he complained

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<sup>57</sup> Houstoun to Mingohoope/Taboca, Augusta, July 17, 1784, CIL, 59-60. For more on Mingohoope and Georgia-Choctaw relations, see O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age*, 51.

<sup>58</sup> Barnard to Creek leaders, Cusseta, June 2, 1784, "Letters of Timothy Barnard," 33 b-d.

that “violence and prejudice had taken place of good policy and reason in all their proceedings with us.” In such an environment, a negotiated solution proved impossible. Without any hope of resolution through dialogue with the Georgians, McGillivray argued that their only reasonable choice was “to send out parties to remove the people and effects from the land in question, in the most peaceable manner possible.” While claiming that there was anything “peaceable” about what was going on along the Oconee was certainly a stretch, McGillivray’s argument got to the basic truth about Georgia’s attitude and actions. They had pushed the Creeks into a position where force of arms had been the only way to defend their territorial rights.<sup>59</sup>

Even if Georgia were better disposed towards the Creeks, McGillivray believed that its government lacked the power to restrain its own population. He claimed that “this small people [the Georgia frontiersmen] wont hear it, but will encroach. It then becomes us to stir ourselves in the matter, & drive off from the okonee all encroachers.” The mēkko believed that if Congress were to assert its superiority over Georgia, by force if necessary, it could stop further bloodshed by ensuring that Americans treated Creeks justly. Theretofore, McGillivray observed that “the State of Georgia in Greediness for lands has always disregarded the orders of Congress [which have been] in fav<sup>r</sup>. of Indians.” Diplomatically, relations with the state of Georgia were completely broken, but he believed that “We can answer to the Commissioners of Congress.” Indeed, McGillivray blamed the crisis in part on Congress’s inaction, claiming that he was surprised that it had taken so long for Congress to send commissioners out to negotiate with the Creeks, and that “we expected that the new [American] Government would soon

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<sup>59</sup> McGillivray to Pickens, Little Tallassee, September 5, 1785, in RC, 387-88.

have taken some steps to make up the differences that subsisted between them and the Indians during the war.”<sup>60</sup>

McGillivray’s real hope lay in diplomacy and international law. Tellingly, in the same letter to Pickens, he stated that “we know our own limits, and the extent of our hunting grounds; and, as a free nation...we should pay no regard to any limits that may prejudice our claims, that were drawn by an American, and confirmed by a British negotiator [i.e. the Treaty of Paris of 1783].” Moreover, McGillivray stated his intention to acquire a “free trade in the ports of the Floridas” and his right to enter into negotiations with Spain for such a right. He repeated such assertions to the Georgians, arguing that “when Brittain compelld to withdraw her protection from us, as a free Nation we had a right to choose & enter into alliance & friendship with any power that would be most agreeable to us. We have done this with the Spanish Nation.”<sup>61</sup>

These were cogent statements of Creek sovereignty, and attempts to utilize Euro-American concepts of international relations against a Euro-American colonizer. In portraying the Creeks as a nation as conceived of by the law of nations, McGillivray argues that Creeks had sovereign power over their own territory, that no other power could negotiate these rights away without their consent, that they had the right to enter into negotiations and treaties with other nations, and possessed the right to trade with whomever they wished. The Creek nation-state that McGillivray envisioned was nothing

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.; McGillivray speech given at Tuckabatchee, paraphrased in a letter to James Durozeaux, Little Tallassee, September 2, 1785, CIL, 86-88.

<sup>61</sup> McGillivray to Pickens, Little Tallassee, September 5, 1785, in RC, 387-88; McGillivray to William Clark, Tuckabatchee, April 24, 1785, CIL, 89-90. Clark was a Georgia merchant operating at Baird’s Bluff, a frontier community which the Creeks had proposed as a meeting place for treaty negotiations. Clark was working to help the Georgia government acquire confirmation of the Oconee boundary. As for the political structure of the Creek nation, the best work on this subject is Hahn, *Inventing the Creek Nation*.



more than a fiction, and the *mēkko* would have been well aware of this. At best, the Creeks were a confederacy of allied towns that exercised control over a range of territory that in many places lacked hard and fast boundaries. Although he had hoped to transform Creek country into something resembling a centralized nation-state, at this point in time such visions were much more dream and reality.

If the rhetorical fiction of a Creek state was more than a measure of wishful thinking in McGillivray's correspondence, it was also a useful tool for a leader who wanted to secure rights for his people and have them taken seriously on an international stage. McGillivray realized that negotiations with Europeans and Euroamericans were more likely to succeed if conducted on their terms and those terms paid greater respect to nation-states. If he could get Creek country to be taken seriously as a nation-state for the purposes of diplomacy, McGillivray realized that he had a chance to turn the Atlantic diplomatic order against the Americans, by acquiring protection for a Creek homeland within a community of nations.

While attention to discourse and theory was a vital component of McGillivray's international agenda, effective diplomacy required the threat of force to back it up, particularly in the face of open aggression, and this is where his project began to falter. Sudden problems in procuring the assistance needed for fending off American colonists threatened to doom his project. McGillivray realized that Creeks needed vast supplies of gunpowder to continue fending off American incursions and asked Spanish officials to permit Panton, Leslie, and Company to increase its stores of that article. In his message reporting the successful attacks on Cumberland, McGillivray argued that "a full & ample Support of Arms & Ammunition...is necessary to give effect to our Exertions on the

Waters of the Mississippi & to contend with Vigour for our Oconnee Lands with Georgia.”<sup>62</sup> He complained that the Creeks should pursue the attack “when there is so good a prospect of Compelling the Americans to relinquish all Idea of Encroachments,” but that this “cannot be effected without a farther aid of ammunition.” McGillivray argued that “what has been already afforded to us may appear great, but it has not been in a proportion of one pound & a half a man, & which is generally expended in every excursion.” He pointed out that he and the other Creek leaders felt that the present conflict “was not altogether our own,” as it benefitted Spain by providing border security and protecting the Mississippi Valley from Americans. Noting that the Creeks had difficulty devoting so much of their time and resources to fighting this war, McGillivray appealed to practical needs, as well as to Spanish officials’ sense of honor and obligation, in requesting an increase in munitions.<sup>63</sup>

While Creek aggression ostensibly served Spanish interests, colonial officials began to worry about unrestrained Creek assaults. They began to fear that the Creeks had no interest in peace, instead seeking a perpetual conflict that would destabilize the region sandwiched by American and Spanish domains. McGillivray insisted that his prime objective was to secure a favorable peace with the state of Georgia, but that these efforts would not succeed without a return of the contested Oconee territory. Repeatedly, he told Spanish officials of his sending peace offers to Georgia officials, only for those officials to reject them without a confirmation of the Oconee cession. As he and other Creek

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<sup>62</sup> McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, Aug. 14, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 726-33; McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, October 4, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 951-64.

<sup>63</sup> McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, Apr. 18, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 317-23; McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, Jun. 20, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 559-62. For the arguments concerning Spanish responsibility towards the Creeks, see McGillivray to Zéspedes, St. Marks, Jan. 5, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1293-1301. Also see Watson, “Strivings for Sovereignty,” 405, 407.

leaders viewed Georgian occupation of the Oconee as unjust, they considered it a matter of defending Creek sovereignty to protect those lands.

In particular, McGillivray believed that the Creeks needed to make a firm stand on the Oconee issue in order to reverse the historical trend of caving to colonial land hunger. He noted that the Georgians already wished to end a damaging war, albeit on unacceptable terms. McGillivray thought that by pressing the Creeks' advantage, "the Georgians may be brought to accede to more moderate terms than they have hitherto insisted upon." His compatriots were even more aggressive concerning American encroachments, and harbored a deep resentment towards their eastern neighbors. McGillivray, probably alluding to the communities alienated by Georgia's hostage-taking, noted that "several Towns...that used to be friends to the Georgians have shown a disposition to join the rest of the Nation" in fighting them. The passage of time diminished the prospect of peace without either Creeks or Georgians making major concessions.<sup>64</sup>

Creeks' demand for arms and the actions of Creek forces throughout the Southeast posed a problem for Spanish colonial governors in the region. Due to the relative weakness of Spain's North American holdings and the dire financial straits of the Spanish Crown, metropolitan officials wanted to avoid war with the United States or Britain as much as possible. Under the guise of providing gunpowder for hunting, Spain had allowed itself plausible deniability toward charges that it sought to use the Creeks to

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<sup>64</sup> McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, Sep. 14, 1785, PLC, reel 2, ff. 640-44; McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, Mar. 28, 1786, PLC, reel 2, ff. 933-40; McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, Mar. 4, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 105-09; McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, Jul. 25, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 637-39; McGillivray to Miró, Pensacola, Oct. 4, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 951-64; McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, Mar. 28, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1594-1606.

wage proxy war on the United States. However, word of the Creeks' procuring gunpowder from Pensacola and using it against Americans quickly made its way to Georgia officials. To answer Creek demands for more gunpowder at that moment would only confirm American fears and place Spanish diplomats in an uncomfortable position.<sup>65</sup>

Spanish officials also did not trust the Creeks or McGillivray to be tactful in their use of the gunpowder against Americans. They showed marked skepticism that Creeks could maintain a defensive posture, seeming to think that a well-armed Indian nation would be uncontrollably militaristic. Zéspedes, in particular, noted in a letter to one of his superiors that "the Indians have no fear of going to war, and their antagonisms seem determined to exterminate them [the Americans]." He blamed the Creeks for the failure of peace negotiations, despite the Georgians' clear provocations, claiming that "the Indians have rejected them [the Georgians], who long for peace...for they are not content with the Georgians' offer to renounce the disputed lands, but instead ask for and insist that they cede all of their territory in perpetuity, including their coastline." This statement was a gross untruth, and reveals how Zéspedes assumed that the Creeks had an insatiable hunger for warfare. He and the other Spanish colonial governors could not conceive of Creeks' actions as rationalized campaigns with a reasonable goal in mind, but as expressions of uncontrollable fury and a warlike nature.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> For an example of Spanish officials employing plausible deniability, see Zéspedes to Gov. George Mathews, St. Augustine, Dec. 10, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1170-76. For rumors and American suspicions, see Mathews to O'Neill, Augusta, November 7, 1787, GDAH, "Governor's Letter Books and Orders, 1786-1789," 122; Mathews to the President of Congress, Augusta, "Governor's Letter Books and Orders, 1786-1789," 128-30. For Spanish officials' internal discussions regarding American suspicions and curtailing gifts of gunpowder, see Miró to Conde de Gálvez, New Orleans, Nov. 25, 1786, quoted in Sonora to Carlos III, Madrid, Mar. 1, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 81-104.

<sup>66</sup> "Los Yndios no tienen recelo del evento, y sus antagonistas se creen intentado de extirparlos." Zéspedes to Marquis de Sonora, St. Augustine, Oct. 27, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1031-34; "...los Yndios les han rechazado, suspiran en el día por la paz...no contento con la renuncia que la Georgia ofrece hacer de las tierras disputadas, pide, é insiste que le sea cedido en propiedad todo el territorio, incluso su costa..."

Furthermore, Spanish officials derided McGillivray as untrustworthy and incompetent to be trusted with the power to wage war. O'Neill preferred that McGillivray be more pliable and chafed at his political maneuvering. He thought of undermining McGillivray's authority, complaining that "his proposals vary so frequently...that I am motivated to convince the Indians with the most effective means that our government values him little." He also suspected that McGillivray would involve British agents at the first opportunity, not only because of his Scottish Loyalist father, but also because of the continued influence of Loyalist traders among the Creeks and the ties which many Creek leaders had formerly held with British officials. Sometimes the evaluations of McGillivray were racially charged. Zéspedes derisively referred to McGillivray as "*el Mestizo*" on numerous occasions. In one of his letters, he remarked that "it seems McGillivray has done what he can, but I respectfully believe that he needs white cooperatives, wise, prudent, and well-disposed, in order to impede the Georgians' attempts to take the Indian trade." This was a condescending way of saying that a *mestizo* could not handle such important affairs on his own. At best, Spanish officials lacked confidence in McGillivray due to perceived character flaws. In their worst moments, they seemed incapable of respecting him because he was an Indian.<sup>67</sup>

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Zéspedes to Antonio Valdés, St. Augustine, May 9, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1775-77. Also see Zéspedes to Marquis de Sonora, St. Augustine, Nov. 9, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1061-64. Zéspedes looked enviously upon the (perceived) manner in which Great Britain managed its Indian allies, remarking that it "conserved the affection of the Indians, in order to use them occasionally...like well-trained Bulldogs, setting them on and calling them off at will." Zéspedes to Valdés, St. Augustine, Mar. 24, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1547-68.

<sup>67</sup> For references to McGillivray as "el Mestizo," see Zéspedes to José de Gálvez, St. Augustine, Jan. 18, 1786, PLC, reel 2, ff. 875-77; Zéspedes to Ezpeleta, St. Augustine, Feb. 6, 1786, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1429-33; Zéspedes to Sonora, St. Augustine, Mar. 30, 1787, PLC reel 3, ff. 269-75; Zéspedes to Sonora, St. Augustine, Jun. 3, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 487-90; Zéspedes to Valdés, St. Augustine, May 9, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1775-77. In and of themselves, the references to McGillivray as a "mestizo" may not have signified a particular disrespect among Spanish officials, for European observers routinely placed non-Europeans into racial categories in their discourse. However, in the particular case of McGillivray, the label "el Mestizo" usually appears alone, as name or proper noun, and not simply a descriptor, when Zéspedes is frustrated

Spanish officials' lack of respect for the Creeks fostered distrust between the two and weakened the Spanish-Creek alliance at a crucial juncture. Spaniards could not conceive of the Creeks as equal partners in a diplomatic and military relationship, and therefore could not establish a lasting partnership based upon reciprocity and mutual respect. Colonial governors' inability to control and manipulate Creeks made them anxious and unable to trust them as an autonomous ally. At a moment in which Spain and the Creeks together could have contained U.S. expansion, imperial officials prioritized immediate needs over long-term strategy. The governors of Louisiana and both Floridas all insisted that McGillivray make peace as quickly as possible and only fight the Americans on purely defensive terms. The problem with this strategy was that armed Americans outnumbered the combined forces of Spanish troops and Creek warriors, and, in the absence of increased Crown aid, had greater material resources with which to wage a conflict. By waiting for the fight to come to them, both Spaniards and Creeks risked becoming overwhelmed. Despite the vulnerability of Florida and Louisiana to unsanctioned Anglo-American settlement, the colonial governors and their superiors insisted upon a conservative policy of defense that would prove untenable.

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with or denigrating McGillivray. The quoted statement from Zéspedes symbolizes the general treatment of McGillivray as a pawn or an agent, and an inferior one at that. In the eyes of the governors, his main utility lay in his influence among the Creek towns rather than any particular intellectual merits. He is most certainly not accorded the respect that officials would normally accord to a head of state, which is akin to how Spanish officials perceived him, as a figure which possessed supreme political authority among the Creek towns. Rather, Miró, O'Neill, Zéspedes, and others routinely wrote to him as superiors, attempting to give him orders and directions rather than collaborative advice. "Parece que Mac-Gilivray haze su posible, pero concivo respetuosamente, que necesita de cooperantes blancos, perspicazes, prudentes, y bien afectos, para impedir el que los Georgians se alzen con el comercio Yndio." Zéspedes to Marquis de Sonora, St. Augustine, Mar. 22, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 180-83. "Lo variable de este sujeto en sus propuestas...me estimula a juzgar a convendrá con disimulo usar de los medios mas eficazes á que conozcan los Yndios su poco valimento con nuestro gobierno..." O'Neill to Miró, Pensacola, Jun. 4, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1829-35.

Even when fully aware of Georgia's provocations, Spanish officials criticized Creek measures of self-defense. Granted, Spain needed to avoid open warfare with the United States, but it could have at least attempted to utilize diplomacy to solve the matter in favor of its allies. They could have tried to pressure the Georgians into restraint, or have defended Creek actions as self-defense. Instead, Spanish officials apologized for the Creeks as if they were an embarrassment, insisted that the gunpowder was not intended for military use, and browbeat the Creeks for their attacks on Georgia. Spanish governors continued to pressure McGillivray to sign a peace treaty with the Americans, despite the fact that such a treaty would undoubtedly occasion the cession of a large tract of land. Neither they nor Spanish diplomats made such requests of U.S. officials. Rather than blame the aggressors for their provocations, Spanish officials chose to blame the victims of American assaults.<sup>68</sup>

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Ironically, despite the mutual hostility between Americans and Creeks, in diplomacy they suffered from variants of the same problem. Like Creeks, Americans chafed at their inability to force Europeans to negotiate and trade with them on their own terms. The British government refused to grant American produce and manufactures the same duties and tariffs they gave to their most favored trading partners. Americans demanded that Britons evacuate posts they held in the southern Great Lakes region, citing

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<sup>68</sup> Regarding Spanish apologies for Creek actions, Zéspedes wrote to Georgia Gov. George Mathews: "El Cruel modo en que los Salvajes, han dado Muerte a los desgraciados Victimas, que los cayeron entre Manos, deve sin duda exitar sentimientos de horror." The Georgians were "victims," while the Creeks were "cruel," "savage," and their actions prompted "sentiments of horror." While some of the harsher language of this letter may be explained away by the fact that Zéspedes was trying to avoid provoking the Georgians, it also shows that he, like other Spanish officials, was not willing to defend their Creek allies in a moment of crisis and proved all too willing to undermine their efforts and their credibility in the diplomatic arena. Zéspedes to Mathews, St. Augustine, Dec. 10, 1787, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1170-76.

Britain's relinquishing of its right to this territory in the Treaty of Paris of 1783. British officials promptly ignored them, aware that Americans lacked the strength or leverage to force the issue. Spanish insulted the Creeks in similar fashion, believing that Creeks' reliance upon them for arms and Creek hostility to the Americans gave them the ability to dictate to the Creeks. British officials in Canada behaved similarly with Ohio Valley Indians, refusing to give them official support or aid, and act which limited their success against the Americans. Going forward, the struggle of both Native peoples and the United States to observe their demands would serve as the defining feature of geopolitics in the trans-Appalachian region.

Unfortunately for Native peoples, over the course of the ensuing decades, they proved unable to solve this dilemma, while the United States gradually acquired the strength and leverage to secure more and more of what they wanted in the international arena. The result would be that, by the end of the 1810s, Europeans would abandon the trans-Appalachian region to the United States. As Americans grew fat off of European trade and found recognition from the European community of nations, Native peoples saw these things denied to them. Only when Native peoples found themselves shut off from outside world did Americans finally secure their much-desired conquest of the trans-Appalachian region.

In the immediate term, however, Creeks actually proved Spaniards wrong about their dependence on Spanish support and resisted becoming the pliable tools of Spanish agents. Although Spanish restrictions posed a serious challenge, through creative adaptation Creeks at least partially solved their dilemma, thanks to the intervention of British colonists from the Bahamas. Enterprising men on the islands saw U.S. aggression



and Spanish circumspection as an economic opportunity in the Indian trade. Promising munitions and a trade in British goods on more liberal terms than Panton and Leslie, British colonists captured the attention of McGillivray and other Creeks. Faced with a challenge to both their territorial sovereignty and their established networks, Creeks branched out yet again, restoring connections with British imperial networks. They did so in the same manner as with the Spanish, by traversing the sea to reach an island colony, overcoming Britons' evacuation from the proximate mainland by taking to the ocean. Through their aggressiveness in diplomacy and network building, Creek actions continued to reverberate at the highest levels of British, Spanish, and American government, shaping affairs in not just the region, but also the wider Atlantic world.

### Chapter 3

#### **Vagrants and Vagabonds: Maritime Travel and the Prospect of Reopening a British Network, 1787-89**

In May 1790, a vessel pulled into dock at Halifax, Nova Scotia carrying two Lower Creeks, three Chickamauga Cherokees, including an interpreter named Wohsi or Moses Price, and an American Loyalist named William Augustus Bowles.<sup>1</sup> The Lower Creeks and Cherokees were looking for assistance, both in the form of diplomacy and goods, against an expansionistic Anglo-American republic. Their ultimate goal was not Nova Scotia, but Quebec, where they hoped to meet the governor-general of British Canada, Lord Dorchester. Spanish officials and Loyalist merchants having failed them, they turned once again toward Great Britain and they would not wait for the British to come to them. They wanted Dorchester to recommend them to the Court of St. James, where they would obtain an audience with King George III. At once, they would cut out the unreliable middlemen in transatlantic diplomacy and trade while forging a personal relationship with the British Crown.

The journey to Nova Scotia, Quebec, and eventually Britain represented an aggressive Creek and Cherokee-led initiative to repair lost diplomatic ties and harness them to support their territorial disputes with Americans. Preceding this, Lower Creeks formed connections colonists and merchants in the Bahamas, including Bowles, as a means of pursuing this agenda. Like the voyages to Havana years prior, Lower Creeks drove this push to traverse maritime space for the purpose of restoring lost connections,

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<sup>1</sup> The source for Moses Price's Cherokee name and his background information, including the positive identification that "Wosseo" (Wohsi) is in fact Moses Price, is William C. Sturtevant, "The Cherokee Frontiers, the French Revolution, and William Augustus Bowles," in Duane H. King, ed., *The Cherokee Nation: A Troubled History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 66-67.

this time with British colonists and officials rather than Spanish ones. In so doing, they hoped to hold British officials to promises made during the Revolution, to continue to honor their alliances with Creek *mēkkvlke* and Cherokee leaders, and to fulfill their promise to support them against Spaniards and Americans who sought to take advantage of them or seize their lands. These voyages revealed that maritime travel was not simply a phenomenon of the post Seven Years' War period, but had become a regular feature of Creek diplomacy, as they searched to maintain old connections via new routes.

### **CREEK INITIATIVES IN THE BAHAMAS**

After the British evacuation from all but the northernmost reaches of the North American mainland, Creeks who had developed relationships with British officials found themselves in a situation similar to that at the end of the Seven Years' War. Then, *mēkkvlke* who had cultivated ties with French and Spanish officials found themselves no longer able to easily access either. Now, the same had occurred with regard to *mēkkvlke* close to the British. However, as with Spain, the sea provided hope. Just fifty miles off the coast of Florida lay a British colony, the Bahamas, to which a number of British colonists and officials had evacuated after the war. Just as they crossed the Florida Strait to reach exiled Spanish officials and colonists in Cuba, they bridged the same strait in canoes and fishing vessels to reach Britons in the Bahamas.

The first documented instance of Creek travel to the Bahamas occurred in 1787, just two years after the evacuation of St. Augustine finalized. In April 1787, Brigadier General Archibald McArthur wrote to the British Home Secretary to report that three Creeks, upon "learning that Colonel Brown the late superintendant, & the late garrison of St. Augustine were here," made their way to Nassau "to see their old friends." During the

buildup to the British evacuation of St. Augustine, various Creeks had pledged to follow Brown and the British across the sea to the Bahamas. Although Brown had talked them out of relocating to Nassau, they had not given up on their commitment to traverse the waters to preserve their relationship with the colonel. The 1787 voyage demonstrated that their words were more than mere boasts. Creeks valued their connections to the outside world, particularly to those whose networks stretched across the Atlantic, providing them access to symbolic and material sources of strength. In the 1760s, they had overcome their fear of the ocean to maintain these connections. The journey to Nassau demonstrated that they would continue to brave the seas even after their initial cause for doing so, the Spanish departure from Florida, had been amended with the Spanish return.

Much as Spanish officials in Cuba did with their Creek visitors, McArthur and Brown resolved to provide them with gifts. McArthur confirmed “on their arrival [that] Colonel Brown and I, on account of the strong attachment of the Creeks to His Majesty’s interest, thought proper to make them the usual presents.” Like Spaniards in the 1760s and 1770s, Britain officials framed their actions as rewarding the loyalty of staunch allies. Undoubtedly, the parallels ran deeper. A desire to protect their turtle fishing vessels must have weighed upon the general and the former Indian agent, and they may have acted with an eye toward future intrigues. By continuing to cultivate good relations with them, McArthur and Brown would have kept Creek alliance networks, and the possibility of a Creek backed campaign to seize American or Spanish territory, open for the future.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> McArthur was the commanding officer at St. Augustine during that last few years of the British regime. He along with Tonyn presided over the evacuation, and he joined Brown in meeting with Native visitors. Thus, he knew Creek leaders well, and his involvement in the ceremonies at Nassau served as the

For Creeks, the trip to Nassau fit the pattern established by voyages of the Apalachee Creeks and Cowetas to Cuba decades earlier. Just as Creek hunters in southwestern Florida sought out Cuban fishing vessels to make their way to the island, these hunters importuned Bahamian turtle hunters to carry them off to New Providence. McArthur reported that the Creeks visitors “had been hunting at the point of Florida about two months ago, [when they] met with A turling vessel from this place.” The incident confirms that traversing the sea via colonial vessels had become an accepted form of communication and alliance-building among Creeks by the mid-eighteenth century. By this point, it did not even matter that these individual Creeks had never braved the waters of the deep themselves. McArthur noted that the party undertook the journey despite the fact that “they had never been at sea.” These Creek hunters must have been aware that dozens if not hundreds of Creeks had made similar trips to Cuba. From Cuba’s example, they also knew that a voyage to the Bahamas was potentially lucrative, as dozens of Creeks returned home year after year with thousands of pesos’ worth of gifts, both valuable in their own right and as symbols of powerful connections abroad.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, British officials do not seem to have meticulously documented this expedition as Spaniards did the first Cuban voyages. McArthur did not note the names of the Creek visitors, the communities they came from, or the goods that he gave them. Aside from his brief mention, no other report of the visit appears to exist in British, Spanish, or American archives. However, like Spanish officials, McArthur probably did not anticipate that Creeks become frequent visitors to the islands. He probably figured

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natural extension of his prior duties and relationship to the Creeks. See Archibald McArthur to Lord Sydney, Nassau, April 13, 1787, NA-UK, CO 23-27, f. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

that the matter would end with the Creeks returning home, satisfied with their presents. Though he appeared to feel some sympathy for the Creeks on account of his and his peers' abandoning them during the evacuation, McArthur does not seem to have encouraged them to return. Brown's fevered attempt to dissuade Creeks from following him to Nassau suggests that they did not relish providing for Creek visitors, as they did not anticipate their superiors in the imperial hierarchy approving of the expenditures that would occasion. In this respect, Britons in Nassau found themselves in a similar position to Spanish officials and colonists in Havana. As in that situation, Creeks would not prove so easy to get rid of. More voyages would ensue in future, as Creeks refused to let go of their British ties. Yet not all Britons would prove as reluctant to welcome the Creeks as their Spanish peers. A number of figures, including the colony's own governor, would see in the Creek voyages a political and financial opportunity.

### **LOYALIST DESERTER TURNED GO-BETWEEN**

The above analysis has demonstrated that Creeks acted as the driving force behind their connections to the Bahamas. However, most scholars have attributed the impetus beyond these voyages and the transatlantic journey that followed to the Loyalist William Augustus Bowles. The enigmatic and charismatic figure would travel around various Lower Creek communities at the tail end of the eighteenth century, falsely portraying himself to outsiders as "Director General of the Creek Nation," and later, that of the "United Creek and Cherokee Nation." He inserted himself into Lower Creek diplomacy

in the late 1780s, and played a major role in Creek relations with the outside world until 1803, when Spanish authorities captured and imprisoned him in a Havana dungeon.<sup>4</sup>

However, the reality was that Bowles operated as little more than a pawn of the Lower Creeks and Chickamauga Cherokees. They suffered his presence because they thought that he could provide them with the access to British networks political and commercial. While captivating in its own right, the true historical import of Bowles's career as an intriguer and go-between lies in its ability to reveal the creativity and determination that Creeks, and to a lesser extent Cherokees, demonstrated in moving to forge, maintain, and harness the power of transatlantic networks. Bowles's rise and fall from prominence completely coincided with his utility to Creek and Cherokee diplomatic goals.<sup>5</sup>

Spanish and American attempts to apprehend Bowles dogged his entire time in Creek country and point to the reason why certain Lower Creek communities insisted on protecting Bowles: they viewed him as a pliable counterweight to Spanish and American interests. Both saw in him the threat of foreign influences, state-backed or not, gaining a foothold in what they considered their territory, threatening their economic and political interests in the region. They feared he would encourage Creeks and other Native peoples to defy their demands, raid their plantations and farms, and attack their inhabitants. Traders and merchants worried that Bowles's connections would steal their markets.

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<sup>4</sup> The two most comprehensive overviews of Bowles's exploits in Creek country are J. Leitch Wright, *William Augustus Bowles: Directory General of the Creek Nation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967) and Gilbert C. Din, *War on the Gulf Coast: The Spanish Fight against William Augustus Bowles* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012). Recently, a brief section on Bowles was also featured in Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), ch. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Rayna Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe," *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1988): 30.

Officials, particularly in Spanish ports, resented his flouting of commercial restrictions and the threat that posed to their customs duties and cuts of profits. Piracy became another concern, as Bowles and the Creeks might harbor privateers and rogues seeking shelter astride Spanish trade routes. Bowles intimidated Americans and kept Spanish officials, who had been lukewarm in their support, eager to placate Lower Creek leaders.

Having Bowles around benefited Creek in other ways as well. His presence prevented Alexander McGillivray from monopolizing connections to the outside world. His ties to Bahamian merchants, if they had ever fully blossomed, would have provided a source of trade goods and weapons that could have aided them in their struggles with the Americans. Most importantly, Bowles had an uncanny ability to worm his way into European courts through his charm and gift for performance. Many Native peoples recognized that he could draw the attention of the British Empire to their plight. Yet, Bowles was powerless without his Creek backers. His entire relevance in the Atlantic world depended upon his supposed ability to command the loyalties of Indian nations. As long as Lower Creeks could gain something from it, it behooved them to play into that charade, with the full knowledge that they could dismiss Bowles if he ever became a problem.

Scholarly opinions concerning Bowles tend to fall along polar extremes, with some completely dismissing him as an intriguer with few genuine ties to Creeks, and others taking his pretensions to Creek and even Cherokee leadership at face value. Worse, their evaluations have tended to turn on the opinions of Europeans and Euro-Americans, rather than a careful analysis of the words and actions of his Creek associates and observers. Those who have a favorable take of Bowles fall in line with his British



partisans, and those who consider him a total fraud follow the tone of Spanish officials and the merchants under their protection.<sup>6</sup>

In its fixation on Bowles's veracity, or lack thereof, this historiography misses the most significant and one of the most compelling facets of Bowles's history. Without questioning the self-interested motives of Bowles or his penchant for exaggeration and lies, one can observe that some of his claims actually reflected opinions and desires current among many Lower Creeks. This is not to say that Bowles was actually "Director General of the Creek Nation." Nor is it to suggest that Bowles was some sort of Creek liberator. Bowles hoped to co-opt Creek power and Creek territory in order to glorify himself and fulfill his political ambitions. However, he derived his attacks on Spanish and American officials from genuine Creek complaints regarding trade, diplomacy, territoriality, and sovereignty. That Bowles gained any traction at all in his quest for power and influence owed to his ability to tap into Creek and Cherokee discontent, and his ability to give voice to their protests at the highest levels of the British government.

Bowles's time in Creek Country began as a teenage deserter from the British garrison stationed at Pensacola during the American Revolution. Running away from

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<sup>6</sup> Regarding scholarship that depicts Bowles as a charlatan, the foremost example is Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*. Works whose authors take Bowles's most outlandish pretensions seriously are Wright, *William Augustus Bowles* and Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*. Wright moderates his stance on Bowles and considers Lower Creeks perspective in a more nuanced fashion, in Wright, "Creek-American Treaty of 1790: Alexander McGillivray and the Diplomacy of the Old Southwest," *GHQ* 51, no. 4 (Dec. 1967): 392-93.

David Narrett provides the most balanced and critical analysis of Bowles, seeking to transcend the debate over Bowles as "either Creek savior or fraud." Instead, Narrett describes him as "an Anglo adventurer striving in mercurial fashion to bridge the colonial-native divide and to remake Indian life." However, Narrett does not account for Creek manipulation of Bowles, viewing the Loyalist as being the mastermind of "his cause". See Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 217, 221.

Lyle N. McAlister also offers a more balanced interpretation, but his work lacks ethnohistorical analysis and provides very little insight into Creek motivations. See McAlister, "The Marine Forces of William Augustus Bowles and His 'State of Muskogee' Initiative: Illustrative Documents," *FHQ* 32, no. 1 (Jul. 1953): 3-27; McAlister, "William Augustus Bowles and the State of Muskogee," *FHQ* 40, no. 4 (Apr. 1962): 317-28.

home to enlist in the Maryland Provincial Regiment in 1777 at the age of thirteen, Bowles may have been looking for adventure. He found little of it at first, with the regiment sentenced to waste away in one of the most despised posts in British America. Sometime in 1778, Bowles applied for leave to go out into town. This fortuitous decision brought him into contact with a Creek leader who had come to trade at Pensacola. Bowles would later claim that he had fallen in with a figure named Setuthlee Mēkko, though no known source corroborates his existence. Whatever the case, Bowles never returned to the garrison, accompanying his Creek charges back to his community, where according to Bowles, Setuthlee Mēkko cared for and protected him until his death a few years later.<sup>7</sup>

Despite knowing very little about Setuthlee Mēkko or whomever made the decision to bring Bowles back to the southern margins of Creek country, one can surmise that his accepting Bowles into his community formed part of a strategy of strengthening connections with British officials and colonists. The communities along the Flint River and the lower reaches of the Chattahoochee were not very influential among the Lower Creeks, taking a back seat to leaders from Coweta, Cusseta, and towns further upstream. Both they and the Miccosukee towns of the Florida panhandle<sup>8</sup> lacked strong ties to either

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<sup>7</sup> For Bowles's early history, see Zéspedes to Gov. George Handley, St. Augustine, October 10, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 846-48; Bowles to King George III, London, [no date, ca. January 3, 1791], NA-UK, Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 4-9, ff. 5-18; Bowles to Esteban Miró, Aboard the Ship *Mississippi* [New Orleans harbor], May 26, [1792], PLC r. 6, ff. 769-81. The date on the letter to Miró is erroneously marked as the year 1791. Also see Benjamin Baynton, *The Authentic Memoirs of William Augustus Bowles...* (London: R. Faulder, 1791), 1-23; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 114-15; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 22-23; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 211; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 1-13.

<sup>8</sup> Most authors refer both the peoples in the Alachua prairie and in the Florida panhandle as "Seminoles" without differentiating between the two, despite the fact that these two groups differed culturally, linguistically, geographically, economically, and politically. To reflect this and to minimize confusion, I refer to the panhandle "Seminoles" as Miccosukees, in line with some contemporaries and after the principal town in the area. See James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), chs. 1-2; Gregory Evans Dowd, "The American Revolution to the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *The Handbook of North American Indians*, eds. Raymond Fogelson and Sturtevant (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 14:142-43; William C. Sturtevant and Jessica R. Cattelino, "Florida Seminole and Miccosukee," in *The Handbook of North American Indians*, 14:429-49;

British authorities or the American rebels, but this Creek man attempted to take advantage of the chaos of war to strengthen his networks. Perhaps for this reason, he welcomed the young Bowles with open arms: by bringing a British subject into his community, an aspiring Creek leader could establish a strong connection to the outside world, independent of Okfuskee, Tallassee, Coweta, or Cusseta leaders. Bowles's mysterious benefactor likely looked at his arrival as a political opportunity.<sup>9</sup>

Speculation that Bowles married a Creek woman, the relation of an Anglo-Creek warrior named Kenhagee, further points to the advantages Creeks saw in forming connections with outsiders. Bowles himself functions as the source for this claim, via a biographical account that a Loyalist compatriot of his published in 1791.<sup>10</sup> Even if untrue, the claim articulate a common pattern in Creek relations with European and Euroamerican traders and political agents, the forming of alliances through marriage. The betrothing of Creek women to European or Euroamerican men offered a means of incorporating the latter into kinship networks, the fundamental fabric of political, social,

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Brent R. Weisman, *Unconquered People: Florida's Seminoles and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999); Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 125-26. For a discussion of the Muskogean language family, see Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, xiii-xvii.

<sup>9</sup> Tonyn to [William] Perryman and the Creek Scouting Party, St. Augustine, January 12, 24, and 31, 1777, NA-UK, CO 5-557, ff. 141, 161, and 167; Hawkins to Eustis, Tuckabatchee, September 21, 1811, in C.L. Grant, ed., *The Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins* [hereafter LJWBH] (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1980), II: 591-92.

For the relative status and influence of the Flint River and lower Chattahoochee towns, see Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and their World*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 64-66; H. Thomas Foster II, "The Yuchi Indians along the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers (1715-1836): A Synthesis," in *Yuchi Indian Histories Before the Removal Era*, ed. Jason Baird Jackson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 114-17. Ethridge describes the Flint River Creeks as "splinter groups" and "satellite towns," small communities residing on relatively isolated and poor quality land. Regarding Foster's work, the Yuchis were a Native people who, by Bowles's time, lived among the Lower Creeks. His argument that the Yuchis on the Flint River were politically marginal relative to the Yuchis on the Chattahoochee holds true for the Lower Creeks as well.

<sup>10</sup> Many secondary sources repeat the assertion that Bowles married Kenhagee's daughter as fact based primarily upon Baynton's account. However, David Narrett rightly critiques this work as a "propagandistic biograph[y]," an issue that I will address in chapter four. See Baynton, *Authentic Memoirs*, 22-23; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 211.

and economic connections in the Creek world. Not only did such ties cement political alliances by creating bonds between relatives and associates across societies, they facilitated Creeks access to property in the form of goods. As mentioned in chapter two, Creek matrilocality meant that marriage transformed a trader's property became the property of his wife's family. For a female relation of Kenhagee to marry Bowles would have been in keeping with how Creek families approached forging connections with outsiders that provided access to diplomatic and material capital. For Bowles to promote the notion of his marrying a Creek woman reflected this fundamental reality, inasmuch as it accorded with the expectations of his British audience. Native-trader marriages had proven so common that Europeans and Euroamericans recognized them as a sign of one's having formed powerful and lasting connections with a Native community. Bowles not only believed that his audience would accept his claims of marriage to a Creek woman, but he also thought that it would bolster his claims to political, economic, and military influence among Creeks.<sup>11</sup>

After spending some years in Creek country, Bowles rejoined his regiment in 1781, apparently under the cover of Creek reinforcements requested by the commander at Pensacola. He then slipped back into the ranks of the British garrison and accompanied it upon its evacuation to New York after the fall of the post to Spanish forces. Like other Loyalists, Bowles received an allotment of land in the Bahamas after the war as compensation for his service. Again like his compatriots, he found the islands a wretched, desolate place. Most newcomers received land of low quality, full of sand and rocks, unsuitable for planting. What arable land did exist could not sustain the intensive process

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<sup>11</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 12-13, 78, 83-84; Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 113; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 5, 30; 43-44; 114, 166, 194.

of plantation agriculture. The islands experienced a brief cotton boom during the initial wave of Loyalist migration, but soil exhaustion quickly ensued as crops drained the land of its meager resources.<sup>12</sup>

Even had the land proven better suited, Bowles seemed to have no interest in becoming a planter. Evidence indicates he put forth no effort or investment in agriculture. Rather, he occupied himself with restless intrigues and found that he possessed an uncanny ability to gain the ear of persons in power. The governor of the Bahamas, Lord Dunmore, and the merchant John Miller were the first of many influential figures whom Bowles gained access to. The manner in which their association began remains unclear, but the arrangement that developed among them had Bowles agreeing to use his connections among the Creeks to help Miller and his firm, Miller, Bonamy, and Co., establish a trade in deerskins. Eventually, both men would leverage their influence to obtain a land cession for Dunmore, a sort of consolation prize for the Ohio Valley land speculation he lost out on as royal governor of Virginia when the Revolution placed it out of his grasp.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For Bowles's departure from Creek country and his rejoining his regiment, see Baynton, *The Authentic Memoirs*, 28-36; Bowles to George III, London, [no date, ca. January 3, 1791], NA-UK, FO 4-9, ff. 5-18; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 22-23; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 13-16.

For Bowles's receiving land in the Bahamas, and his dissatisfaction with such, see Baynton, *The Authentic Memoirs*, 45-46; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 23-24; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 19-23. For the sufferings of Loyalists in the Bahamas in general, see Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 220-34; Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 1:196-97.

<sup>13</sup> For Bowles's association with Lord Dunmore, see Baynton, *The Authentic Memoirs*, 49-52; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 24-28; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 237-38; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 211-12; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 26-28. Bowles and Dunmore left little to incriminate the governor in writing, but their association was an open secret to Bahamians, and much commented upon by the governor's political enemies. See Thomas Brown to Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, New Providence, [c. 1788], PLC, reel 3, ff. 1254-58; John Leslie to Zéspedes, St. Augustine, Oct. 3, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 818-21; Leslie to Alexander McGillivray, St. Augustine, Dec. 11, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 1105-08; William Panton to Esteban Miró, Pensacola, Feb. 12, 1789, PLC, reel 5, ff. 8-14. Some wayward followers of Bowles also testified to his involvement with the governor; see Hugh McDonald et. al., declaration sworn to at St. Augustine, Nov. 21, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 488-96 and 1004-12.

Every single scholarly analysis of the Bowles-Dunmore-Miller venture treats it as their brainchild, but evidence suggests that they in fact reacted to Creek initiatives. As indicated earlier, Lower Creeks actually took the lead in forming connections with the Bahamas. The April 1787 voyage predated most Creeks' contacts with Bowles and had nothing to do with him or any plots of his, relating instead to Creek ties with officials formerly stationed in East Florida. Dunmore, as the colony's governor, certainly knew of the Creeks' arrival and his plans involving Creeks did not begin to form until after this visit. Moreover, although evidence does not indicate whether the Creek visitors demanded a regular trade and dialogue with British colonists, the history of their interactions with British officials and the purpose of similar journeys both maritime and terrestrial would certainly suggest as such. Indeed, it would have been highly anomalous of the Creeks to not request a resumption of trade. The more logical explanation of Dunmore, Bowles, and Miller's plans has them answering Creek pleas for a renewed connection with Britons. Just as Setuthlee Mēkko brought Bowles into Creek country, other Creeks probably influenced him to return to Creek country, albeit indirectly. While Bowles presented himself as a mastermind, it seems that at every step of the way he merely responded to Creek demands.

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For Dunmore's previous intrigues involving the Shawnees and land in the Ohio Valley, see Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 161-64; Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 189-95; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 228; Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, *A Documentary History of Dunmore's War, 1774* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1905); Jack M. Sosin, "The British Indian Department and Dunmore's War," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 74 (Jan. 1966), 34-50; Glenn F. Williams, *Dunmore's War: The Last Conflict of America's Colonial Era* (Yardley, Pa.: Westholme Publishing, 2013).

## MOTIVES OF BOWLES, MILLER, AND DUNMORE

Bowles, Dunmore, and Miller had multiple reasons for following up on the Creek visit. Political motivations had a heavy influence over their scheme. The sudden influx of Loyalists into the Bahamas had split the colony into two factions. The first, known as the “Old Settlers,” mostly represented established interests on the island, though the name was a bit of a misnomer as a number of the Loyalist newcomers ended up supporting them. The Old Settlers backed the existing political establishment, where the colonial assembly held but limited amounts of power relative to the governor, and had Dunmore as their champion. The other faction, the “New Settlers,” mainly consisted of Loyalist refugees. Hailing from the American mainland, where colonial assemblies had a significant degree of power prior to U.S. independence, the Loyalists chafed at Dunmore’s domineering style and sought a greater role for elective government. Ironically, many of the same Loyalists who had lost their property and livelihoods defending the Crown and its governors against rebellious colonial assemblies chose to fight against a royal governor on behalf of the Bahamian House of Commons, the difference of course being that the Loyalists were not advocating a complete rejection of metropolitan rule.<sup>14</sup>

Panton, Leslie, and Co., who held a store in Nassau run by Thomas Forbes, supported the New Settler faction and the House of Commons. Despite the fact that both were newcomers, both Bowles and Miller supported the Old Settlers and Dunmore. Bowles testified against the New Settlers, claiming that they were plotting to seize the government of the Bahamas and declare their independence from Great Britain. Miller

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<sup>14</sup> For an overview of the political factionalism in the Bahamas during the 1780s and 1790s, see Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1: chs. 12-13; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 24; Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 220-34; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 21-23.

was one of Dunmore's key supporters and served on the Governor's Council in Nassau. By supporting Miller, Bonamy, and Co. in their attempt to supplant Panton and Leslie, Dunmore would weaken his enemies while empowering key allies, and gaining through them economic and political influence in Florida. Bowles believed he would have his own political ambitions served as well, positioning himself as a key cog in the affairs of the broader region by wielding authority among the Creeks and Seminoles and commanding the respect of British, Spanish, and U.S. officials.<sup>15</sup>

John Miller had other reasons for being involved as well. Like Panton, he had been involved in the Indian trade prior to the American Revolution. He was a resident of West Florida as early as 1770, where he represented the town of Pensacola in the colonial assembly that briefly existed in West Florida in late 1778. He served as a justice of the peace there as late as 1781. He also appears as a trader at the Creek town of Yuchi in 1776, cooperating with John Stuart and the British Indian agents who sought to mobilize Creeks against the rebellious colonists. Sometime after the fall of Pensacola to Spanish forces in 1781, Miller fled to the Bahamas. While he seems to have reinvented himself as a merchant to the colonial population, trouble followed him across the channel in the form of a Spanish invasion.

Spain occupied the Bahamas in 1782-3, and Miller's mercantile activities made him a target of suspicion. Like many merchants throughout the war, Miller profited off the war by outfitting privateers and selling off prizes. Spanish officials viewed the Bahamas as a privateer base that threatened Spanish shipping as a result. As part of the

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<sup>15</sup> For Bowles's testimony, see Bowles affidavit, New Providence [Nassau], April 9, 1788, NA-UK, CO 23-27, ff. 158-59. This document also demonstrates Miller's membership in the Bahamian Governor's Council; further evidence is in John Miller Testimony, Elm Court, Middle Temple [London], November 20, 1786, NA-UK, CO 23-26, ff. 227-28; William Wylly for Panton, Leslie, and Company to William Wyndham Grenville, London, June 19, 1789, PLC reel 5, ff. 295-99.



surrender agreement with Bahamian colonists, Spanish authorities demanded that all privateers disarm and surrender their munitions to the provisional government. One of Miller's privateers, the *Unicorn*, was out at sea at the time of the invasion and continued its privateering activities. When the *Unicorn* assaulted a Spanish ship, interim governor Antonio Claraco placed Miller under house arrest and accused him of orchestrating the attack.

Charging Miller with a violation of the terms of the capitulation, Claraco confiscated his property and shipped him to Havana. There, Spanish authorities held Miller as a prisoner for thirteen months. Miller fought his treatment, claiming that Spanish authorities had only used the charges as a pretext to seize his considerable property. After his release, Miller began a campaign to recover his lost property, demanding that the Spanish government compensate him close to \$76,000. Miller conducted his campaign so publicly and with such vehemence, repeatedly insulting Spanish authorities in print, that he seems to have ruined any chance British colonists in the Bahamas had of obtaining compensation for losses during the occupation. Miller's clerk and partner, Bromfield Bonamy, supported Miller's claims in a written statement after the war. Bonamy would go on to become Miller's business partner, and together the two would invest in the Bowles venture. Bowles's scheme offered a perfect opportunity for the vengeful duo, allowing them strike back at the Spaniards, recoup some of Miller's losses, and parley Miller's expertise and means into a substantial role in the Creek deerskin trade.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For evidence of Miller's residency in West Florida, and his participation in the colonial assembly, see Clinton L. Howard, "Colonial Pensacola: The British Period Part III: The Administration of Governor Chester, 1770-1781," 392; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 27. For evidence of Miller as a justice of the

## MOTIVES OF THE FLINT RIVER AND LOWER CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER CREEKS

While Bowles was concocting schemes in the Bahamas, the Flint River and Lower Chattahoochee River communities grew even more isolated in the aftermath of the American Revolution. The ties they held with St. Augustine dissipated with the British evacuation, an event that these communities faced with trepidation. Unlike most other Creeks or the Alachua Seminoles, they never formed strong ties to Spanish officials or Panton, Leslie, and Company. Nor did they gravitate towards the Americans like Okfuskee and Tallassee. The cases of the father-son duo of Kenhagee and Okaiegigie, who went by William and Thomas Perryman, respectively, exemplify their leanings. As early as 1777, Kenhagee led Creek scouting parties in the service of British East Florida Governor Patrick Tonyn. Benjamin Hawkins, the U.S. agent to the Creeks, would later remark that “Kenhegee (commonly called Perryman) [was] a man highly esteemed by the British agents during the war of revolution.” Kenhagee’s son Okaiegigie composed a petition to Governor Tonyn complaining of King George’s decision “to throw away this Land” to “his and our Enemies,” the Americans and Spaniards. Instead of accepting the new order, Kenhagee and Okaiegigie began associating with outlaws and rogues infesting the area along the St. Marys River. Poorly policed and lacking even the semblance of

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peace, see Henry Smith Affidavit, Pensacola, June 1781, NA-UK, GCP, no. 9923. For evidence of Miller as a Creek trader, see David Taitt to John Stuart, [Little Tallassee?], July 7, 1776, in RC, 212-13. For Miller’s conflict with the Spanish occupying force in Nassau, and his campaign for compensation, see John Miller Memorial to Lt. Gen. Alexander Leslie, New Providence [Nassau], July 24, 1782, GCP, no. 10,000; Bromfield Bonamy Testimony, New Providence [Nassau], March 11, 1785, NA-UK, CO 23-26, f. 129; Miller to Gov. John Maxwell, New Providence [Nassau], March 12, 1785, NA-UK, CO 23-26, ff. 109-10; James A. Lewis, *The Final Campaign of the American Revolution: Rise and Fall of the Spanish Bahamas* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 48-54, 91-92.

government authority, during the last few years of the war this region had attracted cattle rustlers and slave hunters who sought to plunder American and Loyalist estates alike.<sup>17</sup>

Kenhagee, Okaiegigie, and other Creeks in the region actively cooperated with Anglo cattle and slave rustlers, helping to facilitate the sale of their ill-gotten goods. In 1784, Timothy Barnard, a Georgian trader who lived among the Flint River communities, complained of “Chaps that Call themselves toreyes that ar frequently going By with negroes to sell to the Spaniards.” That same year, when Zéspedes arrived in St. Augustine, he quickly identified Okaiegigie as an accomplice of the St. Marys outlaws. John Linder, himself a reformed outlaw who had accepted Spanish protection and pardon, complained to Zéspedes of a “gang of Indians” affiliated with Daniel McGirtt. McGirtt was the principal figure behind slave and cattle rustling in the region, and Creeks associated with him had plundered a great deal of property from Linder’s wife, including slaves and horses. Linder singled out Okaiegigie as the main culprit, claiming that “the Mestizo Indian named Thomas Perrymand arrived with a Party of Indians, and they set off with all of the effects of the said Wife [of Linder].” Zéspedes appealed to McGillivray and former British Indian agent Thomas Brown for help, and both men pressured Okaiegigie to restitute the property to Linder’s wife.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Okaiegigie [Thomas Perryman] and Fine Bones to Tonyn, Col. Archibald McArthur, and Brown, St. Augustine, May 15, 1783, NA-UK, CO, 5-560, ff. 309-10; Tanner, *Zéspedes in East Florida*, ch. 3; J. Leitch Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier, 1783-1815* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), 27-28.

Imprecise documentation has led scholars to confuse William Perryman and his son Thomas. Scholars dispute whether William or Thomas Perryman was the elder and thus which was the supposed “father-in-law” of Bowles. A letter from U.S. Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins settles this question by referring to Thomas Perryman as “a son of Kenhegee (commonly called Perryman).” See Hawkins to Eustis, Tuckabatchee, September 21, 1811, LJWBH, II: 591-2. See Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 238, n. 2 for more.

<sup>18</sup> Barnard to Maj. Patrick Carr, Flint River, April 13, 1784, in “Letters of Timothy Barnard,” 29-31; John Linder affidavit, St. Augustine, August 20, 1784, AGI, PC, leg. 150, f. 67; Zéspedes to O’Neill, with a copy of a note from Brown to Okaiegigie [Thomas Perryman], St. Augustine, September 2, 1784, AGI, PC, leg. 150, ff. 69-70; Zéspedes to McGillivray, St. Augustine, September 2, 1784, AGI, PC, leg. 158A, ff. 8-9;

By robbing citizens and colonists living under American and Spanish jurisdiction and drawing the ire of other Creek leaders in the process, the Flint River and Lower Chattahoochee River Creeks deepened their diplomatic isolation, even as they increased their material resources. Cattle and slave trading were profitable enterprises, but the gains came at the price of security. Their actions annoyed the more powerful communities that surrounded them and engendered a great deal of hostility. These developments made the return of Bowles in 1788 fortuitous. The various connections that the Flint River and Lower Chattahoochee River Creeks had built during the Revolution would now pay off, giving them an outlet to powerful outside forces. Indeed, the title that Kenhagee's son Okaiegigie would soon earn might have attested to the power of these connections. By the early 1800s, recorded testimony from Creek sources began to refer to Okaiegigie as Hopvyē Mēkko, or the "Far-Off" Mēkko, a name that possibly reflected his ability to bridge ties to distant lands.<sup>19</sup>

Lending credence to the notion that Bowles had formed some kind of bond with Kenhagee in the 1770s, Bowles went to the headman's *tvlofv* immediately after landing at Mosquito Inlet, some sixty miles south of St. Augustine. Armed with a supply of munitions and gifts, Bowles headed straight for the lower Chattahoochee. Although what transpired there remains a mystery, Bowles emerged from his visit more confident than ever. Kenhagee likely learned of his plan to introduce a direct trade between Creek country and the Bahamas and Bowles must have gathered intelligence of the discontent

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McGillivray to Zéspedes, Little Tallassee, October 2, 1784, AGI, PC, leg. 150, ff. 71-72; Zéspedes to Conde de Gálvez, St. Augustine, AGI, PC, leg. 158A, f. 6.

<sup>19</sup> For the appellation of the title Hopvyē Mēkko to Okaiegigie, alias Thomas Perryman, see Creek and Seminole Deposition, "Chackweithlee Bluff on the Appalachicola River" [better known as Prospect Bluff], August 22, 1804, PLC, reel 15, ff. 975-89.

pervading Creek country. Immediately thereafter Bowles traveled to Coweta, where he convinced its mēkko to let him issue a call for Creek leaders to meet with him there. The turnout was substantial. Bowles had arrived during the height of controversy over the Oconee River lands. The Coweta meeting even brought out a number of Cherokee leaders who had been fighting alongside disaffected Creeks against American colonists. Bowles's success stood to benefit Kenhagee greatly. If Bowles's plans bore fruit, Kenhagee and his tvlofv would become a crucial hub in a major exchange network connecting communities of the mainland to Britons in and across the Atlantic.<sup>20</sup>

### **THE COWETA MEETING: CREEKS EXPLORE NEW CONNECTIONS**

Although not well documented, the Coweta meeting attracted Creeks from far and wide. Even mēkkvlke with extant ties to American, Spanish, and Loyalist agents and traders came eager to hear what this man claiming to be a British agent had to say. In fact, many of the traders themselves attended the meeting, along with some Loyalist inhabitants of the Tensaw District. Bowles's ability to attract observers from all across Creek country reflects the dire situation that Spanish officials' stinginess placed Creek leaders and Loyalist traders alike, as well as the appeal that a British colonial presence held for the many inhabitants of the southeast who distrusted both Americans and Spaniards.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Mosquito Inlet is now known as Ponce de Leon Inlet and the "Indian River" that fed into it is now part of Florida's Intercoastal Waterway. See O'Neill to Miró, Pensacola, Jul. 23, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 0213-17; Pantón to Miró, Pensacola, Aug. 5, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 297-302; O'Neill to José de Ezpeleta, Pensacola, August 15, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 395-401; John Hambly to Leslie, San Juan Concepción, September 14, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 677-81; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 111-3, 114-8; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 25; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 29-30.

<sup>21</sup> The Tensaw District was located along the lower Tombigbee and Tensaw Rivers in present-day southern Alabama, on the edges of where Spanish West Florida met Upper Creek country. Spain, the Creeks, and eventually the United States all believed they had a claim to the area, and all three tried to exercise jurisdiction over the area at various times throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

At Coweta, Bowles's path first intersected with that of Alexander McGillivray, who serves as a barometer for general Creek interest in British networks emanating from the Bahamas. The foundering of McGillivray's relationship with Spanish officials had left him without reliable connections. As Bowles arrived in Coweta with ammunition, he must have seemed a godsend to McGillivray. McGillivray's own words about the meeting are not trustworthy, as he only wrote about his involvement long after the fact, and in a dissembling manner meant to justify his conduct to Panton and Spanish officials. Judging by his eagerness to embrace Bowles at the time, he probably thought Bowles was a British agent and hoped his arrival portended a renewal of relations between Creek leaders and Britain. This would have solved all of McGillivray's problems by creating a reliable diplomatic and exchange network, involving an imperial government he knew well, had connections with, and a personal affinity towards. Britain had the military and economic power to support the Creeks and presumably the will to halt American colonization. British officials were working to keep Americans out the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes region, holding out the possibility that they would extend those efforts to the southern trans-Appalachian region and Mississippi Valley.<sup>22</sup>

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centuries. British Loyalists, Anglo-Creeks, and Scots-Creeks comprised the brunt of its population. In a socioeconomic sense, they patterned Tensaw in the manner of a Euro-American settlement, devoting themselves to cattle ranching and plantation agriculture. Culturally, it remained at once Creek and Anglo-American. McGillivray himself established a plantation there in 1783, and his family was influential in the district for decades. The best analysis of this region is Gregory A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), ch. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Second-hand accounts of the meeting at Coweta can be found in O'Neill to Miro, Pensacola, July 23, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 213-17; Panton to Miró, Pensacola, August 5, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 297-302, 303-07; O'Neill to José de Ezpeleta, Pensacola, August 15, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 395-401. O'Neill's letters erroneously state that McGillivray travelled to Mosquito Inlet to meet with Bowles. Also see Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 116; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 25-6; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 29-30.

For British involvement in territory claimed by the United States, see Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, esp. chs. 1-3. The Colonial Office Papers for the Province of Quebec [NA-UK, CO 42] are littered with intelligence forwarded by Governor-General Lord Dorchester on Indian affairs in the United States, particularly the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley regions, in which various military and Indian agents discuss

McGillivray's decision to accept arms and ammunition from Bowles followed the Creek diplomatic tradition of diversifying one's connections. Despite serving as a partner of Panton and Leslie, official partners of the Spanish colonial administration in Louisiana and the Floridas, McGillivray chose to hedge his bets. Just as he had initially accepted partnerships in both Mather, Strother, and Company and Panton and Leslie, McGillivray took the opportunity to forge ties with Bowles. Unlike Creek leaders past, however, McGillivray did not view his new connections as negotiating leverage with Panton or Spanish officials. The mēkko did his best to keep his contacts a secret, sowing confusion among his partners. McGillivray had told West Florida Governor O'Neill in June 1788 that he "was going to the Lower Towns Concerning some reports there of a Strangers arrival," but remained conspicuously tight-lipped thereafter.<sup>23</sup>

McGillivray's silence left observers to speculate blindly as to his intentions and sowed distrust among the partners of the supposed Spanish-Creek-Loyalist alliance. In late July, as details of Bowles's expedition filtered in, O'Neill began to speculate that McGillivray had orchestrated Bowles's arrival in order to pressure Spain to allow a free port in Florida, where merchants could ship British goods to the Creeks duty-free. He latter suggested Panton's collusion in the matter, as he pushed for the removal of import duties on his goods prior to Bowles's arrival. O'Neill had always worried that both Panton and McGillivray would eventually betray Spanish officials in favor of British interests. The arrival of Bowles set off the governor's fears of conspiracy. He began to

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how best to support the Shawnees, Iroquois, and others against American aggression. The British Crown approve such measures, as long as actors on the ground handled them with discretion. The southeast did not factor into discussions originating in Quebec and Upper Canada until later. As of 1788-9, Dunmore and the Bahamian Loyalists were the only ones agitating for imperial involvement in the region.

<sup>23</sup> McGillivray to O'Neill, Little Tallassee, June 22, 1788, PLC, reel 4, f. 71.

grow alarmist, reporting rumors that claimed McGillivray had recruited an expedition of five hundred Loyalists from the Bahamas “to wage War on the Americans of Georgia.” Eventually, Louisiana Governor Miró confronted McGillivray, claiming that his contacts with Bowles violated “the agreements” he made at the 1784 Pensacola congress and that McGillivray had “not fulfilled the trust” he had placed in him.<sup>24</sup>

Already suspicious of him, the Bowles affair could have led Spanish officials into active opposition against McGillivray. The meager, underfunded Spanish garrisons did not pose a substantial threat to Creeks, but Spanish officials could have sought to depose or assassinate McGillivray in favor of a more pliable *mēkko*. O’Neill had even suggested such a plan some months earlier, and it would not have been difficult for the Louisiana government to place a bounty on McGillivray’s head. Sufficient enticements and offers of support likely could have persuaded any number of Chickasaw, Choctaw, or even some Creek leaders to organize an assassination. Surprise attacks and ambushes always threatened travellers throughout the region and McGillivray’s frequent journeys on diplomatic and commercial business rendered him vulnerable. Even though he had negotiating leverage with Spanish officials, McGillivray’s clout did not make him indispensable.<sup>25</sup>

McGillivray also had to reckon with Pantón, who was both annoyed and frightened by the potential implications of his actions. Justifiably concerned that Spanish officials would suspect him of being behind the Bowles expedition, Pantón demanded

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<sup>24</sup> O’Neill to Miró, Pensacola, June 4, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1829-35; O’Neill to Miró, Pensacola, June 22, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 73-76; O’Neill to Miró, Pensacola, July 23, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 213-17; O’Neill to Diego de Vegas, Pensacola, July 26, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 230-34; O’Neill to Ezpeleta, Pensacola, August 15, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 395-401; Miró to McGillivray, New Orleans, December 13, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 1109-11.

<sup>25</sup> O’Neill to Miró, Pensacola, Jun. 4, 1788, PLC, reel 3, ff. 1829-35.



answers as to why McGillivray chose to get involved with Bowles. These suspicions could have lead to the Spanish government revoking Panton and Leslie's contract and confiscating all of his and the company's property. He demanded that McGillivray assert that he acted alone regarding Bowles, so as to absolve Panton, Leslie, and Company of all presumption of intrigue.<sup>26</sup>

Surprisingly, Panton's fears did not seem to extend to worries that McGillivray would dissolve or compromise their partnership. Panton alone remained convinced that McGillivray would not abandon him. This was perhaps wishful thinking. In September 1788, McGillivray resigned his 12.5 percent interest in the company. His given reason stated that with his "attention being wholly engaged about the concerns of my people, it could not be in my power to be of any essential service to your business." This resolution did not faze Panton. He continued to regard McGillivray as a partner and chose to interpret the resignation of his shares as a gesture to protect the company, "as proceeding from his love of us." His true motives were probably less noble. McGillivray had never really played an active role in managing company business. Thus, it is doubtful that McGillivray felt guilty about it not being "in his power" to take an active role in the company's affairs. Instead, the shares he functioned as a bribe intended to secure his influence with Spanish officials and his fellow Creeks. McGillivray's resignation of the shares signaled his distancing himself from his alliance with Spain and the company.<sup>27</sup>

Like other Creek leaders, McGillivray likely intended to place himself in a position to benefit from competition between the two companies. He must have known

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<sup>26</sup> Panton to McGillivray, Pensacola, Aug. 2, 1788 and Aug. 12, 1788, quoted in James Innerarity to John Forbes, Pensacola, November 22, 1806, PLC, Reel 4, ff. 276-77.

<sup>27</sup> McGillivray to Panton, Little Tallassee, Sep. 20, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 747-55.

that Miller intended to supplant Panton, as Bowles began to denounce Panton and Leslie at every opportunity. At the Coweta meeting, Bowles had told the attendees “that [Panton] had given them a hard trade and that he will procure Merchants [who] will give them goods cheaper.” Due to McGillivray’s presence at this meeting, the statement could not have escaped his notice. By withdrawing his allegiance, McGillivray could force both companies into a position where they vied for his favor in their bid to destroy one another. Panton’s optimism smacked of willful ignorance. Perhaps trying to convince himself more than anyone, Panton asserted that McGillivray remained “loyal” to Spain and his company. Spanish officials continued to have their doubts.<sup>28</sup>

### **POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS**

Like McGillivray, the other participants in this burgeoning network had clear plans for how they sought to turn it to their advantage. The Creek leaders on the Flint and lower Chattahoochee Rivers sought to function as crucial links between other Creek communities further north and west and British merchants and officials. Their control of transit and communication routes between the Florida peninsula and Creek country proved crucial, as it forced all supplies and information from the Bahamas to pass through their hands. A number of these figures accompanied Bowles back to Mosquito Inlet on the east coast of Florida. Philatouchee, the Afro-Creek *mēkko* of Chehaw, and John Galphin, a Scots-Creek who lived along the lower Chattahoochee, served as his escort. Bowles would return to Nassau while they waited at Laurel Grove, a plantation on the St. Johns River, for him to return with more goods. In addition, “two Cusseta Indian

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<sup>28</sup> Panton to Leslie, Pensacola, November 20, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 991-96; Panton to Miró, Pensacola, August 5, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 297-302.

Mestizos” returned with Bowles to Nassau. Their accompaniment served multiple purposes for the parties involved. For Bowles, they allowed him demonstrate his Creek connections to colonists and officials in the Bahamas. For the Creeks themselves, it allowed them to form their own personal connections with Miller and Dunmore, while acquiring the prestige and political capital that maritime travel would grant them. The potential status derived from maritime travel proved particularly important for less noteworthy Creeks aspiring to political leadership, as these “Cusseta Indian Mestizos” almost certainly were. Thomas Brown, the former British Indian agent, functioned as the source documenting their arrival in Nassau. The fact that Brown could not name them is significant, implying that he did not know who they were. Considering his extensive experience, Brown would likely have known any person of significance among the Creeks.<sup>29</sup>

Men such as the two Cussetas formed the core of the group that worked to form ties with Bowles: Lower Creeks, generally of mixed heritage, who were either lesser members of the principal etvlwvlke, Coweta and Cusseta, or leading figures from less important communities. In particular, the communities on the Flint River, in Apalachee, and the neighboring Chattahoochee River towns of Chehaw and Osochee jumped at the chance to forge connections with Bowles. Linguistic and ethnic diversity might have

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<sup>29</sup> Hambly to Leslie, San Juan Concepción, September 14, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 677-81; Andrew Fitch Testimony, St. Marys, September 21, 1788, quoted in Richard Lang to Zéspedes, St. Marys, September 22, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 774-7; Brown to Zéspedes, New Providence [Nassau], no date [ca. late 1788], PLC, reel 3, ff. 1254-58.

For more on Philatouchee, see Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 131-33; Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 236-37; Cameron B. Strang, “Indian Storytelling, Scientific Knowledge, and Power in the Florida Borderlands,” *WMQ* 70, no. 4 (Oct. 2013), n. 54. The source for Philatouchee’s status as mēkko of Chehaw is Bartolomé Benitez Gálvez, St. Augustine, April 6, 1790, East Florida Papers [hereafter EFP], National Archives, Washington, D.C., bnd. 385, docs. 1791-92, reel 173. For more on Galphin, see Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 100-01, 224-26.

divided these communities. Chehaw was a Hitchiti-speaking Yamasee town, while Osochee spoke Muskogee, and the Flint River hosted a patchwork of Muskogee, Hitchiti, and Yuchi towns. Yet their shared status as lesser communities among the Lower Creeks, often forced to play subordinate roles to Coweta and Cusseta in diplomacy, drew them together. Occasionally, they attempted to assert their independence from Coweta and Cusseta. During one incident in 1735, a British agent came among the Lower Creeks offering munitions if communities would agree to attack Spanish posts and their allies. Osochee and Chehaw accepted these gifts while other Lower Creek towns ignored them. Likewise, in Bowles and his associates these communities saw an opportunity to forge their own connections independent of Coweta and Cusseta, exhibiting greater autonomy while enhancing their status relative to other Creeks and throughout the greater region. They would remain committed to using Bowles long after other Creeks lost interest.<sup>30</sup>

With growing interest in Creek country, Bowles returned to Nassau and began organizing an expedition, in which he would lead a party of Loyalists from the Bahamas into the Florida peninsula. According to his plan, they would meet up with Lower Creeks to destroy Panton and Leslie's establishments. Meanwhile, Miller and Bonamy would send over a supply of goods that would serve as the foundation of a new commercial house. Using Kenhagee's *tvlofv* and the Flint, Chattahoochee, Apalachicola, and Wakulla Rivers as his home base, Bowles, Miller, and Bonamy would replace Panton and Leslie as the principal conduit of trade to Creeks, who would thus construct a new set of ties to

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<sup>30</sup> Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 27-30, 64-66; H. Thomas Foster II, "The Yuchi Indians along the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers (1715-1836): A Synthesis," in *Yuchi Indian Histories Before the Removal Era*, ed. Jason Baird Jackson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 101-22; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 52, 168; John Worth, "The Lower Creeks: Origins and Early History," in *Indians of the Greater Southeast*, ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Gainesville: University of Florida Press), 285-86.

British colonists and the British Empire while obtaining a supply of goods unmediated by Spanish officials.<sup>31</sup>

Creeks' intended connections with the Bahamas faltered on the ignorance of Bowles and the limits of his connections, both in Creek country and the British Empire. Upon returning to Indian River in September 1788, Bowles met up with a Creek packhorse train led by Galphin and outfitted by McGillivray. Bowles had told his Loyalist recruits that they were to establish plantations in Creek country, enticing them by promising them the fertile lands they lacked in the Bahamas. Instead, after handing over the supplies intended for McGillivray, he took them to ransack the Panton, Leslie, and Company store at San Juan Concepción on the St. Johns River, then move on to Panton's store at St. Marks. Bonamy, who had dropped him off at Mosquito Inlet with a load of goods, would return to Nassau, prepare a second cargo, and then rendezvous with Bowles at Apalachee. They would use the Panton and Leslie posts at San Juan Concepción and St. Marks as bases to open their trade and recruit Creek and Seminole allies.<sup>32</sup>

Bowles's targeting of the Seminoles comprised one of the largest flaws in his plan. The Seminoles living in the Alachua prairie harbored very different attitudes than any of the Upper or Lower Creeks. They got along well with the Spanish administration in Florida as well as Panton and Leslie and enjoyed a fairly peaceful relationship with colonists along the St. Johns River, including a brisk trade in cattle. American raids and

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<sup>31</sup> Hambly to Leslie, San Juan Concepción, September 28, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 784-91. For secondary accounts of Bowles's expedition, see Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 118-19; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 25-28; Wright, "Creek-American Treaty," 392-93; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 30-32.

<sup>32</sup> "Substance of a voluntary declaration made by Sundry [members] of Bowles's Banditti," St. Augustine, November 21, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 488-96 (mistakenly dated as August 21, 1788 in the abstract) and 1004-12; Testimony of John Loverd, Camden County, Ga., December 17, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 1121-27.

incursions were not yet a serious problem for the Seminoles. Therefore, they had little need for Spanish military assistance and little cause for dispute. Seminole leaders did not seem to care that Bowles had ties with Kenhagee any of the other Creeks on the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers, who lived nearly two-hundred miles away and had but infrequent contact with their communities. Just the opposite, Bowles's intention to stir up trouble in their territory annoyed them. Bowles seems to have not considered the possibility that Seminole leaders would oppose him, despite never having communicated or established ties with them. He failed to understand the limitations of his connections as well as the differences between the Creeks further north and the Alachua Seminoles. These factors caused Bowles serious problems upon his arrival.<sup>33</sup>

Seminole leaders asserted their power not by reaching out to form new connections, but by protecting the ones they already possessed and seeking to neuter the fledgling ties of their Creek neighbors. Rather than openly confront Bowles, the Seminoles endeavored to scare him off. Upon his arrival at Indian River, they spread word that a large Spanish and American expedition had organized to arrest him. This prompted Bowles to abandon his plan and flee inland. Unfamiliar with the geography of central Florida and unsure of what to do next, he wandered aimlessly around the peninsula's interior. Eventually, he came to the Alachua prairie, where he received a

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<sup>33</sup> The Seminoles' close ties to British planters and merchants began with a band of Oconees under Ahaya, or the Cowkeeper, who cooperated with Georgia Governor James Oglethorpe in raids on Spanish Florida during the 1740s. Ahaya's band moved into northern Florida shortly thereafter, setting the foundation for the Seminole communities. Anglo-Seminole ties strengthened after the British Crown gained control of East Florida in 1763, and continued even after Spain returned to the province, as a significant number of their British trading partners remained in the province under Spanish rule. See James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 11-23; Brent R. Weisman, *Like Beads on a String: A Culture History of the Seminole Indians in Northern Peninsular Florida* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), chs. 2-3; Weisman, *Unconquered People: Florida's Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 14-24; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulgee People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 48-52, 113-15.

polite but unsympathetic welcome. Bowles had promised his men that “the Indians” would welcome them and allow them to settle amongst them, but the aloofness of the Seminoles had a dispiriting effect on his expedition. Moreover, a member of the expedition discovered Bowles’s intention of leading the party on a raid of Pantón’s stores. Upon receiving this news, most of his party turned mutinous. Men deserted in droves, running off with the camp’s horses and goods in the middle of the night.<sup>34</sup>

Bowles’s expedition unraveled quickly in the wake of Seminole opposition. He tried to chase the deserters down, but they fled to the Pantón, Leslie, and Co. store at San Juan Concepción. The small Spanish force posted at the store protected them, refusing to release the deserters or the horses and goods they made off with. Had the Spanish detachment been larger, it probably would have arrested Bowles and the rest of his men. According to one of the deserters, “when [Bowles] left Pantóns Store he had but fifteen Men (who were generally sickly).” Defeated and dejected, Bowles and his party took refuge “at Perryman’s old Place on Flint Rivers.”<sup>35</sup>

Although devastating, the setbacks did not ruin Creek, Bowles, Miller, and Bonamy’s plans. Along the way to the Chattahoochee, Bowles met back up with Galphin and together they regrouped. They stopped to buy “500 head of Cattle” from John Kinnaird, another Scots-Creek from the lower Chattahoochee, and called on Kenhagee to

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<sup>34</sup> “Substance of a voluntary declaration,” St. Augustine, November 21, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 488-96 and 1004-12; Testimony of John Loverd, Camden County, Ga., December 17, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 1121-27.

<sup>35</sup> Bowles to Carlos Howard, St. Johns River [San Juan Concepción], November 15, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 932-33; William Pengree to Leslie, John Hambly’s [Pantón and Leslie store at San Juan Concepción], November 16, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 944-46; Cpl. Mateo Martin to Zéspedes, San Juan Concepción, November 18, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 947-58; Testimony of John Loverd, Camden County, Ga., December 17, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 1121-27; Bowles, letter to the editor of the *Lucayan Herald*, Nassau, Aug. 19, 1789, PLC, reel 5, ff. 1596-1604; Edward Forrester to Pantón, Apalachee, December 24, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 1154-56.

meet up with them. Altering their design, they decided to cooperate with the Lower Creeks in raids upon the Georgians, “in order to collect a full supply of Provisions.” They believed that McGillivray would support them, paying “forty pounds for each man” they killed. Despite a number of failures, Bowles and Galphin had successfully delivered their stock of arms and ammunition, earning merit among Lower Creeks and Chickamauga Cherokees that stood in great need of those supplies. This key achievement bolstered Creek and Cherokee faith that Bowles could provide access to the networks they desired.<sup>36</sup>

### **CREEK AND CHEROKEE PETITIONS**

A second set of meetings of Lower Creek and Cherokee leaders at Cusseta and near Coweta, respectively, revealed not only their growing faith in Bowles and his associates, but their ultimate ambition to use him as a conduit to restore communications with the British Crown. There they crafted two petitions to King George III, one by the Cherokees and one by the Lower Creeks. Both petitions bore the names of the most influential figures in their respective societies. Topping the list of Cherokee petitioners were Chickamauga leaders Uskwol Kata (Hanging Maw) and Tsiyu Kansini (Dragging Canoe). They were joined by the principal chief of the Upper Cherokees, Khvn Anita (Little Turkey). The Lower Creek signatories included the tvstvnkvke and mēkkvlke of Coweta, Cusseta, and Osochee, the tvstvnvke of Rē Kackv (Broken Arrow), and the mēkkvlke of Okmulgee, Eufaula, and Hitchiti. Attracted by the possibility restoring British ties and encouraged by the shipment of arms and ammunition, some of the most

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<sup>36</sup> Testimony of John Lovern, Camden County, Ga., December 17, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 1121-27; Forrester to Panton, Apalachee, December 24, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 1154-56.



prominent men among the Cherokees and Lower Creeks employed Bowles to forward their pleas to the Crown.<sup>37</sup>

The two petitions were very similar in tone. That of the Cherokees emphasized the long ties between Britain and their nation, as well as the responsibility that Britain bore to maintain the obligations of that friendship. “Father your talks to us when you left us,” they claimed, “was when we were distressed to look to you and send to you for assistance.” In light of recent troubles with Americans, they continued, “we now beg you will help us, send your Warriors, let them land in Carolina and Georgia, you shall soon see red Warriors sufficient to chastise those bad people.” They spoke of the treachery conducted at Chilhowee in June 1788, when members of the Franklin militia murdered Upper Cherokee leaders under a flag of truce. The Cherokees explained the extreme stress placed upon them by the rising cost of goods, the loss of hunting grounds and thus “the Deer of the Woods [which] to us is like Money,” and the continual encroachments of men and livestock. In addition to military help, they sought to correct their subsistence problems. They wished to have the king “send a man to us that we have the goods at the former price, and as you then gave us weights you will now send us a Measure, whereby justice may be done to all.” The reference to weights and measures drew upon a longtime complaint in the deerskin trade, that unscrupulous white traders used faulty weights to undervalue pelts. By the 1780s, the call for weights and measures functioned as a

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<sup>37</sup> For the Creek petition, see Lower Creek Leaders to King George III, Cusseta, May 7, 1789, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 292-95 and FO -/7, ff. 92-93. For the Cherokee petition see, Cherokee Leaders to King George III, Chattahoochee River near Coweta, May 6, 1789, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 296-99 and FO 4-7, ff. 181-84. Rounding out the list of Cherokee signatories are Richard Justice, Ishettechi, Uninekatih, Akata’i, Nenetooyah, Askayatihi, Katakiski, Tekakolohan, Tsiskwa Talonike’I, and Chuleon. The basis for the orthography used for the Cherokee names is Sturtevant, “Cherokee Frontiers,” 74-75. This source also explains the names in the Creek petition.

metaphor for royal intervention in the deerskin trade, a mutually recognized trope from petitions of years past.<sup>38</sup>

Cherokee leaders' reference to weights and measures illustrates a broader point behind the petitions as a whole. While responding to contemporary issues, these petitions hearkened back to the prewar period, when Native peoples could appeal to the Crown and royal governors to correct problems caused by British colonists who stole land and cheated Indians in trade. Cherokees had fought this battle before, quite literally, in the Anglo-Cherokee War of 1760-61 and the raids that led to Patriot invasion during the American Revolution. In both cases, conflict developed out of a Cherokee desire to correct the actions of Anglo-Americans and both resulted from the inability or unwillingness of royal officials to control their subjects. Although Congress and the state governments had replaced Parliament, the Crown, and royal governors in the Anglo-American political hierarchy, Cherokees found them even less vigilant in policing Indian boundaries. As reflected by the Chilhowee incident, Cherokees could not trust them to negotiate in good faith either. Appealing to these authorities had proven fruitless, even hazardous. Cherokees thus responded to the turmoil engulfing their world by not only seeking to restore old relationships, but the old political order among their neighbors.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the unity Cherokees showed in appealing to the British Crown, not all of the Cherokee signatories sought the same goals. The Upper Cherokees had never countenanced violent opposition to the Americans in the first place and Little Turkey

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<sup>38</sup> Cherokee Leaders to King George III, Chattahoochee River near Coweta, May 6, 1789, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 296-99 and FO 4-7, ff. 181-4. For the history of southeastern Indians' complaints regarding weights and measures, see Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 88-90, 104-55.

<sup>39</sup> Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation*, chs. 6-8; Hatley, *The Dividing Paths*, esp. chs. 8-9 and 14-15; John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, 2001).

would later state that war was only the aim of “them five towns,” meaning the Chickamaugas. Little Turkey sought the resumption of British ties as a counterweight to the Americans and a means of forcing restraint upon them through diplomatic pressure. Although the Chilhowee incident demanded retaliation, later actions would demonstrate that Little Turkey and other Upper Cherokees did not seek prolonged war with Americans. However, the Chickamaugas’ main purpose was to obtain munitions and supplies for continuing their war against neighboring American communities. They desired a full-fledged military alliance with agents of the British Empire. Yet however they envisioned it, all of the Cherokee signatories sought to restore their ideal of the old Anglo-Cherokee alliance, whereby Briton and Cherokee protected and aided one another in a mutually beneficial relationship.<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, the Lower Creek petition emphasized their view of Britain’s continuing duties as an ally. They had not forgotten British agents’ promises not to abandon them during their evacuation and began their petition by pressing the Crown on the matter. “Father, at your leaving our shore you told us that we should again see you and that we should not be distressed and that our parting would be only like two moons,” they proclaimed, “but the time has been long.” Lower Creek leaders asserted that they had tried to maintain peace with the Americans per British agents’ requests, and “it was [the Americans’] own faults that we had any differences.” If Americans had respected Creek boundaries then peace would have ensued, but “the people of Georgia shed the blood of our young Warriors while hunting game.” Because of the “treacherous nature” of the

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<sup>40</sup> For the Little Turkey quote, see Little Turkey to John Sevier, Turkeytown, September 2, 1792, ASP-IA, 1:276. For the divergence in Cherokee attitudes towards the Americans, see ch. 2, n. 15.

Americans, they claimed that they had little recourse but to appeal to the King of Great Britain and his representatives in government, as they had in years past.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the petition, Lower Creek leaders laid out the obligations of the British Crown while asserting that they had met their own and articulated why they stood in need of British assistance. Upon evacuating, British officials had insisted that Creeks cooperate with the incoming Spaniards and that the latter would substitute for Britons as Creeks' allies in the region. The petition's authors addressed this issue, asserting that Spanish officials had failed to live up to their promises, for "the Spanish Governors have taken the Americans by the hand they have invited them to sit down upon our Land and offer to protect them." While perhaps a complaint about Spain's reticence to issue arms and ammunition, the statement likely referred to Governor Miró's offer to accept Anglo-American immigrants in Florida and Louisiana as well. Creeks chafed at this action, viewing Spanish officials' willingness to embrace and protect peoples they considered enemies as a betrayal of their alliance. Perhaps speaking for the Loyalist traders among them, who chafed at rising prices, they claimed that the Spaniards "oppress your people who was left among us and those who have come to us for protection...we have given Land to them and have protected them." Lower Creek leaders laid out a comprehensive case for why Spaniards had proven poor allies and thus why they needed Britons to return and fulfill their old duties.<sup>42</sup>

As with the Cherokees, the rhetorical proofs of Lower Creek loyalty and friendship to Britain and the perfidy of their neighbors culminated in a request for arms,

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<sup>41</sup> Lower Creek Leaders to King George III, Cusseta, May 7, 1789, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 292-95 and FO 4-7, ff. 92-93.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

if not troops, to come to their aid. “We beg of you to give us as many [arms] as will arm our young Warriors and also Ammunition,” they pleaded, further adding, “that a War is again to be renewed in our defence and asserting our rights.” Reinvoking the metaphorical language of kinship and paternal ties between Britain and their nation, the petitioners informed their “Father” that their “young Warriors...are like Children not able to help and defend themselves.” They requested that king “put warlike weapons into our hands,” with which they would fulfill their terms of the Anglo-Creek relationship as redefined during the course of the American Revolution. Lower Creek leaders offered to “drive from our shores those people who forced you to leave this Land and make room for your people that they may again sit down with us in peace.” Like Cherokee petitioners, Lower Creeks expressed a desire to turn back to a time where the British Crown had the power to intervene in Creek-colonial relations. At the same time, they articulated an idealized version of that relationship, the one they had always exhorted the Crown to uphold, whereby Crown officials disciplined misbehaving colonists and ensured that peaceful and mutually beneficial relations reigned between Creeks and Anglo-Americans.<sup>43</sup>

The petitioners used the material exchange of symbolic goods to further emphasize the continuation of the Anglo-Creek relationship. The *mēkkvlke* and *tvstvnkvke* sent an old medal along with their petition. Elsewhere, Bowles noted that the medal “was received by the Creek Nation in the Year 1764 from your Majesty’s then governor of East Florida.” This would mean that the medal was one of the few handed out by James Grant and John Stuart at the Picolata congress held in that year. Given that

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Coweta and Cusseta served as the sites of the Creek and Cherokee petitioners' meetings and the most influential of the towns composing the Lower Creek address, the medal may have been the "great medal" that Grant and Stuart gave to Cusseta mēkko Captain Aleck or the "small medal" they awarded to Coweta mēkko Sempyoffé. In its place the petitioners asked that the king send a new one, "that we may know you have not forgot us." The old medal acted as a material reminder of Anglo-Creek ties, symbolizing the fact that Creeks had not forgotten the British. The Cowetas had held it for nearly forty years for an occasion such as this, where they could produce it as a reminder of ties in danger of being forgotten. The experience parallels with that of Tunapé, who brought a thirty-year-old commission to Havana to demonstrate his long-held ties to Spanish officials. The new medal would symbolize Britain's willingness to perpetuate those ties, a reaffirmation that they would support and protect the Lower Creeks.<sup>44</sup>

Though the Lower Creek petition resembled countless pleas which Creeks issued to British agents throughout the eighteenth century, it also revealed new ways in which Creeks were approaching diplomacy. For one, they made an offer much like the one Tunapé had made to Spanish officials in Cuba over a decade prior, to come and resettle in the lands they formerly occupied. This was not an offer to build a fort in the midst of their territory for the purposes of trade, such as one Creeks the made to the French in the case of Fort Toulouse in the 1710s, nor did it resemble Forts Loudoun and Prince George, which the Cherokees requested the British build among their towns in the 1750s. As in those cases Creeks sought to increase access to trade and allies. However, the request for a British colony outpaced those former requests in scope and ambition. Instead of a new

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. For the distribution of medals at the Picolata Congress, see "Proceedings of the First Picolata Congress," November 15-20, 1765, GFT, 461-62.

Fort Toulouse or Fort Loudoun, they wanted a new Charles Town, a new St. Augustine, another New Orleans, colonial hubs from which smaller ventures such as forts extended.

Lower Creeks sought colonization not to strengthen existing relationships but to restore and preserve them. They risked losing access to a web of connections that had long worked to their advantage. Thus, the Lower Creek petition went beyond that of the Cherokees in its ambition. They wanted more than material aid in the form of arms and manpower or negotiating leverage against colonial rivals of Great Britain. Creeks sought to transform their political environment, to refashion their surroundings and recreate a world more secure and stable, by reintroducing European colonial competition to the region and repositioning themselves as key mediators between warring powers. That was the foundation on which Coweta and the Lower Creeks had built their strength, and that was the order to which they wished to return.

### **A TRANSATLANTIC EXPEDITION**

To accomplish their respective goals, neither Cherokees nor Lower Creeks felt it sufficient to rely on written communications alone. Both groups sent emissaries along with Bowles to travel to Britain and meet with King George personally. The Cherokees sent along three men, Unatoy, Kuahtikiski, and Wohsi, who doubled as an interpreter, while the Creeks sent two warriors, Seponejah and Tvskenēhv, who also went by the name Tom Lewis. All or most of them seem to have been of Anglo or Scots as well as Creek and Cherokee ancestry, as sources frequently refer to them as “*mestizos*” or “half-breeds.” In the ensuing months, Bowles would claim that he had been “accompanied by some of [the Creeks’ and Cherokees’] principal Chiefs.” This was a lie, as none of the delegates seem to have been men of particular distinction. Bowles had begun claiming

that they were “chiefs,” but this is unlikely. No source outside of Bowles indicates them as leaders or prominent figures. This includes traders in Creek country and correspondents from Panton, Leslie, and Company, who were fairly well-positioned to understand whether these men held influence in Creek and Cherokee societies. Observers in London described them as being quite young, and McGillivray described Tvskēnēhv in particular as a “half Breed boy.” Later in life, Tvskēnēhv acted as an emissary to Tecumseh and Wohsi served as an interpreter between Cherokees and English-speakers. Outside of these two, none of the delegates ever appeared again in the documentary record outside of this journey. They probably sought to use Bowles to bolster their own standing at home through the impressive feat of traveling overseas, forging a transoceanic diplomatic network, and setting up vital (and potentially lucrative) trade connections with the Bahamas. Despite their probably not holding positions of leadership, the Creeks and Cherokees with Bowles were likely aiming for increased influence and power, and this may have motivated them to travel to Nassau and London.<sup>45</sup>

That more prominent leaders selected these lesser figures to make the journey across the Atlantic may indicate that the petitioners thought their business at home too pressing to absent themselves. They may also have wished to keep their involvement with

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<sup>45</sup> For the reference to “principal Chiefs,” see Bowles to the Conde de Floridablanca, New Providence [Nassau], August 21, 1789, PLC reel 5, ff. 525-27. Tvskiniha identified himself as Tom Lewis in the petition to the British customs officials; see Creek and Cherokee Delegation to the Board of Commissioners of His Majesty’s Customs in Great Britain, Charlotte Town, St. John, September 9, 1790, NA-UK, Treasury [hereafter T] 1-687, ff. 127-28. McGillivray’s comment can be found in McGillivray to Panton, Little Tallassee, October 28, 1791, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1120-23 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 298-300. For more information on the ambassadors, see Sturtevant, “Cherokee Frontiers,” 66-70.

For secondary accounts, see Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 29; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 38-40. Wright unquestioningly repeats Bowles’s assertion that the delegation was filled with “chiefs,” though he acknowledges that Bowles “could not speak for all the Creeks and Cherokees, or even most of them, but he did represent an articulate minority.” Din uses race to discredit those who associated with Bowles, describing those who accompanied him as “English-speaking Anglo-mestizos” in opposition to “pure-bloods.”



Bowles a secret from Spanish and American officials for fear of retaliation. Regardless, the act of sending ambassadors to the court in London shows that various Creek and Cherokee leaders thought their diplomatic effort worthwhile enough to go beyond a simple paper petition. It indicates the emphasis which both groups placed upon face-to-face, verbal communication. Creeks and Cherokees both preferred this form of diplomatic negotiation and its accompanying rituals, as signified by decades of treaty councils. Moreover, by sending along individuals to meet with the king and his ministers in person, they would make it much more difficult for the Crown to ignore their petitions. Papers could be filed away or lost, their contents ignored. Persistent individuals with a willingness to press their claims would ensure that imperial officials at least heard their message.

The petitions, with regard to these ambassadors, also expose the hollowness of Bowles's more outrageous pretensions. Far from affirming him as "Director General" of a united Creek and Cherokee Nation, they emphasized that Creeks and Cherokees not only made no effort at political unification, but that they still primarily identified as clusters of autonomous towns. Creeks and Cherokees held separate councils, composed separate petitions, and signed as individual leaders of individual communities. The petitions also clarified that Creeks and Cherokees only expected Bowles to advocate for their interests. The Cherokee petitioners referred to Bowles as "your Warrior," in contrast to "ours." While placing a degree of trust in Bowles, asking him "to deliver this [petition] to [the King's] hand" and affirming that he "has been among us and knows what we speak is truth, as he has seen our situation himself," they did not invest him with any further authority and made clear they had not adopted him as Cherokee. A bit more

generous, the Lower Creek petitioners referred to Bowles as “our beloved Warrior who is [also] one of yours.” This statement might refer to Bowles’s supposed marriage to Kenhagee’s daughter and thus his incorporation into a Creek kin network. Even then, nowhere did they signify his holding any position of political authority. The petitioners also qualified the terms of his belonging. He was both “our beloved Warrior,” and “yours,” a man split between two worlds, the latter of which took precedence throughout the rest of the petition. Every other mention of Bowles regarded him solely as “your Warrior,” with no indication of his belonging to the Creeks at all.<sup>46</sup>

Through the very act of sending additional emissaries, Cherokees and Creeks made clear that they did not entirely trust Bowles to represent their interests. Though some scholars have cast doubt upon the authenticity of these petitions, the fact that they at least partially contradict Bowles’s claims is perhaps the strongest evidence of their veracity. If Bowles had fabricated them, totally inventing their contents and fraudulently affixing the names of Creek and Cherokee leaders, he would have made sure to have them confirm the claims he made elsewhere. Instead, neither document supported Bowles’s claims to Creek and Cherokee leadership, the existence of a Creek-Cherokee union, or the chiefly status of the emissaries. The most logical explanation is that both Lower Creek and Cherokee leaders did see Bowles’s arrival as a potential opportunity to restore old trade connections, but were not foolish or desperate enough to accord him any

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<sup>46</sup>Cherokee Leaders to King George III, Chattahoochee River near Coweta, May 6, 1789, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 296-99 and FO 4-7, ff. 181-84; Lower Creek Leaders to King George III, Cusseta, May 7, 1789, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 292-95 and FO 4-7, ff. 92-93.

position of rank or authority. He was a potential ally and a means to an end, nothing more.<sup>47</sup>

### CONSTRAINING AND CONTROLLING CREEK NETWORKS

For all his bravado, Bowles seems to have understood the flimsiness of his claims and the limits of his influence. After departing Coweta, his goal was to carry the petitions and ambassadors to London, but on every stop along the way he worked to both isolate them from outside influences and ensured that his voice drowned out their own. Although the delegation appeared repeatedly in the documentary record, none of this evidence recorded a single word uttered in these meetings. In fact, the names of the delegates seldom appeared at all. Usually they were nameless, faceless Indians. Bowles did all of the talking (and writing) for them, despite the fact that the Cherokees had an interpreter with them (Wohsi or Moses Price) and in spite of how many British officials expressed skepticism concerning Bowles.<sup>48</sup>

For Bowles, the greatest danger lay in giving others the opportunity to persuade the Creeks and Cherokees to alter their course of action. Upon leaving the mainland, the delegation first went to the Bahamas, where it arrived on July 28, 1789. Well before their arrival, a struggle had ensued between members of the New and Old Settler factions for influence in Creek and Cherokee country and control of Native networks extending from

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<sup>47</sup> For scholarly doubts as to the veracity of the petitions, see Sturtevant, "Cherokee Frontiers," 67. J. Leitch Wright is overly credulous in asserting that the Cherokees and Lower Creeks had in fact made Bowles their "Director General"; see *William Augustus Bowles*, 37-8. Gilbert Din has the most nuanced account of the Coweta meeting, but does not draw on documentary evidence. Paradoxically, he relies entirely on Wright to describe it while deviating from Wright's interpretation. His main error is to exaggerate the unimportance of the Creek leaders present, stating that "few Creek leaders, especially the more numerous Upper Creeks, wanted any part of him." See Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 29.

<sup>48</sup> Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 124; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 31-32; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 36-40.

the mainland. From Nassau to Pensacola, the various branches of Panton and Leslie sought to deter the delegates from making their trip to Britain. Persuaded in no small measure by self-interest, the company's allies, partners, and employees felt that Bowles's sophistry had led the Creeks and Cherokees to undertake a fool's errand. Before their departure from Creek country, Panton's storekeeper at St. Marks, Edward Forrester, had vowed "to do all that lays in my Power to open the Eyes of those Poor Indians whom [Bowles] so basely is trying to deceive." Earlier, when Bowles was recruiting for his expedition into Florida to attack Panton and Leslie's stores, Thomas Brown and the company's partner in Nassau, Thomas Forbes, had attempted to meet with the Cussetas that accompanied him. Miller kept the Cussetas on lockdown in his house to protect them from outside influences, turning away Forbes and Brown, "even though [the Cussetas] had importuned greatly" to see the latter. Bowles, Miller, and their associates recognized the potential influence of company officials and particularly that of Brown, the former Indian agent whom Creeks held in high regard. In response, they did their best to prevent contrary influences from reaching the delegates' ears.<sup>49</sup>

No such efforts, if even attempted, proved successful during the 1789 Creek visit, as Bowles and his allies kept the delegation firmly within their circle. They accomplished this despite challenges posed by various delays which kept Bowles and the Creeks and Cherokees waiting in Nassau for several months. For one, they awaited word from Thomas Dalton, a friend of Bowles's who ineptly tried to press the Creeks' and Cherokees' case in London in advance of their arrival. Bowles also could not restrain himself from competing in a press war, justifying his conduct in Florida against the

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<sup>49</sup> Forrester to Panton, Apalachee, December 24, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 1154-56; Brown to Zéspedes, New Providence [Nassau], no date [ca. late 1788], PLC reel 3, ff. 1254-58; The date of the party's arrival in Nassau comes from Bowles to Dorchester, [Quebec], July 7, 1790, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 282-85.

invectives of embittered deserters, Panton and Leslie, and other New Settlers. Most embarrassingly, Bowles did not yet have a plan in place for how to get to London. Not until the fall of 1789 did the party set sail, choosing to proceed to Quebec on their way to London in an effort to secure support from British officials in Canada.<sup>50</sup>

Recognizing the threat posed by the delegation and the efforts of Bowles, Miller, Bonamy, and Dunmore, Panton and Leslie and Spanish officials alike made serious efforts to repair their relationship with Creek leaders, starting with McGillivray. Governor Miró appealed to his superiors in Cuba for permission to resume sending munitions to the Creeks. The Captain General there acknowledged the legitimacy of Creek grievances and the threat they posed to Spanish governance, reasoning that “they need [arms and ammunition] to defend themselves, and not being given them by the Spaniards, one can not blame them for going to wherever they may find them.” With the Captain General’s approval, Miró renewed his annual presents to the Creeks via McGillivray, promised to provide them with arms and ammunition, and authorized Panton to release gunpowder in small quantities, so long as his company concealed the

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<sup>50</sup> For Dalton, see Memorandum of George Beckwith, in Lord Dorchester to Grenville, Quebec, September 27, 1790, CO 42-69, 61-108 (relevant passage on ff. 78-82); Beckwith to Grenville, New York, August 5, 1790, in Frederick Jackson Turner, ed., “English Policy Toward America in 1790-1791.” *American Historical Review* VII, no. 4 - VIII, no. 1 (Jul.-Oct. 1902), 719-20; Dalton to Even Nepean, August 3, 1790, in Turner, “English Policy,” 721.

Documents from Bowles’s “press war” include Bowles, Letter to the Editor, August 15, 1789, *Lucayan Royal Herald and Weekly Advertiser*, Wednesday, August 19, 1789, enclosed in Dunmore to Grenville, Nassau, March 1, 1790, NA-UK, CO 23-30, ff. 192-94 and PLC reel 5, ff. 1170-78; Affidavit of John Richmond, March 5, 1789, *ibid.*; Affidavit of James Short, August 18, 1789, *ibid.*; Thomas Forbes to John Wells, Editor of the *Bahama Gazette*, Nassau, August 20, 1789, *Bahama Gazette*, August 15-22, 1789; Stephen Haven to Wells, August 20, 1789, *ibid.*; Affidavit of Abraham Belleny, March 2, 1789, *ibid.* The *Bahama Gazette* and the *Lucayan Herald* were rival papers, with the *Herald* serving as Dunmore and the Old Settlers’ mouthpiece and the *Gazette* in favor of the New Settlers. For more information, see Howard S. Pactor, *Colonial British Caribbean Newspapers: A Bibliography and Directory* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990); Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 34, 40.

See also Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 124-25; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 31-3; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 34, 38-41.

total volume of its disbursement as much as possible. While Miró hoped to exercise greater control over the Creeks, he also feared the dissipation of Spanish influence among them and the protection it afforded. Panton, having opposed the restrictions in the first place and fearing losing his business to Miller and Bonamy, happily complied.<sup>51</sup>

Despite his frustrations with Spanish authorities, McGillivray also had an interest in resolving the problems between them. Spanish concessions eliminated his main grievance with his existing networks. Moreover, they provided advantages that Miller and Bonamy did not. For one, both Panton and Leslie and Spanish officials looked to him as their key ally and relied upon him to secure their influence in Creek county.

McGillivray had no idea whether this new consortium would hold him in the same light. Something in Bowles's behavior must have triggered such suspicions, for shortly after he left, McGillivray began to complain that Bowles "in no instance obeyed any instructions" that McGillivray gave him. He even suggested that Bowles "and His Employers have attempted to deceive me," perhaps an early indication that the contingent sought to undermine him in favor of Lower Creek leaders. The shipment of arms and ammunition aside, the company had also not proven its ability to supply him to the extent that Panton and Leslie had, nor had it demonstrated its ability to secure the backing of the British government. Bowles's ineptitude at various points could not have reassured McGillivray on these issues. McGillivray readily accepted the ammunition brought to him by Galphin and Kinnaird, but told Panton that Bowles "has too many irons in the fire and has Conducted himself of Late very foolishly." Only a few months after meeting with

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<sup>51</sup> Miró to Ezpeleta, New Orleans, September 16, 1788, PLC, reel 4, ff. 691-94; Ezpeleta to Miró, Havana, October 24, 1788, AGI, PC, leg. 151A, ff. 445-46 and PLC reel 4, ff. 889-91; Ezpeleta to Miró, Havana, October 27, 1788, AGI, PC, leg. 151A, ff. 449-50; Miró to McGillivray, New Orleans, December 13, 1788, PLC reel 4, ff. 1109-11.

Bowles, McGillivray vowed to Spanish authorities that he “shall be compelled to leave this nation never to return to it.”<sup>52</sup>

And yet, McGillivray could not bring himself to completely abandon the potential connections that Bowles represented. Despite his promise to expel Bowles and the continual urging of Spanish authorities to do so, he did nothing to arrest or constrain the adventurer’s movements. Retreating from his pledge, McGillivray argued that Bowles was “even too insignificant for Contempt,” let alone for “his blood to be Shed in this Country.” He further dismissed the “Vagrants” and “Vagabonds” of Bowles’s expedition as “very well disposed of”; if they had ever been a threat, they were no longer. In response to accusations that Bowles sought to ransack Panton’s stores, he claimed that “Bowles never could have had the schemes [his deserters] charged him with,” adding that the Lower Creeks who associated with him were “true devotees to [Panton and Leslie’s] interests.” McGillivray justified his inaction by dismissing Bowles and his associates as insignificant, but the mēkko’s prior conduct casts aspersions upon his motives.<sup>53</sup>

Further suggesting that McGillivray sought to keep alternatives open, he pretended to ignore signs that Creeks and Cherokees were expanding their connections with Bowles, Miller, Bonamy, and Dunmore. While Cherokee and Lower Creek leaders met and composed petitions to King George III, McGillivray disregarded “the Late Hubbub about Bowles,” which he considered “over.” Thereafter, he did not return to the subject of the adventurer for some time. The mēkko could not have been ignorant of the

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<sup>52</sup> McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, February 1, 1789, PLC, reel 4, ff. 1603-25; McGillivray to Panton, Little Tallassee, February 1, 1789, PLC, reel 4, ff. 1697-1704 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 215-20.

<sup>53</sup> Howard to [McGillivray], St. Augustine, March 28, 1789, PLC, reel 5, ff. 66-70 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 223-25; McGillivray to Leslie, Little Tallassee, February 8, 1789, PLC, reel 4, ff. 1676-91 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 222-23.

proceedings on the Chattahoochee. Most likely, McGillivray wanted to wait and see if something useful materialized out of their efforts without jeopardizing his existing connections.<sup>54</sup>

McGillivray's inaction would prove a mistake. Though he could not have known at the time, the appearance of Bowles set the stage for a massive rift in Creek country. Even though he lacked the sort of consolidated authority he wished for, circumstances had thus far played into McGillivray's hand. Americans' hostility and deception left Spain and Panton and Leslie as the Creeks' only hope for trade and assistance. Since McGillivray had almost monopolized communications with the Spanish-Panton network, a certain level of dependence could only benefit him. Those who had rejected his policy of hostility towards the Americans, like the Tallassee King, found themselves compelled to reverse course and request Spanish aid.

By allowing the potential of a British connection to linger in the minds of Creeks, by refusing to take measures to squash Bowles's intrigues, McGillivray gave his political rivals hope. Almost of necessity, the networks he explored would center on the eastern coast of Florida, far away from his center of power among Upper Creeks, and much closer to Lower Creek leaders. McGillivray probably overestimated his influence over the latter, while they jumped at the opportunity to forge their own connections independent of him. The result would leave Creeks torn between rival networks, jockeying for regional influence by staking their fortunes to competing powers. None of them would live up to expectations, undermining the best chance for Creeks to protect a sovereign space in their homeland.

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<sup>54</sup> McGillivray to Panton, Little Tallassee, May 20-21, 1789, PLC, reel 5, ff. 183-94.





## Chapter 4

### **A Voyage “Ill Advised”: Creek and Cherokee Attempts to Reconnect with the British Atlantic, 1790-94**

A famous saying holds that some men are enamored with the sound of their own voice. For William Augustus Bowles, the scratch of his pen appealed equally. From the 1789 Coweta meeting onward, Bowles became a prodigious author of petitions and letters to high government officials in both the Spanish and British empires. As time wore on, these letters grew longer and more outlandish, and his delusions grew apace with his rambling prose. By 1791, his addresses consisted of twenty-to-thirty folios directed to King George III, King Carlos IV, and their top ministers. These letters somehow alternated between monotony and excitement, at once compelling in their outrageousness and tedious in their repetitiveness. It becomes difficult to distinguish hallucination from lie, as Bowles’s actions and words acquired more conviction and even less truth as time wore on.

Among the blatant falsehoods, Bowles claimed that the Creeks and Cherokees had become producers and potential exporters of “Indigo, Tobacco, Drugs of various sorts, dying woods, Salt petre, furs, hides, tallow, wax, Ship timber, Tar, Turpentine, Hemp, Flax and many other articles.” He insisted that Creeks “possessed of some sort of Marine,” though that maritime presence proved conspicuously absent when Bowles desperately needed transport to ferry people and supplies between the Florida coast and the Bahamas. Most bizarrely, Bowles claimed to have persuaded them to “throw aside their antient weapon, the hatchet,” and instead adopt “besides the Musquet, a long Spear with which they form a phalanx.” Bowles boasted of the title Creeks gave him, “Estajoca,” which he took to be some sort of honorific, or at least pretended to. In fact

*estehvtke* meant nothing particularly special, it being the Muskogee term for “white person.” The most significant of his outlandish claims had Bowles asserting himself as “Director General of the United Creek and Cherokee Nation.” Not only did he argue that the two peoples were “United into one, & are governed by one Council,” but that they had elected him “Generalissimo, & President of the Council,” a position which he supposedly resigned so that he could travel to Britain on their behalf. The petitions some Creek and Cherokee leaders sent along with him suddenly became missives from a governmental body, “who are the Sovereign power of the whole Country occupied.”<sup>1</sup>

While occasionally captivating, Bowles’s correspondence while in London only carries importance in relation to the Creek and Cherokee ambitions that made his quixotic venture possible. Although much of his letters and petitions fall into the realm of fantasy, they centered on the very real desire of both Creeks and Cherokees to reopen British diplomatic and exchange networks. Bowles’s key request was to establish a port under Creek, rather than Spanish or British, jurisdiction. As an independent, sovereign people, Bowles argued that they deserved the right to manage their own trade. The intersection of territorial, economic, and maritime rights had a long history among the Creeks. Dating back to the 1730s, Creeks sought to use a negotiated European presence on the seacoast to their own diplomatic and material benefit. Various Creek leaders experimented with the notion of creating or reforming coastal entrepôts in the decades leading up to Bowles’s arrival. In their own way, all of these figures argued for Creek sovereignty and

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<sup>1</sup> Bowles to King George III, [London, ca. January 3, 1791], NA-UK, Foreign Office [hereafter FO] 4/9, ff. 5-18. Bowles’s petition to Carlos IV is very similar. See Bowles to King Carlos IV, London, March 25, 1791, PLC, reel 6, ff. 634-51. For the Florida Keys, see Thomas Forbes to [Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada?], New Providence, September 12, 1790, PLC, reel 6, ff. 238-39; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 33; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 38-42. For *estehvtke*, see Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, s.vv. “*estehvtke*.”

control over these coastal sites. Although he littered their message with self-aggrandizing prose and proposals, the root of Bowles's agenda took its cue from that of the Creeks and Cherokees he collaborated with. The entirety of his schemes depended upon obtaining what they desired: a renewed diplomatic relationship with Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

The Creek and Cherokee delegation's voyage not only shows how crucial Atlantic trade and diplomacy were to them, it also reveals how and why their role in these networks faded. As it turned out, traversing the seas posed little challenge in comparison that of the changing geopolitics of Atlantic imperial struggles. Cherokees and especially Creeks still possessed the numbers and the command of land and riverine paths that had allowed them to play a central role in North American affairs for decades. What they lacked was the sustained interest of European imperial powers in the region they called home. The lack of motive on the part of Europeans led them to neglect maintaining the networks they and Creek and Cherokees had jointly constructed. Earlier in the century, French, Spaniards, and Britons scrambled to claim the allegiances of Creek and Cherokee communities. Despite the dramatic geopolitical shifts that occurred between 1763 and 1789, certain aspects of this dynamic remained. Creeks and other Native peoples continued to live, work, trade, negotiate, and fight alongside and against Euro-Americans, remaining integral to, but also apart from, their imperial and colonial systems in the region. Throughout that period, competing empires and colonizing polities, including the

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<sup>2</sup> For Bowles, see Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 29, 32-38; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 37-41. For Tomochichi, see Steven J. Peach, "Creek Indian Globetrotter: Tomochichi's Trans-Atlantic Quest for Traditional Power in the Colonial Southeast," *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 605-35. For McGillivray, see ch. 2.

fledgling United States, required the support of Native peoples such as the Creeks to pursue their ambitions.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, this all began to change in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Spanish Crown officials had already judged their interest in Florida and Louisiana not worth provoking a war with the United States. Individual colonists proved willing to cast aside relationships with both Native peoples and Spanish officials if Anglo-Americans presented more attractive opportunities. British officials plotted the restoration of an imperial presence in the region before the ink had dried on the Treaty of Paris, but issues revolving around the French Revolution soon enveloped their attention. Both British and Spanish officials became preoccupied with defending the British Isles, peninsular Spain, and their more valuable colonies from French invasion. Unfortunately for both the Creeks and Cherokees, they grew increasingly peripheral to the concerns of British and Spanish officials. British and Spanish withdrawal from imperial rivalry with the United States would create an opportunity for Americans. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the United States had grown sufficiently strong to take advantage of the constraining of Native peoples' of Atlantic networks, with disastrous results for Indians.

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<sup>3</sup> My interpretation of the Creek-Cherokee voyage to London reflects many of the points outlined by Alden Vaughn in his work on Native transatlantic journeys to England. Vaughn argues that, beginning in the 1760s, Native peoples saw journeys to London as increasingly useful, while Crown officials saw them as increasingly useless, even troublesome. He outlines a number of delegations believed, like the Creeks and Cherokees of the 1790s, that traveling to see the king in person would accord them prestige back home and help them secure stronger alliances with and assistance from agents of the British Empire. Likewise, he observes a Crown tendency to treat the delegates with generosity while discouraging them from returning and without committing to their political or material goals. Other parallel trends he identifies include the British government's extreme reluctance to reimburse Britons who aid the travel of Native delegations without authorization, and a tendency to speak with figures perceived as the heads of the delegation while ignoring the "attendants." As I shall illustrate, both dynamics characterize British officials' interactions with Bowles. See Vaughn, *Transatlantic Encounters*, ch. 9.

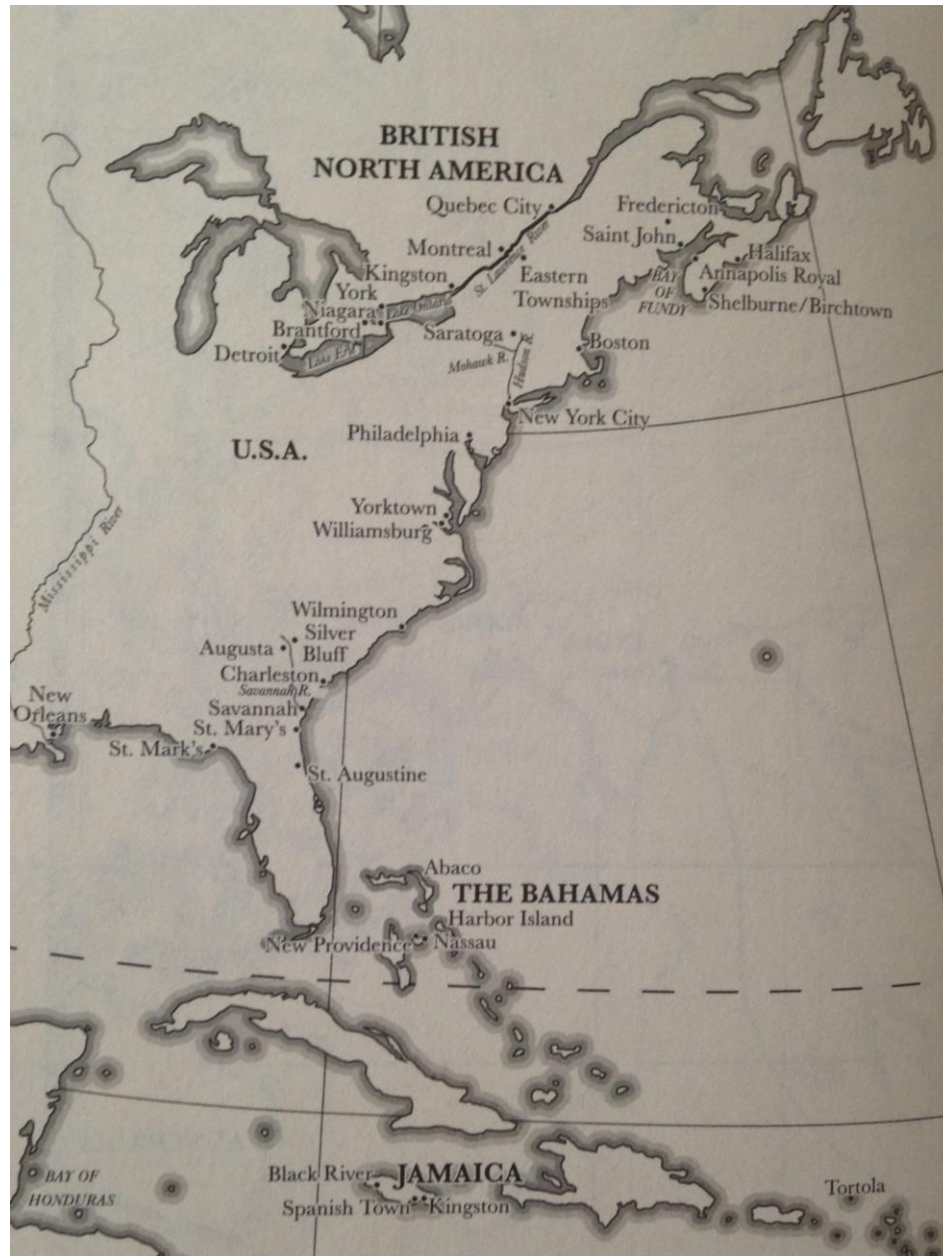


Figure 3. Atlantic coast of North America ca. 1789-90.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Map adapted from Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Random House, 2011), 4.

## **ADRIFT IN AN IMPERIAL STRUGGLE: CREEKS AND CHEROKEES AT SEA**

The contingencies of imperial politics shaped the fortunes of the Creek and Cherokee expedition from beginning to end. At first, the timing of their voyage proved fortuitous. Early in 1789, Spanish efforts to lay claim to Vancouver Island on the Pacific coast of North America had precipitated the so-called Nootka Crisis, named after the sound along the island's western shore. Britain had laid claim to the region and threatened war over what it considered a Spanish intrusion. As word of the incident crawled across the globe during the spring and summer of 1789, the Creeks, Cherokees, and Bowles formed a delegation and made their way to the Bahamas, where they hired passage to Nova Scotia after a series of delays. By the time the delegation landed at Halifax in June 1790, the crisis loomed over British policy. Anticipating open warfare, Crown officials searched for means to undermine Spain's global position. The Nootka Crisis gave the delegation a chance to position itself as the key to Spanish Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Mississippi Valley. Together, Creeks, Cherokees, and Britons could rid Florida of its Spanish presence. Presumably, the capture of Florida would then provide Britain with a base to attack launch further attacks, thus acquiring a stranglehold on two of the most important commercial routes in North America. The dust-up between Britain and Spain provided the most important imperial and global context to the Creek and Cherokee mission and would prove key to their gaining access to the Crown.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> J. Leitch Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier, 1783-1815* (Athens: University of Georgia Press), ch. 4; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 33; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 40-41.

That the party even made it past Nova Scotia and Quebec depended entirely on the context of the Nootka Crisis. Bowles's attempts at self-aggrandizement endangered Creek and Cherokee aims by making ridiculous claims that British officials would not take seriously. He figured that he would be able to fool officials who had no way of verifying his situation in distant Creek country. He erred in that respect, as British officials in Canada never abandoned their skepticism. In fact, Bowles's exaggerated claims may have done the Creeks and Cherokees harm by arousing the suspicion of those officials. Nova Scotia Governor John Parr was "satisfied...that these Indians, are warriors from the Two Nations, whom they say they represent," but gave no recommendation of Bowles. That he felt the need to validate the party's legitimacy indicates that he had his doubts about them, probably due to Bowles's presence. That Parr sent them on to Quebec anyway had more to do with events in Nootka Sound than Bowles's persuasiveness. Citing "the present Crisis" and "the probability of a Rupture with Spain," Parr thought it prudent to let Lord Dorchester, Governor-General at Quebec, judge the matter for himself.<sup>6</sup>

In Quebec, Lord Dorchester gave the party much greater scrutiny. Like Parr, he referred to the group as "Creek and Cherokee Indians...Accompanied by a Mr. Bowles." Brushing aside Bowles's pretensions, Dorchester addressed his initial responses to the Creek and Cherokee party instead of Bowles. Despite this, the voices of the Creeks and Cherokees remained silent in the documentary record. Whatever discussions the Creeks and Cherokees had with Dorchester, they went unrecorded. Translation does not account

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<sup>6</sup> Bowles to Lord Dorchester, [Quebec], July 7, 1790, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 282-85; John Parr to William Wyndham Grenville [by then Lord Grenville], Halifax, September 20, 1790, NA-UK, CO 217-62 and Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC), Colonial Office Records, Nova Scotia A (hereafter CO-NS-A) 114, reel C-9135, ff. 149-51.



for Bowles's continual mediation between Dorchester and the Indians. At least one member of the party, Wohsi, spoke English and Tvskenēhv likely did as well. For whatever reason, despite evidence indicating that Dorchester preferred to speak to the Creeks and Cherokees directly, Bowles continued to muffle their voices and speak on their behalf. While possible that the group trusted Bowles to deliver the Creek and Cherokee address, it would have been quite unusual for Creek and Cherokee ambassadors to not at least give verbal assent to a speaker's words or confirm his status as the group's representative. That they would have allowed an outsider such as Bowles to speak for them, however well he had ingratiated himself amongst them, seems implausible.<sup>7</sup>

Most likely, the councils at Coweta had placed their trust in the wrong individuals to represent their grievances. The delegation's failure to assert itself in discussions suggests that Bowles had convinced them to play along with his charade, likely with promises that they would be able to share in whatever connections and rewards he gained from obtaining Crown support. With none of these men occupying or holding prominent positions within Creek or Cherokee society, they might have welcomed an opportunity to bolster their standing at the expense of their elders. With the apparent consent of the Creek and Cherokee delegation, Bowles began to abuse the trust placed in him by the councils at Coweta and neglected to mention the Creek and Cherokee petition in his first letter to Dorchester. Only after a week of silence from the Governor-General did Bowles produce the document, citing a lame excuse that "the orders we received from the Supreme Council...was positive to present it to His Majesty only." More likely, Bowles

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<sup>7</sup> Dorchester to Grenville, Montreal, July 26, 1790, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 279-80 and LAC, Colonial Office Records, Q Series (hereafter CO-Q), reel C-11900, vol. 44, pt. 1, ff. 535-38.

thought it better to conceal the petitions because his ambitions outstripped the constraints they placed upon him. Between a wary governor, a fast-talking pretender, and a Creek and Cherokee delegation conspicuous in its silence, negotiations in Quebec remained mired in confusion for nearly a month.<sup>8</sup>

Dorchester had an interest in supporting Native peoples at war with the United States, but wished to position himself as the mediator of their concerns. As British Commander-in-Chief in North America, he felt threatened by Bowles and the delegation's insistence upon negotiating with the king directly without involving him in the matter. What more, he must have felt affronted that they expected him to fund the journey out of his government's coffers without involving him in the matter further. Dorchester saw little need for Bowles and the Indians to carry their message to London in person. He told the Creeks and Cherokees that they had wasted their time in traveling to Quebec, and that they had been "ill advised" at multiple stages of their journey. In his view, they were

ill advised by those, who desired, when they had any thing to say to the King, that they should not write, but send over to London some of their Chiefs to Speak in person...ill advised at the Bahamas on their Way to London, if they were desired to come first to Quebec, which is greatly out of the Way to London...[and] ill advised at Halifax, if they were desired to come to Quebec, having no business but to go to London.

While Dorchester argued that it had been inappropriate and nonsensical for the Creeks and Cherokees to come to Quebec, his administration funded and supplied other Native peoples currently defending themselves against American citizens. Over the next few years, agents of his government would indeed offer supplies to visiting Creeks and

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<sup>8</sup> Bowles to Dorchester, Quebec, July 14, 1790, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 286-87.

Cherokees through posts in the Ohio country. The members of the delegation had ample reason to expect that Dorchester's government would support them as well.

Dorchester's critique of the delegation's intention to travel to London raises issues of sovereignty, communication, and negotiation at the heart of the Creek and Cherokee mission. Aside from obtaining material and diplomatic assistance from Britain, the delegation wished to assert itself as the representation of sovereign Creek and Cherokee entities. A visit to see the king, from a Creek and Cherokee perspective, allowed for direct diplomatic contact between equals as heads of sovereign peoples. Delivering their message to Dorchester would lessen its impact while also allowing the governor-general control over how the king and his ministers would consume and interpret their petition. The delegation's insistence upon delivering their petition to the king in person served as an assertion of Creek and Cherokee sovereignty. Dorchester's demand that they route all pleas through him represented his attempt to constrain and restrict that sovereignty by forcing Native peoples to rely on British officials as transatlantic mediators.

Another concern that likely bothered Dorchester related to government expense. At each point of their journey, British officials had to provision them and hire ships to send them on to the next leg of the voyage. As Dorchester alluded to, even a decision to send them back home raised issues of having to pay for their trip back to Creek country. Dorchester did not want to incur that expense, and probably worried that he would court royal disfavor in doing so. Since the 1760s, Crown officials had grown disdainful of hosting Native delegations at Whitehall and had officially discouraged the practice. Moreover, a written petition or "talk" would not only cause less expense to the Crown, it

would also cause less trouble. Documentary petitions proved much less bothersome than living, breathing supplicants on one's doorstep, and much easier to ignore until convenient. Dorchester offered to forward any "addresses" they had to the royal court, but "this they seem[ed] averse to." Strapped with war debt, the British imperial government generally advocated a policy of cost cutting in military and colonial expenses in the years following the American Revolution. Among other factors, the war debt led it to vacillate between conflict and rapprochement with the United States during the postwar years. Dorchester had legitimate reason to doubt whether his superiors would approve of funding the delegation's journey.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, the existence of the Nootka Crisis resolved the impasse in the delegation's favor, saving the expedition from failure. Despite all of his objections to their mission, Dorchester found nothing "to justify [his] interference in the proceedings of Mr. Bowles and the Indians" or to prevent them from traveling to see the king. Dorchester decided upon a course of action that got the party out of his province while providing him with political cover. The Governor-General argued that "in Case of a War with Spain [the Creeks and Cherokees] might be of considerable use, as their Confederacy is very numerous, in both the Floridas." He favorably referred to the Creeks' and Cherokees' actions in favor of Loyalists during the American Revolution, along with their conflicts with Spanish and American officials. Dorchester claimed to believe that "they would think themselves happy to be again under the protection of Great

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<sup>9</sup> Dorchester to Bowles, Quebec, ca. July 14-16, 1790, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 288-89; [Dorchester to the Creeks and Cherokees accompanied by Bowles, Quebec, ca. July 16-23, 1790], NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 300-01; Dorchester to Grenville, Montreal, July 26, 1790, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 279-80 and LAC, CO-Q, reel C-11900, vol. 44, pt. 1, ff. 535-38; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 33-34; Vaughn, *Transatlantic Encounters*, ch. 9; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 48-49.

Britain, and that they would readily assist in any operations to dispossess the Spaniards of the Floridas and Louisiana.” In reality, no palatable alternatives existed. The party had no way of leaving Quebec without Dorchester’s assistance. At worst Dorchester could claim to have presented the king with an opportunity to strike at Spain. The Governor-General paid Bowles and the delegation’s passage to Great Britain, recommending them to Crown officials.<sup>10</sup>

### **KING GEORGE’S COURT**

The Nootka Crisis not only secured Bowles and the delegation passage to England, it ensured their welcome once there. London society greeted the delegation as Native dignitaries and newspapers printed accounts suggesting their potential value in an impending conflict with Spain. The clearest marker of their reception comes from portraits taken of them by London artists upon their arrival. In these portraits, the delegation’s British hosts outfitted them in dress typical of that given to Native dignitaries. In fact, their European and American hosts gave many Native leaders elaborate clothing and ornamentation that they wore in portraits and diplomatic audiences. Items like gorgets, great coats, jewelry, and beads routinely functioned as diplomatic gifts in Euro-Native meetings and councils, and Native peoples held these items in high regard as markers of leadership and connections to the outside world, as well as for their pure aesthetic appeal. Both sitter and audience would have seen the

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<sup>10</sup> Dorchester to Bowles, [Quebec, ca. July 23-26, 1790], NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 304-05; Dorchester to Grenville, Montreal, July 26, 1790, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 279-80 and LAC, CO-Q, reel C-1190, vol. 44, pt. 1, ff. 535-38.

adornments as signifying the Native leaders' ties with European and Euro-American societies.<sup>11</sup>

For Native peoples, the portraits served as a vehicle to make assertions about sovereignty and leadership. Aware that such portraits marked their sitters as figures of esteem and respect in both European and American societies, Native leaders would have seen sitting for them as a means of asserting their stature as diplomats and political leaders. The spectacle generated by such displays could also prove counterproductive, however. At the same time as it marked the sitter as a Native person of authority, the image of indigenous peoples adorned in European goods might signify their subordination in the eyes of many Europeans and Americans. Eager to see Native peoples as in service to some monarch or under the influence of some imperial power, the portraits, combined with the delegates' visit to a European capital, likely marked them as "British" Indians, subjecting themselves to the Crown. While Native sitters saw the portraits as placing themselves on par with European diplomats and leaders, Europeans and Euroamericans could view them as signifying their acceptance of "civilization," defined by subordination to the cultural, political, and social hierarchies of the European and Euro-American world.

Worse, the dress of Native peoples in such portraits also functioned as a source of entertainment for their European and American audiences. Europeans amused themselves by consuming imagery of Native peoples dressed in what they considered fantastical costumes. While their clothing drew upon European manufactured goods, such as luxurious colorful cloths, medallions, and gorgets, the portraits displayed these items in a

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<sup>11</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 124-25; LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother*, 42-43, 48-49.

manner that Europeans thought ridiculous, or fit their exoticized perceptions of Indians. Some articles of clothing and decoration were clearly exoticisms from a European or Euroamerican perspective, such as the feathered turbans featured in a number of the portraits. Others took items and stripped them of their specific contextual uses. Gorgets and great coats, for instance, functioned as military wear, and frequently appeared as a part of military uniform dress in portraits. However, Indians wore them in diplomatic portraits, distinguishing themselves from Europeans or Euroamericans, and reflected the perception of a warlike nature that most of the portraits' audience would have attributed to Native peoples. The cloth robes or strips of cloth which Native leaders wore over their shoulders, in what scholar Nancy Shoemaker refers to as "toga-like" fashion, evoked European and Euroamerican audiences' fascination with Roman history and its parallels with Native peoples. Partially reverential and partially mocking, Europeans commented upon Native leaders' skilled oratory, and compared them to Roman senators in their speaking ability. Their displaying Native peoples in outfits that resembled togas extended this complex analogy from the literary to the visual form, and ultimately served as further entertainment for European and American audiences.<sup>12</sup>

A comparison between Bowles's and the delegates' portraits and those of contemporary Native dignitaries reveal how the former fit into these broader trends. Figures 4 and 5 show the Seneca leader Cornplanter and the Mohawk leader Joseph

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<sup>12</sup> For the re-clothing of Native delegations, see Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming White and Red in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 53-54. For Native people in European portraiture, see *Ibid.*, 77-78. For oratory, see Carolyn Eastman, "The Indian Censures the White Man: 'Indian Eloquence' and American Reading Audiences in the Early Republic," *WMQ* 63, no. 3 (June 2008): 535-64; Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire*, 237-38.



Figure 4. F[rederick] Bartoli, *Ki On Twog Ky (also known as Cornplanter)*, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in (1796), Henry Luce III Center for the Study of American Culture, New York Historical Society, New York.



Figure 5. Charles Wilson Peale, *Joseph Brant/Thayendanegea*, oil on canvas, 27  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 24  $\frac{1}{4}$  (1797), The Portrait Gallery in the Second Bank of the United States, Independence National Historic Park, Philadelphia.





Figure 6. John Trumbull, *Hopothle-Mico*, pencil, 5 X 3 7/8 (1790), Charles Allen Munn Collection, Fordham University Library, New York.

Brant, as they dressed for portraits during diplomatic visits. Both men wore colorful robes of manufactured cloth, with Cornplanter wearing what appears to have been a silver gorget, while Brant wore what appears to have been a brass gorget. Both also wore metallic armbands, and thin strips of black cloth, akin to a scarf, around their necks. Cornplanter has a red cloth draped over his left shoulder, while Brant sported a patterned red, black, and gold cloth. In Figure 6, Creek leader Hopothle Mēkko dons similar dress, with a gorget and a great coat similar to that worn by European and American military officers. To this he added necklaces of beads, ostentatious feathered earrings, and a cloth headwrap resembling a turban in his portrait. Cornplanter wore a turban or cloth cap of his own, decorated it with colorful feathers, wore a nose ring, and wielded a decorative tomahawk calumet. Likewise, Brant wore what appears to have been a cloth headband decorated with metal rings, and series of colorful feathers and flowers in his hair. These



Figure 7. William Hodges, *Cherokee Indian*, oil on canvas, 75cm x 62 cm (1791), RCSSC/P 245, Collection of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, London, UK, <<http://surgicat.rcseng.ac.uk/Details/collect/46033>>, accessed April 27, 2015.



Figure 8. William Hodges, *Cherokee Indian*, oil on canvas, 75cm x 62 cm (1791), RCSSC/P 246, Collection of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, London, UK, <<http://surgicat.rcseng.ac.uk/Details/collect/46027>>, accessed April 27, 2015.

sorts of fashions had become recognizable tropes for European and Euro-American audiences. While this clothing and decoration clearly identified them as Native leaders, powerful people in America, it also turned them into curiosities and objects of visual consumption. By sitting for portraits in these attires, Native leaders engaged in a performance that marked themselves as persons of authority by playing to the expectations and desires of Euroamerican audiences.

Figures 7 and 8 show two members of the delegation deporting themselves in a similar manner, while Figure 9 shows Bowles attempting to approximate this dress. The two members of the delegation, simply described as “Cherokee Indians” by their painter, donned gorgets, metallic armbands, and wore long black cloths or robes draped over their left shoulders. Each wore large earrings, and the man in the first portrait wore a feather in his hair. Bowles, as if he had anticipated the later Cornplanter portrait, wore an elaborate cloth headdress plumed with large white feathers. He too wore a gorget, along with a series of large beaded necklaces. Each wore white laced shirts, most likely gifts their received while in London. Even the postures of the two delegation members correspond to the posture that Brant would later assume. Both artist and sitter adhered to conventions that by the mid-1790s would become commonplace in Native diplomatic portraits.

The spectacle indicated by these portraits had the unfortunate effect of overshadowing the Creeks’ and Cherokees’ diplomatic agenda. Bowles’s inclusion in these portraits, donning dress usually reserved for Native dignitaries and styling himself an “Indian,” symbolized a personal transformation that consumed the public’s attention. Securing passage to England provided a great opportunity to the delegation, but it also



Figure 9. Thomas Hardy, *William Augustus Bowles*, oil on canvas, 49 ¼” x 35 ½” (1791), Collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, NC.

heightened Bowles’s ambitions and the grandiosity of his performance. Having finally secured an audience before the king’s top ministers, Bowles felt inspired to present himself as a Creek chief. In his written correspondence, he shifted from describing himself as a negotiator and representative to being the Creeks’ and Cherokees’ leader. He approached the task as an actor gearing up for a theatrical role. Fashioning a costume to match his role, Bowles began to wear the types of ornamentation Europeans often associated with Indians, such as gorgets, feathers, and beaded necklaces.

Bowles’s performance fits within an Anglo-American tradition of “playing Indian.” When Anglo-Americans donned adornments associated with Native peoples, they engaged in a public display they intended to signify both their attachment to America and their mastery of Native lands and peoples. However, Bowles’s performance

modified the usual meanings of Indian play. As a Loyalist, Bowles had no interest in the aspects of playing Indian that related to American nationalism. Rather than articulate an American identity, Bowles wanted to convey his newfound “Indian” self. His costume functioned as the outward manifestation for his new identity. Bowles made no attempt to hide the fact that he was Anglo-American by birth, but also claimed that the Creeks and Cherokees had accepted him and placed him in positions of leadership. Over one hundred years before “Grey Owl,” the famed Englishman-turned-Ojibwe, Bowles drew upon Native imagery to refashion an identity for himself as an adopted Creek. When introducing himself to King George III via petition, he no longer referred to himself as an intermediary entrusted by Creek and Cherokee leaders to deliver their message. Instead, he had become their military and political leader, a “Generalissimo, & President of the Council” as elected by the chiefs assembled.<sup>13</sup>

Just as the American public played along with the pageantry of groups such as the Society of St. Tammany, Londoners celebrated Bowles’s performance. When the party docked at Portsmouth in October 1790, a prominent naval captain, Sir Andrew Douglas, immediately received them and put them up at the Crown Inn. The decision to have Thomas Hardy, a graduate of the Royal Academy most famous for his paintings of Joseph Haydn, paint Bowles’s portrait further reflects the London public’s acceptance and celebration of his performance. His friend and fellow Loyalist Benjamin Baynton composed and published Bowles’ “authentic memoirs,” telling of his travels throughout America. “In every respect a savage warrior,” Bowles nonetheless “taught them many wise regulations of civil and domestic policy, as well as new rules of military discipline.”

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<sup>13</sup> Bowles to George III, ca. January 3, 1791, NA-UK, FO 4/9, f. 5-18;

A newspaper account of the delegation's arrival lionized Bowles, writing that "from a spirit of enterprise while in America, he penetrated into the country of these Indians...and he has been invested with a principal command of their forces." As the stories told it, the intrepid adventurer Bowles had led the Creeks and Cherokees across the ocean to the King's court, rallying them to the standard of the British Empire, prepared to defend the Crown against perfidious Spaniards.<sup>14</sup>

London's public not only played along with Bowles's performance, but also fit the Creeks and Cherokees into the role of "noble savages" and loyal devotees to the British Crown. Baynton remarked upon their "friendly character...not irritated by resentment, or thirst of revenge," only to describe them as "warlike" a page later. They took in Bowles as a distressed teenager, nursed him to health, and adopted him as one of their own. Like those who would engage in Indian play during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Bowles and those who mythologized him drew upon romantic notions of Indians. However, they used the image of the noble savage not to critique empire and European civilization, but to promote it. The members of the Creek and Cherokee delegation became "chiefs," in London to assert their loyalty to Great Britain and their dependence upon the king for support. The account of the delegation's arrival at Portsmouth listed all six men, including Bowles, as "Cherokee chiefs." Another account described two of the "Missionaries" as chiefs, probably the same two men that Hodges painted. For Londoners, the members of the delegation represented the constituted authorities of the "United Creek and Cherokee Nation," promising the service of 20,000

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<sup>14</sup> For the arrival at Portsmouth, see "On Thursday arrived at Spithead..", *The Times* [London, UK], October 30, 1790. Regarding Thomas Hardy see, Alan Davison, "The Face of a Musical Genius: Thomas Hardy's Portrait of Joseph Haydn," *Eighteenth Century Music* 6, no. 2 (Sept. 2009): 214. For Baynton's memoir, see Baynton, *Authentic Memoirs*, 29, 42.

warriors to the British cause, rather than lower-level warriors sent to deliver a set of petitions. The members of the delegation seemed all too willing to play along with the charade.<sup>15</sup>

Londoners' willingness to play along with Bowles's act reflected their willingness to read into the delegation a narrative of Native submission and subjecthood. Viewed with a colonizing lens, the delegation's visit to London suggested that these Indian chiefs harbored such an attachment to the British Empire that they traversed the ocean to beg for Britons' return. This story lent itself to tales that indulged a patriarchal vision of empire, of abandoned Native "children" seeking out their imperial "father," the king. Likewise, the account of an Englishman-turned-Indian indulged multiple imperial fantasies. Bowles' claims suggested that intrepid Britons could maintain the best of their civilization while adopting the martial intensity supposedly pertaining to Indians. In so doing, he also embodied a masculine ideal, which harness strength and prowess in war alongside refined behavior. Bowles also reflected contemporary fantasies about Europeans' ability to control and direct Native peoples, while at the same time uplifting them through education to join the ranks of the civilized. Most of all, it convinced Londoners of Indians' deep loyalty to Great Britain and their willingness to defend the empire. Baynton's account characterized Bowles's "enthusiastic attachment for the British nation" as equal to "his affection for those by whom he was adopted," synthesizing the two by having Bowles offer to "lead the fighting men of this warlike nation" against Spain. Bowles's Indian dress and his narrative told a story of British

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<sup>15</sup> Baynton, *Authentic Memoirs*, 22-23; "Particulars of the Cherokee Embassy," *London Chronicle*, November 18-20, 1790.

domination of America and its peoples, an ability to harness their war-making power to the advantage of colonists and the imperial state, without ill effect to either.<sup>16</sup>

By embracing the pageantry so wholeheartedly, Bowles enabled the London public's desire to treat them as celebrities rather than serious dignitaries with a substantial agenda. Even though Bowles's Indian play flattered British imperial pride and made him a curiosity in London society, it did not help him or the Creeks and Cherokees achieve their goals. Aside from a couple of brief mentions in the earliest newspaper accounts of their arrival, the excitement seldom dwelled upon potential conflicts with Spain and the United States, or potential diplomatic and military aid. The delegation would never obtain an audience before the king himself, their communications limited to written dispatches filtered through Secretary of State Grenville.

Making matters worse, the contingencies of imperial rivalry that paved the delegation's way to England had turned against them. The only hope the delegation had of obtaining a serious hearing lay in the imperial concerns surrounding the Nootka Crisis. Unfortunately for the Creeks and Cherokees, Spanish and British diplomats had committed themselves to a peaceful resolution of the dispute by the time they reached London. In October 1790, representatives of both empires agreed to set aside the issue until further negotiations settled the matter of territorial and commercial rights in the region. Cash-strapped and indebted from prior rounds of hostilities, neither government wished to participate in another global conflict less than a decade after the conclusion of the American Revolution. Without a war, Britain's interest in Florida and thus the fate of the Creeks and Cherokees dissipated. As a chess piece in a broader and seemingly

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<sup>16</sup> Baynton, *Authentic Memoirs*, 23-26.



imminent struggle, Florida held great value. Considered on its own, not one of the king's ministers viewed it as worth starting a war over.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time that it reached an agreement with Spain, the British government began moving to ease tensions with the United States. In the decade after American independence, Whitehall wavered over whether to antagonize the United States or to shore up commercial and diplomatic relations with them. The Creek and Cherokee delegation had the misfortune to arrive at a time when the pendulum of British policy had swung once again toward peace. Once an object of great imperial interest, the Creeks' and Cherokees' diplomatic ambitions became an embarrassment to a government that no longer wished to provoke Spain or the United States.<sup>18</sup>

As a result, the delegation's attempts to appeal to Anglo-American and Anglo-Spanish hostility met with a frosty reception. When Bowles and the delegation first arrived, they presented their memorial to Grenville, asking him to forward it to the king. Grenville replied with a categorical denial for "any application made to him [the king] for Arms and Ammunition to be used in Military Operations against the United States of America." One might not have expected Grenville or the monarchy to openly sanction a Creek and Cherokee proxy war against the United States, but Grenville could have found ways to provide the arms and ammunition surreptitiously. That he did not move to do so

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<sup>17</sup> *Convention between His Britannick Majesty and the King of Spain* [Escorial, October 28, 1790] (London: Edward Johnston, 1790); John M. Norris, "The Policy of the British Cabinet in the Nootka Crisis," *The English Historical Review* 70, no. 277 (Oct. 1955): 562-80; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 65.

<sup>18</sup> Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, x, chs. 2-5.

provided an indication of the government's attitude toward the delegation, and their hesitancy to commit to Native alliances in general.<sup>19</sup>

With the British Crown no longer preparing for war against Spanish America, the Creeks and Cherokees lost the principal argument in their favor. When Grenville replied to the delegation's requests, he never once mentioned Spain except by implication. Rather than respond to the proposal of an anti-Spanish alliance, he simply ignored it. Grenville's tone amounted to more than discretion. Bowles suggested holding verbal discussions with Grenville, perhaps thinking that the secretary wished to avoid committing sensitive subjects to writing. Grenville replied with a terse message demanding that he "commit [his proposals] to writing." Officials at Whitehall had little interest in negotiations, and Grenville's insistence upon written communications allowed them to demonstrate the fact to American and Spanish diplomats. By the beginning of 1791, Grenville ceased responding to Bowles altogether, although Bowles continued to write him letters. The British government paid to lodge Bowles and the Indians in the city for a few months and gave them some provisions and a small amount of gifts to take back home. Other than that, they received nothing.<sup>20</sup>

Despite all of the factors working against them, the allure of imperial aggrandizement still provided the Creeks and Cherokees with a minor concession that might have lent support towards their material needs and the recognition of their sovereignty. Grenville granted the Creeks and Cherokees, or anyone acting in their name, "an admission to the free ports in His Majesty's West Indian Islands," one of which was

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<sup>19</sup> Grenville to Bowles, Whitehall, December 8, 1790, NA-UK, FO 4-8, ff. 419-20.

<sup>20</sup> Grenville to Bowles, Whitehall, December 8, 1790, NA-UK, FO 4-8, ff. 419-20; Grenville to John Hammond, Whitehall, January 5, 1792, NA-UK, FO 4-14, ff. 13-15.

Nassau. Originally applied to Jamaica and Dominica by Parliament in 1766, renewed repeatedly, and extended to New Providence and Grenada in 1787, the Free Port Acts allowed foreign ships to trade at select "free ports" named in the acts. Essentially, the offer would extend the terms of the Free Port Acts to Creeks and Cherokees or anyone who claimed to operate under Creek or Cherokee sovereignty.<sup>21</sup>

While Grenville might have sought to profit off the Creek and Cherokee deerskin trade, he probably looked at this concession primarily as a means to encourage duty-free smuggling from American and particularly Spanish domains. Most of British commercial policy, and particularly the Free Port Acts, centered upon a desire to penetrate the commercial markets of Spanish America. The sites chosen for the acts, all of them ports in the West Indies, were conspicuous in their proximity to Spanish colonies. With the Creeks' proximity to Spanish Florida and Spanish trade routes leading from Mexico and Cuba to Spain, smugglers could have camouflaged any number of commercial activities under the guise of acting in the Creeks' and Cherokees' name. The notion of a sovereign Creek or Cherokee people probably only interested the Crown as a potential means of securing this trade.<sup>22</sup>

Still, Grenville's offer accorded the Creeks and Cherokees rights which the Free Port Act expressly reserved for nations. This development held potential for both peoples' diplomatic agendas. As historian J. Leitch Wright has noted, the arrangement amounted to "an indirect recognition of Muskogee's sovereignty." While Creeks and

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<sup>21</sup> Grenville to Dorchester, Whitehall, March 7, 1791, NA-UK, CO 42-73, ff. 15-16. For the text of 1787 act, see Act of 27 Geo. III, c. 27. For the 1766 act see Act of 6 Geo. III, c. 49. For the free port system in the Bahamas, see Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1:192. For an examination of the free port system in general, with a particular focus on its role in British trade with Spanish America, see Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America*.

<sup>22</sup> Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America*.

Cherokees never took advantage of this provision, it holds great significance when viewed as part of a century-long process whereby Creeks gradually adopted characteristics of a cohesive nation on the international stage. The British imperial government's willingness to recognize Creeks under the Free Port Act represented a significant step towards their gaining rights on par with European and Euro-American nations under European international law. It suggested that, like all good diplomats, Creeks and Cherokees could exploit Europeans' self-interest to achieve their aims. If they could frame recognition of their sovereignty as conducive to imperial ambitions, full integration into an international diplomatic community could become possible. The delegation that traveled with Bowles proved it by securing the greatest concession yet from a European power toward acknowledgement of full Creek and Cherokee sovereignty.<sup>23</sup>

While a number of obstacles tempered the promise of recognition under the Free Port Act, none of them posed insurmountable challenges. For one, the act stated that nations trading at free ports had to bring their own vessels under their own flags to port. For Cherokees, the lack of an unmediated coastal route did pose a serious problem and likely would have forced them to rely upon the Creeks and their seacoast for trade. The Creeks labored under no such limitation. Instead, their challenge lay in the fact that, as far as discernible, no Creeks possessed ocean-going vessels suitable for trade. While Creeks had large canoes that could and did make the trek to Nassau, these could not carry many goods. This meant that to take full advantage of these provisions, Creeks would have to

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<sup>23</sup> For the implications of the Free Port act as regarded Creeks and Cherokees, see Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 34-35; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 50-54. For the development of a "national" Creek diplomacy, see Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*.

enlist the help of outsiders, purchase ships, or build them themselves. However, this had already been the case with regard to their trade, and had not limited them as much as one would think. Creeks had managed to enlist the help of merchants, fishermen, wreckers, and turtlers frequenting the Florida coast in order to make their way into the Caribbean. With the promise of a regular exchange, British colonists who sought to profit off such trade, such as Miller, Bonamy, and Bowles, would doubtless provide them with boats.

The lack of facilities and expertise in shipbuilding in Creek country made the Creek construction of their own vessels more difficult, but not impossible. Creek country abounded in pine, the type of timber Britons most valued for its use in shipbuilding and production of naval stores. If Creeks did not want to buy ships outright or rely on others for transportation, they could purchase the supplies they lacked and make an effort to hire men with shipbuilding expertise to either educate them in the skill or labor for them. Next to all of the other Creek innovations of this era, the prospect of a shipbuilding Creek nation might not have been as farfetched as it may seem.<sup>24</sup>

The most serious issues related not to the efforts or abilities of Creeks and Cherokees themselves, but to the will and means of their British allies. The precariousness of Bowles's enterprise and Britain's unwillingness to make material contributions in defense of Creek or Cherokee sovereignty threatened to make all of their efforts for naught. Both Spaniards and Americans objected to what they saw as British "interference" with the Creeks, and would place pressure on the British government to stay out of mainland affairs. Creek seafarers had evaded Spanish and British attempts to

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<sup>24</sup> For the preponderance of pine in eighteenth-century Georgia and Florida and its naval uses, see Robert B. Outland III, *Tapping the Pines: The Naval Stores Industry in the American South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), ch. 1.

police the Florida coast for decades, but they might not be able to counteract Spaniards' and Americans' diplomatic pressure on Great Britain. Moreover, Creeks and Cherokees could not count on British military assistance against American aggression. Aside from diplomatic protest against the United States, the best they might hope for would be arms and supplies funneled through private sources in the Bahamas. Unfortunately, even if they established a trade, the Bowles-Miller-Bonamy consortium represented the only established interest in the Bahamas willing to invest in Indian trade outside of Panton, Leslie, and Company. Miller, Bonamy, and Co. rested on a precarious foundation and still had not demonstrated an ability to meet Creek or Cherokee needs. Grenville's concessions promised much, but guaranteed nothing. As it turned out, the arrangement would pose immediate challenges, as the Creek and Cherokee delegation would come home to a land embroiled in conflict.

Still, the lack of official backing disappointed the Creek and Cherokee delegation. Its members had suffered through months of waiting and travel to reach London, only to receive half-hearted encouragement. The Creeks and Cherokees had also spent much of their time in the British capital ill. Treasury bills for the lodging and care of the delegation show that all five members required medical attention for various ailments. An itemized statement shows the government reimbursing over £110 in medical expenses. Wohsi must have gotten the worst of it, for over a third of that amount specifically pertained to him. Disillusion set in among at least one of the delegates. Upon their return to Florida, Tvskenēhv abandoned the party and took refuge with McGillivray in Little Tallassee. He credited the English for treating them "with extraordinary Kindness," but had lost faith in his contacts in the Bahamas. On top of Bowles's inability to secure an

audience with the king or persuade royal officials to grant their requests, Tvskenēhv had observed that Bowles “was treated as a Vagabond, except by Lord Dunmore, John Millar & one or two others his Lordships friends.” Although Tvskenēhv later reconciled with Bowles and his Bahamian associates, his temporary abandonment and testimony reflected a growing pessimism among Creeks and Cherokees that the Crown would ever grant them the support they sought.<sup>25</sup>

The delegation’s outcome did not dissuade Creeks and Cherokees from continuing to pursue useful connections with Britons, though it did cause a divergence in tactics. Throughout the 1780s and early 1790s, Cherokees suffered under constant American assault without a reliable source of arms or aid. The failure to secure steady connections with either British or Spanish colonists convinced many Cherokees that they could no longer count upon outside help. Instead, they signed a treaty with federal officials in October 1791 and traveled to Philadelphia to hold further discussions in January 1792. Secretary of War Henry Knox rejoiced that the Cherokee rapprochement had created an “opening” for American influence, “relatively to Bowle’s.” He hoped that continued progress would lead to the Americans’ “banishing this bold intruder from all the Southern Indians.” However, Knox and other American observers erred in choosing to recognize some Cherokee leaders as representative of “the nation” as a whole. As a

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<sup>25</sup> “Account of Expenditure for Mr. Bowles and five Creek and Cherokee Indians for their Entertainment, and for Presents,” [Whitehall, April 2, 1791], NA-UK, T 1-692, ff. 131-32; McGillivray to Panton, Little Tallassee, October 28, 1791, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1120-23 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 298-300; Bowles to O’Neill, Coweta, December 4, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 2371 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1247-51.

result, they rushed to judgment, presuming they had rooted out Cherokee hostility and the pursuit for British ties within Cherokee country when in fact they had not.<sup>26</sup>

A sizeable number of Cherokees maintained hope in a British alliance against the United States, but geography led them to abandon their ties with the Bahamas. Unlike Creeks, Cherokees did not have direct access to the sea, which would have made the relationship difficult to maintain in even the best of conditions. Their country also lay much closer to the Ohio Valley and they had regular contact with Shawnees and other peoples who lived there, who themselves had direct access to British traders and agents from Canada. An associate of Bowles, George Wellbank, would take up residence in the town of Chickamauga Cherokee leader Dragging Canoe. However, Cherokee demands and logistical realities pulled Wellbank away from the Florida coast and towards the Great Lakes, as Cherokee leaders enlisted him to help in their communications with British officials at Detroit, Sandusky, and Niagara.<sup>27</sup>

The Chickamauga Cherokees opened a correspondence with British Indian agent Alexander McKee, keeping their British ties open and finding ways to employ them in negotiations with Americans. In 1791, Wellbank forwarded a letter from Dragging Canoe to McKee, and Dragging Canoe's brother, the White Owl's Son, traveled to the Maumee Rapids to deliver the message to McKee in person. McKee kept the tenuous British ties open, granting the brothers a handful of prestige goods, namely "a Hat of feathers, two pairs of Arm Bands & a Gorget," as well as provisions, ammunition, and other goods.

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<sup>26</sup> Knox to Washington, War Department [Philadelphia], [January 17, 1792], in *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1936), IV:111-15.

<sup>27</sup> Philip M. Hamer, "The British in Canada and the Southern Indians, 1790-1794," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 2 (1930): 109; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 224.



While not the stockpile of munitions that the Chickamaugas desperately needed, these goods were important. Dragging Canoe had personally requested the clothing in particular, no doubt prizing them as symbols of his ties to the British. Such items not only boosted his own prestige by displaying his access to distant and powerful foreigners, they gave Chickamaugas hope that British officials might aid them yet.<sup>28</sup>

More than providing material aid, the goods served negotiating purposes for Chickamauga Cherokee leaders. When an American agent offered White Owl's Son a set of elaborate clothing, the Chickamauga accepted them, but also boasted of his presents from Detroit. Subtly, he added that they had also given him "powder and lead, as much as he wanted, for himself and three other Cherokees." White Owl's Son intended the story of his visit to see McKee as a cautionary tale. He wanted the agent to know that he did not depend on American largesse and that the Cherokees had access to the Americans' enemies. British goods communicated a message to American diplomats and agents, demonstrating that Cherokees were still capable of cultivating relationships with powerful outsiders. Tenuous as they were, Cherokees prized their British ties as a diplomatic weapon, with the mere threat of a British alliance giving them leverage in negotiations.<sup>29</sup>

The Creeks' and Cherokees' desire to hold out against the United States had far-reaching diplomatic implications north of the Ohio. Both Creek and Chickamauga Cherokee representatives traveled to the Glaize, a site at the confluence of the Auglaize

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<sup>28</sup> George Wellbank to Alexander McKee, Cherokee Nation, April 12, 1791, in Hamer, "The British in Canada and the Southern Indians," 112-13; McKee to Wellbank, [Foot of the Maumee Rapids], July 22, 1791, in Hamer, "The British in Canada and the Southern Indians," 113-14; McKee to Dragging Canoe, Foot of the Maumee Rapids, July 22, 1791, in Hamer, "The British in Canada and the Southern Indians," 114.

<sup>29</sup> James Carey to William Blount, Knoxville, November 3, 1792, in ASP-IA, 1:327-29.

and Maumee Rivers just southwest of Lake Erie, for a meeting of tribes from all over the Eastern Woodlands. No significant leaders seem to have been present among either group and both did little more than observe the meeting. Nevertheless, their very presence attracted the notice of the speakers and emboldened the gathered nations. Speakers from the Shawnees, the Six Nations Haudenosaunee, and the Seven Nations of Canada all stopped to note that the presence of the Creeks and Cherokees signified the strengthening of their alliance. Seneca leader Cowkiller remarked that their presence “will brighten the Chain of friendship with all nations,” while Seven Nations chief Cochenawage produced a large white wampum belt intended to “confirm our union, to take care of your Country...& to listen to our father the King [of Great Britain].” Cochenawage’s speech and the symbolism of the white wampum belt signified a revitalization of pan-Indian efforts to form a defensive alliance against U.S. citizens. In effect, the meeting served as the northern counterpart to the 1787 meetings in Creek country, galvanizing parties among the nations committed to a united war front.<sup>30</sup>

The Glaize meeting had immediate effects upon the policy of all the attendees. The Grand River Mohawk leader Joseph Brant, complained that prior to the conference, trends pushed towards a negotiated settlement with U.S. commissioners in the Ohio Valley. In the months following the meeting, however, “these desirable objects vanished, [and] distrust seemed to prevail [among the Indians].” Brant blamed this change of affairs upon “advice received from the Creek County.” While Brant sought to shift blame for his failed negotiations, the emboldening of Native peoples from the Great Lakes to the

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<sup>30</sup> “Indian Council at the Glaize,” September 30 – October 9, 1792, in E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lt. Governor John Graves Simcoe* (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923-1931), I:218-29; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 103-09.

Chattahoochee in the months following the conference suggest that the presence of the Creeks and Cherokees had a notable effect. Attacks along the Ohio and Cumberland rivers immediately followed the meeting. Shawnee delegates returned with the Creeks and Cherokees to speak among their communities. Despite their lack of ammunition, Creeks, Chickamauga Cherokees, and Shawnees together launched a new series of attacks upon the American communities on the Cumberland River. As Gregory Evans Dowd has shown, their preparations, councils, and speeches adopted an increasingly spiritual fervor. Shawnees consulted a Mohawk diviner, Coocoochee, who spoke of the resistance to American aggression as blessed by the Great Spirit. During the raids on Cumberland, Cherokee leader and conjurer Richard Justice led a war ritual whereby he tore a fresh scalp and tore at it with his hands and teeth.<sup>31</sup>

Certainly, the excitement surrounding the round of pan-tribal councils, tinged with rituals and invocations of spiritual power, played a substantial role in Creeks' and Cherokees' renewed aggression. However, the belief that British officials in Canada would provide them supplies of arms and ammunition influenced their decision. The Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, unwittingly encouraged them in his response to the conference at the Glaize. Believing that their gathering centered upon uniting for the purpose of peace negotiations, Simcoe pledged his support on behalf of the British Crown. Subsequent actions would demonstrate that the various Native groups took Simcoe's pledge of support as including assistance in war. A horrified Simcoe "lament[ed] as a most serious evil the Creeks & Cherokees having taken up arms against

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph Brant to John Graves Simcoe, Foot of the Maumee Rapids, July 28, 1793, in Cruikshank, *Correspondence of...Simcoe*, I:402-03; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 107-110.

the United States.” Like Brant, he feared their decision “may have an unfavorable Influence on the Dispositions of the Western Indians,” pushing them to continue their conflict with American colonists. The lieutenant governor had worked to encourage the Shawnees, Miamis, and other tribes to settle upon a “boundary...which would have permanently protected the interests of His Majesty’s Dominions.” Instead, the sudden appearance of the Creeks and Cherokees in his quarter upended British policy by reigniting the flames of pan-Indian resistance.<sup>32</sup>

As Simcoe’s reaction suggests, British officials disappointed the Creeks, Cherokees, and the other confederated tribes in their expectations of support. In May 1793, the Shawnee delegation who had wintered among the Creeks and Cherokees invited them back to the Maumee Rapids, telling them that this time they would obtain arms and supplies from British agents. A handful of Creeks went along, on whom next to no information seems to exist. Presumably, they hailed from the same core group of Creeks that worked alongside Bowles and Wellbank, the latter of whom cooperated with the Shawnee delegates in drumming up support for their mission. As for the Cherokees, while the Upper towns held a council and refused to assent to the Shawnees’ plan, the Chickamaugas responded favorably. Like other American observers, the U.S. territorial governor in Cumberland disregarded the Chickamauga response, stating only that “the Cherokee Chiefs are for peace with the United States.” However, when “the council broke...[and] the Shawanese Ambassadors with Wellbanks proceeded to the Northward,”

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<sup>32</sup> Simcoe to “the Western Indians,” n.d, in Cruikshank, *Correspondence of...Simcoe*, I:230-31; Simcoe to George Hammond, Navy Hall [Niagara], July 24, 1793, in Cruikshank, *Correspondence of...Simcoe*, V:64-66.

a group of Chickamaugas accompanied them. The pan-Indian alliance, though starting to flag, very much persisted in hopes of external support.<sup>33</sup>

The group that traveled with the Shawnees had the backing of influential figures in Cherokee country, demonstrating that a sizeable portion of the Cherokees still held out for a British-backed pan-Indian alliance. Wellbank carried with him letters from the elderly Chickamauga leader Little Turkey, and a veteran of the London delegation, Wohsi. The correspondence repeated assertions and pleas of years past. Wohsi begged for help, arguing that “without your assistance at this critical juncture...Americans are continually encroaching upon us.” Little Turkey asked for “Arms, and ammunition &c” in order to “procecute the War with Vigour & the sooner put an End to our dispute.” Even after years of isolation and rejection from British officials, they at least had a sliver of hope that Britain would resume its alliance with them.<sup>34</sup>

However, clues in the messages indicate that Cherokees remained skeptical that their effort would produce results. Even Little Turkey admitted that “It is now 10 years since the English left us, & I have never heard anything to be depended upon [from them].” In light of this statement, Little Turkey’s assertion that the Shawnees “must have a good foundation & back for what they tell us,” strikes the reader as cautious and jaded, rather than the supreme confidence in promises of British aid that they projected to American authorities. Most Cherokees expressed even greater skepticism. Little Turkey’s

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<sup>33</sup> William Blount to Henry Knox, Knoxville, May 28, 1793, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, IV:262-66; Charles Storer to Timothy Pickering, New York, October 4, 1793, in *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, ed. Theodore J. Crackel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 14:219-21.

<sup>34</sup> Kahanetah [Little Turkey] to McKee, Cherokee Nation, May 20, 1793, in Hamer, “British in Canada and the Southern Indians,” 121-22; Moses Price [Wohsi] to McKee, [Cherokee Nation, ca. May 20, 1793], in Hamer, “British in Canada and the Southern Indians,” 122-23.

claim that the Cherokees “appear all so unanimous” in favor of the Shawnee proposal belied the fact that the Chickamaugas stood alone. Other Cherokees had given up on obtaining British assistance, and continued to rely entirely upon negotiations with American officials.<sup>35</sup>

Some defiant Chickamaugas even considered fleeing their homeland, despairing of their ability to continue to extract political and territorial concessions but unwilling to submit to American demands. Wohsi stated that plans to “cross the Mississippi...had been in adjutation [adjudication],” and only the arrival of “the Chiefs from your Nation” [the Shawnees] had put a stop to these discussions. The Chickamaugas had moved west once before, to the outer reaches of Cherokee country, to achieve greater separation from invading Americans. Now, in a moment of frustration, some considered abandoning it altogether rather than submit to a negotiated peace with the United States. When British forces left Cherokee country, they had told the Cherokees that “when we were distressed to look to you and send to you for assistance.” However, after ten years of silence and even outright rejection, most “distressed” Cherokees could only conclude that Britain had abandoned them for good.<sup>36</sup>

The failure of the 1793 Canadian expedition would finally quash any faith the Chickamaugas had in British aid. As Little Turkey suspected, the Shawnee delegation had offered the Chickamaugas false hope, as the British government had no intention of lending them support beyond limited supplies of goods. When the delegation reached the

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<sup>35</sup> Kahanetah [Little Turkey] to McKee, Cherokee Nation, May 20, 1793, in Hamer, “British in Canada and the Southern Indians,” 121-22.

<sup>36</sup> Moses Price [Wohsi] to McKee, [Cherokee Nation, ca. May 20, 1793], in Hamer, “British in Canada and the Southern Indians,” 122-23; Cherokee leaders to George III, on the Chattahoochee near Coweta, May 6, 1789, NA-UK, CO 42-68, ff. 296-99.

Maumee Rapids, they and the other groups camped there sent a message to Simcoe stating that “we (the Creeks & Cherokees) are upon our Feet & ready to start [for war against the Americans] when we receive the supplies we are in need of.” They cited Simcoe’s regretful speech after the Glaize council the year prior, claiming to “Speak to you in consequence of your own Words, to send us as soon as possible the assistance we are in want of.” When they made their way to Niagara, Simcoe crushed their hopes. He referred to the Shawnees’ assurances of arms and ammunition as “improper and unauthorized promises” and regarded both Creek and Cherokee attacks against American citizens as “a most serious evil.” Simcoe feared a general Indian conflict spreading across the Eastern Woodlands that British officials did not intend to officially support. He essentially turned the delegation away empty-handed, almost certainly offering a few gifts, but no promises of British backing or significant quantities of arms and ammunition. The delegation returned home, and with them departed the last significant Cherokee effort to repair their British alliance.<sup>37</sup>

The attitude of British officials in Canada and the Ohio Valley closely reflected those of Spanish officials in Louisiana and the Floridas. The complex and confusing British policy involved using Indians to halt American expansion as a sort of “buffer” zone to block American expansion, but sought to restrain them from engaging in active conflict. Like Spanish colonial governors, Governor-General Dorchester wanted to avoid anything that might bring British forces into direct conflict with Americans, or force

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<sup>37</sup> “Western Indians” to Simcoe, Foot of the Maumee Rapids, July 16, 1793, in Cruikshank, *Correspondence of...Simcoe*, V:59-60; Simcoe to McKee, Navy Hall [Niagara], July 23, 1793, in Hamer, “British in Canada and the Southern Indians,” 123; Simcoe to Alured Clarke, Navy Hall [Niagara], July 29, 1793, in Hamer, “British in Canada and the Southern Indians,” 124-26. I explore Spanish plans to use Creeks as a “buffer” against American encroachment into Florida and Louisiana in chapter 2.

Britain to expend large sums on containing the growth of American settlements. In the wake of the Cherokee and Shawnee visit, Simcoe warned McKee “to prevent any interruption to the prospect of Peace,” and insisted upon his “strictly adhering to the system of perfect neutrality which Lord Dorchester has constantly directed.” Even this cynical notion of British neutrality had serious and negative consequences for Native peoples. British imperial planners did not want the expense of arming and funding a prolonged Native-U.S. conflict, and certainly did not want Indians to draw Britain itself into open warfare against the United States. For them, the more aggressive propositions of Native peoples and their Loyalist allies undermined the foundation of British policy. They saw Indians as a cost-effective way of protecting their imperial claims, and expensive conflicts would run counter to this rationale.<sup>38</sup>

Just like Spanish policies further south, the British outlook eventually proved untenable. It rested upon a belief among British officials in Canada that the United States would crumble under the weight of its own internal problems, particularly its weak central government and disputes among its citizens. From contemporary observations, the expectation appeared reasonable. Westerners flirted with creating separatist republics supported by Spanish financial and commercial backing, and a U.S. senator from Tennessee would later engage in similar talks with the British ambassador at Philadelphia. The United States’ very founding occurred as a cacophonous rupture of individual grievances with government authority, and such political turmoil had plagued the former colonies ever since. However, the ignorance of policy makers at Whitehall

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<sup>38</sup> Simcoe to McKee, Navy Hall [Niagara], July 23, 1793, in Hamer, “British in Canada and the Southern Indians,” 123; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, x, chs. 1 and 5.



pushed these notions to ridiculous ends. One imperial planner actually believed that Kentuckians and Ohio Valley Indians might cooperate with one another against the federal government, despite the deep hostility between them. The chaotic nature of the trans-Appalachian region created an environment in which imperial imaginations ran wild and uncertainty reigned.<sup>39</sup>

British policy makers failed to realize the connection between westerners' irritation with the federal government and their aggression towards Native peoples. The Washington Administration's reluctance to countenance naked aggression against Native peoples formed one of the largest issues driving western resentment of eastern politicians. Britain, or Spain for that matter, might have successfully exploited this issue, but they could not have done so while also protecting Native sovereignties. Any alliance with Americans in the trans-Appalachian region would have come at the expense of Native peoples. Ironically, British or Spanish officials might have been able to exploit the fractures in American society most effectively by offering stronger support to Native peoples. The more trans-Appalachian colonizers failed in their attempts to seize Native land, the more they would have resented the U.S. federal government inability or unwillingness to "protect" them. Britain's risk-averse, cost-conscious, and somewhat naïve policy of the time prevented its agents and officials from fully exploiting this dynamic.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 237-40 and chs. 6-8; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 62-63.

<sup>40</sup> For the tension Indian affairs produced in American society and government, see Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*. For British offers of mediation, see Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 68-73.

In general, British officials' expectation that Native peoples not fight intruding Americans was unrealistic. Keeping Americans off Native land required open conflict in light of a U.S. refusal to respect Native rights. British officials offered to mediate a treaty between Native peoples and the United States in the hopes of denying Native lands to the United States without military engagement. However, without the threat of force from Britain's end, the United States had little incentive to agree to such demands. Although British policy would later shift towards a more vigorous support of Native peoples in the trans-Appalachian region, the change would occur too late and prove too halting in duration to alter the trend towards American conquest of Native lands and displacement of Native peoples. The concept of the buffer zone would remain in Britain's Native American policy for decades, but without effective support to make it feasible.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the failure of their efforts to construct British and Spanish alliances, the actions of groups like the Chickamaugas show that Native peoples continued to shape the world around them. They forced their demands and needs into European and American policy conversations, and made national and imperial strategists reckon with their sovereignty. Even beleaguered and land-locked Native peoples made and maintained regular contact with European agents, and British, Spanish, and American officials alike could not reconcile Native demands and agendas with their idealized imperial policies. Americans could not regulate or even track the movements of Native peoples in their pretended domains. As the next chapter will explore, they also found it impossible to govern Native peoples' relations with outsiders or establish any sort of jurisdiction or control over them. In fact, federal officials would come to rely upon Native sovereignties

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<sup>41</sup> Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 92.

in their effort to establish greater power over individual states. Britons and Spaniards conceived of Native peoples as pliable client polities rather than true allies, but found themselves unable to control them any more than Americans could. Native sovereignties continued to play a crucial role in late-eighteenth-century North America. Though under assault, Native peoples continued to influence events in the trans-Appalachian region, and showed few signs of actually submitting to either Europeans' or Americans' demands.

Ultimately, the Creeks' and Cherokees' experiences with British officials in Canada and England point to the key problem for many Native polities of the Eastern Woodlands. For so long, many of them had found ways of turning European imperial competition to their advantage due to the relative weakness of the European presence across the continent. However, by the late eighteenth century, imperial rivalry began to diminish in North America. Unlike in past decades, Creeks and Cherokees could not convince Britons or Spaniards to invest significant resources in them in exchange for protecting their colonies or harming imperial rivals. Indebted in the wake of two imperial wars that had centered on North America, both Britain and Spain sought to avoid another expensive conflict on that continent.

Nootka was an exception that proved the rule: whereas a contested territory with valuable fur resources might have precipitated a broader conflict in previous decades, discretion ruled the day in the early 1790s. Spain surrendered its pretensions to Nootka rather than start a war. Consequently, both Britain and Spain proved less willing to support groups like the Creeks and Cherokees, who would counter the imperial or colonial ambitions of others. Throughout the decade, British and Spanish officials would

repeatedly chose to leave Native peoples to their own devices or offer them miniscule and conditional support in their struggles with American citizens. Such decisions exacerbated a chaotic situation, whereby Native peoples could not avoid conflict with Americans, but had fewer and fewer material and diplomatic resources to draw on to oppose them.

Native peoples' declining access to Atlantic networks came not from their inability to construct and maintain them, even at a geographic remove from their would-be partners, but to Europeans' unwillingness to sustain and support them as allies and partners. This would prove the single most decisive factor in the declining situation of Native peoples between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River.

Despite all of these challenges, many Creeks persisted in their efforts to reconstruct or build new transatlantic connections. They would not give up on their attempts to resurrect trade and diplomacy with agents of the British Empire, but still saw British colonists in the Bahamas as their best path to achieving this goal. Bowles, for all of his failings, remained central in their efforts. Outside of Panton, Leslie, and Company, no one else possessed his ties to both Creek communities and powerful interests in the British Empire. The efforts of these Creeks upon the delegation's return would continue to revolve around a means of reestablishing their British networks, while the contest to retain the Oconee lands still loomed over their affairs. Bowles embraced the opportunity the Oconee crisis continued to provide him, but would soon chafe under the pressure of having to make good on his promises of British support. Without aid and only minor and informal recognition from the Crown, Bowles sought to cobble together what he could from his contacts in the Bahamas. The dying throes of this struggle would define the last Creek diplomatic efforts in the Atlantic for decades.



## Chapter 5

### **The “lying Captain,” the “Sinceless People,” and “those designing men”: Deception, Disappointment, and The Growing Isolation of Creek Country, 1790-95**

Not intimidated by the King of Spain, Coweta Hitchiti mēkko Okillissa Chupka addressed King Carlos IV with a terse salutation of “Brother,” rather than the customary and more deferential “Father.” Throughout the text of the letter, he spoke to the Spanish king as an equal. Instead of the supplicatory tone with which Creek leaders usually wrote to European monarchs, the irritated mēkko demanded compliance with a request. “Our beloved friend and father (Gen<sup>1</sup>. Bowles) is in your Land,” he stated, “[and] we wish you to send him back.” Bowles, by then a prisoner in Spanish custody, represented Lower Creeks’ strained ties to the British imperial system. Lower Creeks like Okillissa Chupka considered Spanish interference with their diplomatic efforts nearly as an affront to their political and territorial sovereignty. “The Land we live in is our own,” Okillissa Chupka continued, “& we are determined to have whom we wish in it.” While Spanish officials saw the prospect of Anglo-Creek trade along the Florida coast as violation of their jurisdiction and territory, the Lower Creeks who sought this exchange viewed themselves as exercising a sovereign right to host and negotiate with whom they wished.<sup>1</sup>

Okillissa Chupka singled out the individuals he believed responsible for this hostile turn in Spanish policy: “those designing men M<sup>c</sup>Gillivray & Panton.” The mēkko told the king that McGillivray and Panton had “misled” him, and warned him not to let them “deceive you, as they have done us.” Okillissa Chupka argued that Bowles had not sought to craft an anti-Spanish alliance as McGillivray and Panton had implied. Rather,

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<sup>1</sup> “A Talk from the Kings, Chiefs & Warriors of the Creek Nation” to Carlos IV, Cowetah Old Town [Coweta Tallahassee], October 24, 1792, PLC, reel 7, ff. 1658-63.

he had partnered with Creeks to reopen diplomatic connections with British colonists, officials, and merchants. Lower Creeks sought not to supplant their relationship with Spain, but to add to it. “We mean to hold the Spaniards by one hand & the English by the other,” he elaborated. They sought not to tether themselves to one imperial regime or the other but to preserve a multifaceted system of Creek diplomacy that allowed them to derive strength from their position as a well-connected nation, serving as arbiters between Europeans and Euroamericans in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Like McGillivray and Panton, Bowles had self-interested ambitions. Yet his perceived utility to Creek network building distinguished Bowles in the eyes of Lower Creeks such as Okillissa Chupka. Men like McGillivray and Panton, he argued, sought to undermine the legitimate interests of most Creeks, as expressed in diplomacy and trade. In contrast, Bowles allowed certain Lower Creek leaders and communities to establish independent ties to the broader Atlantic world and gave them greater freedom to negotiate the terms of their relationships with outsiders. To many Lower Creeks, he represented connections that they saw as vital components of their sovereignty.

However, other Creeks disagreed with Okillissa Chupka’s assessment of Bowles, McGillivray, and Panton. While they shared the mēkko’s concern for Creek sovereignty in diplomatic endeavors, they disapproved of his choice of associates. In mid-1800, a group of Upper Creek leaders led by Fushatchee Mēkko asserted that they would not countenance “the Lying talks of Bowles [who is] Named by us the lying Captain.” Bowles had earned that epithet with his failed schemes and the disappointment of his promised connections. The assemblage of Upper Creek leaders marveled that any of the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Lower Creeks would continue to support him. As such, they dismissed his supporters as “Sinceless people” and pleaded with Vicente Folch, then-governor of Spanish West Florida, not to conflate the Lower Creeks’ actions with their own. “The Whole of us upper Creeks and every place belonging is all of one mind & is determined to adhere to you,” they stated, “and not forsake you by the talks in the Lower Creeks as they will.” Just as Okillissa Chupka articulated his vision of Creek sovereignty in defiant and assertive tones, the group led by Fushatchee Mēkko voiced a desire for negotiated coexistence designed to minimize conflict. They dismissed the approach of other Creeks as foolish and risky. Instead, they sought to avert violence and preserve the existing channels of trade as much as possible.<sup>3</sup>

To Fushatchee Mēkko, the most prudent course of diplomacy did not involve relying upon adventurers like Bowles. Many Creek leaders increasingly dismissed restoring ties with Britain as a fantasy and sought to concentrate on meliorating relations with their Spanish and American neighbors. This turn away from aggressive transatlantic diplomacy and towards making concessions to Americans, reflected the efforts of McGillivray at the dawn of the 1790s. Creek leaders like McGillivray and Fushatchee Mēkko began to view minimizing conflict with both their American and Spanish neighbors as the most prudent policy. This turn in the diplomacy of some Creek communities was both symbolized and crystallized by McGillivray and other Creek leaders’ decision to sign a treaty with the U.S. federal government at New York in 1790.

This turn away from transatlantic diplomacies, arising out of the ultimate failure of Creek-Spanish and Creek-British negotiations, renewed divides among and between

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<sup>3</sup> Fushatchee Mēkko, Opay Mēkko [of] Tuskegee, et. al. to Vicente Folch, July 8, 1800, AGI, PC, leg. 216A and PLC, reel 13, ff. 284-88.



Upper and Lower Creeks. The Treaty of New York actually forced both Americans and Creeks to make significant concessions, including many tacit recognitions of Creek sovereignty by the United States. However, it also included an agreement to cede the Oconee lands to the United States, a provision that outweighed all other considerations in the eyes of most Lower Creeks. Confident in their possession of political and territorial sovereignty, they felt little need to have Americans acknowledge rights they already possessed and felt capable of defending. They viewed the surrender of the Oconee lands as a capitulation and refused to honor the agreement, rejecting the treaty party's authority to cede lands with but minimal Lower Creek input. The ensuing controversy placed Creek communities at odds and stymied Creek-U.S. negotiations for nearly a decade. Ultimately, Creeks' rejection by Spanish and British negotiators created a situation in which Creek diplomacy shifted from a proactive footing with transatlantic dimensions to a defensive, reactive, and locally-minded state.

### **THE TREATY OF NEW YORK**

Alexander McGillivray and other Creek leaders' decision to sign the Treaty of New York had its roots in problems with Spanish officials as well as simmering differences between most Upper and Lower Creeks. McGillivray had helped to construct an alliance between the three groups that initially met their respective needs. Spanish officials needed the support of an influential figure among the Creeks and McGillivray provided just that. Meanwhile, he made himself indispensable to Lower Creeks by positioning of himself as the arbiter of Spanish networks, as they had few diplomatic and trade alternatives. McGillivray used their reliance upon him to maintain the facade that he led and represented the Creeks as a whole, which allowed him to benefit from

preferential treatment by Spanish officials and a lucrative role in regional trade.

Pretending to exercise a greater command than he actually wielded, McGillivray kept the potentially explosive situation under control by using his Spanish and Loyalist connections to satisfy Lower Creek objectives. He had seemingly secured Spain as an ally against American colonization and used trade networks centered in Pensacola to provide Lower Creeks with arms and ammunition to beat back encroaching Americans.

This unity of purpose between the three broke down when Spanish officials curtailed ammunition supplies in the late 1780s. With McGillivray's connections no longer proving useful, Lower Creeks had little reason to support him. Their turn towards using the Bahamas, Apalachee, and the eastern coast of Florida as diplomatic and exchange outlets reflected their frustration with Spanish officials, while forcing McGillivray to choose between the Lower Creeks and his Spanish-Loyalist networks. His own flirtations with Bowles and the Bahamas had threatened to alienate him from Panton, Leslie, and Company and Spanish officials. However, remaining committed to his Spanish-Loyalist networks would put him at cross-purposes with the Lower Creeks. McGillivray made his decision when he realized that he would wield less influence over Bowles and his partners than he did with Panton and Leslie and Spanish officials. After Spanish officials relented on some of their munitions restrictions, McGillivray chose to support his existing connections, driving a wedge between himself and the Lower Creeks.

Even so, McGillivray's dispute with Spanish officials convinced him to explore new political and diplomatic options. Spaniards' attempt to use trade sanctions against the Creeks had undermined McGillivray's credibility and created an opportunity for outsiders to draw Lower Creeks away from his influence. Worse, it had aimed to reduce

McGillivray to a mere pawn in Spanish imperial policy. Although McGillivray still valued his partnership with Panton, Leslie, and Company, he wished to limit his dependence upon Spanish officials as much as possible. The quarrel also sapped his inclination to fight for the Oconee lands. While the issue had proved an effective rallying point to draw Creeks together and forge alliances with neighboring peoples, McGillivray had struggled to find means to continue the conflict. He had seen outsiders exploit the demand for arms and ammunition it created, threatening to erode his political leverage in Creek country. Confronted with these issues, McGillivray began to reconsider both the Oconee land issue and the exclusivity of his networks.

Having reached the limits of what alliance with Spain and the war over the Oconee lands could grant him politically, McGillivray became willing to entertain American peace overtures. Goods from American traders and gifts from American officials would provide him with a new source of material and social capital in Creek country, while allowing him to play Spanish and American officials against one another. Strong ties with the American federal government might enhance his status as a leader and diplomat among the Creeks. Moreover, peace with the Americans would end the endemic cycle of violence that had consumed the eastern margins of Creek country for decades, while also reducing Creeks' need for gunpowder. The United States federal government would vie with Spanish officials for McGillivray's attention, all while reducing his burdens regarding war and the need to secure munitions.

The evolution of the Oconee land dispute exposed a growing discrepancy between McGillivray's ambitions and Creek needs. American insistence upon obtaining the lands meant that a negotiated peace would likely compel Creeks to surrender them.

McGillivray had always viewed the Oconee lands as nothing more than a negotiating tool. In 1787, at the height of his pan-Indian alliance-building efforts, he had offered to bargain the Oconee lands for the right to establish a port under American commercial protection at the mouth of the St. Marys River. Yet for most Creeks, particularly those of the Lower towns, the Oconee lands served an integral material need as hunting grounds. The reduction of game and the increase of the cost of goods in recent decades had only made these lands more important. Moreover, their loss would bring Americans closer to the Lower Creek towns, increasing the potential for violent disputes and competition between the two over resources. No evidence indicates that McGillivray contemplated how this cession would damage Lower Creek communities, only how it could maximize his political and diplomatic position in the region.<sup>4</sup>

While changes in Spanish-Creek relations pushed McGillivray to negotiate with the Americans, a simultaneous shift in U.S. political affairs made the Treaty of New York possible. The falling out between McGillivray and the Lower Creeks coincided with the development of a stronger central authority in the United States. After previous negotiations with Georgia officials failed, Creek leaders had looked to Congress to ensure peace. Congress's appointed commissioner to the Rock Landing talks in 1787 disappointed them with his inability and disinclination to police the state of Georgia. McGillivray complained that "we expected that he was come with full Power to do our Nation Justice...but I found that we were deceived in our expectations, & he might as well have not come into our Nation." Two Lower Creek leaders, Yvholv Mēkko of Coweta and Nehē Mēkko of Cusseta, complained that they had "expected Mr. White [the

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<sup>4</sup> White to Knox, Fayetteville, May 24, 1787, ASP-IA, 1:20-21.

congressional commissioner] would inform the State of Georgia...that we were their friends.” Creek leaders hoped that Congress’s appointed representatives would serve a role similar to the British Indian agents before them. As Britain’s Superintendent of Indian Affairs had sought to reprimand Georgians who cheated Creeks or coveted their land, Creeks viewed agents of Congress as a moderating influence that would restrain violent elements in the state.<sup>5</sup>

With the ratification of a new federal constitution in 1787 and the election of a new government under that constitution in 1788, the United States finally acquired a stronger central authority willing and able to restrain Georgia. Native diplomacy represented one of the key arenas in which new President George Washington and his Secretary of War Henry Knox wished to assert federal supremacy. As Gregory Ablavsky argues, the Washington administration defined Indian affairs as a federal responsibility based upon various powers granted by the Constitution. For many reasons, the administration selected the dispute between Georgia and the Creeks as the first trial of this new authority. Georgia epitomized how disastrous a state pursuing its own Indian policy could be. The state’s citizens provoked a conflict with the Creeks and their officials took a hard line with Creek leaders in negotiations, yet the state’s militia proved woefully incapable of backing up its threats. The Washington administration could prove to the nation the wisdom of placing Indian affairs under federal jurisdiction by succeeding where Georgia could not.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> McGillivray to O’Neill, Little Tallassee, April 18, 1787, PLC reel 3, ff. 317-23; Hallowing King [Yvholv Mēkko] and Fat King [Nehē Mekko] [to George Mathews], Coweta, June 14, 1787, ASP-IA, I:32.

<sup>6</sup> For the Administration’s definition of federal power over Indian affairs, see Ablavsky, “Beyond the Indian Commerce Clause,” 1040-43. For Washington’s decision to seek federal intervention in Creek relations, see Washington to U.S. Senate, New York, August 7, 1789, ASP-IA, I:12. For Knox’s advice relative to this decision, see Henry Knox to Washington, War Office [New York], July 6, 1789, ASP-IA,

Paradoxically, the very prospect of establishing and defining a federal jurisdiction would itself come to depend upon Native sovereignties during the republic's early years, making a Creek treaty all the more important. As Lisa Ford argues, the federal government's role as peacemaker and mediator in conflicts between the states and Native peoples led the latter to accord it a certain degree of power in mediating disputes in Indian country. Federal agents practiced a jurisdiction founded upon delegated Native territorial sovereignty in punishing Americans in Indian country, and particularly in Creek country. By authority of the Creeks and other Native peoples, federal agents used Native territories to establish a precedent for trying cases and issuing punishments under federal jurisdiction.<sup>7</sup>

With regard to foreign affairs, the administration viewed a treaty as a means of eliminating Spanish and British contacts with the Creeks as a way to define and assert certain aspects of U.S. sovereignty abroad. While the administration acknowledged that the Treaty of Paris of 1783 did not eradicate Native territorial, political, or legal sovereignties, it argued that it did preclude Europeans from interfering with these lands or their inhabitants without American permission. Thomas Jefferson would articulate this view in arguing to both Spanish and British officials that "no other white nations can become their patrons, protectors or Mediators, nor in any shape intermeddle" with Indians inside U.S. claims. Sovereignty in trans-Appalachia operated on two separate levels according to the U.S. federal government. As respected dealings with Americans, Native peoples possessed these lands and retained a significant degree of political and

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1:15-16. Also see Randolph C. Downes, "Creek-American Relations, 1790-1795," *The Journal of Southern History* 8, no. 3 (Aug. 1942): 350-51; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 36-71; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 137-38; Wright, "Creek-American Treaty," 381, 383-85, 393-94.

<sup>7</sup> Ford, *Settler Sovereignty*, 32-34.

legal autonomy. However, as regarded “white nations” such as Britain or Spain, the administration considered this land U.S. territory, its peoples under U.S. protection, and any attempts by outsiders to interpose between Americans and Native peoples as unlawful. In effect, these prohibitions amounted to an attempt to constrain Native political and legal sovereignties by declaring their negotiations with Europeans illegal under international law.<sup>8</sup>

Once again, the Washington administration would have to rely on Native sovereignties to enforce its vision of American sovereignty. Creek country abutted Spanish colonial posts and teemed with agents and traders professing British and Spanish subjecthood, despite lying well inside what the United States considered its territory with respect to the rights of Europeans. Practically speaking, the United States could not enforce its legal claims to have prohibited this activity. The federal government lacked the strength to employ force against Europeans in areas where Creeks predominated and could not compel Native peoples to comply, legally or otherwise. If Creeks agreed to repudiate Spanish ties, expel Loyalist traders, and acknowledge the administration’s definition of their sovereignty by treaty, it would bolster the federal government’s efforts to define U.S. rights over trans-Appalachia and redefine its relationship with European powers under international law.<sup>9</sup>

Negotiations leading up to the Treaty of New York reveal how limited American power was in comparison to that of many Native peoples, even after the ratification of the 1787 constitution. Federal and state management of Indian affairs during the first decades

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Notes of a conversation with George Hammond,” [Philadelphia, December 12, 1792], in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. John Catanzariti (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 24:717–21; Ablavsky, “Beyond the Indian Commerce Clause,” 1063–65.

<sup>9</sup> Ablavsky, “Beyond the Indian Commerce Clause,” 1063–65.

of independence had much more in common with European colonial regimes than they did with later policies. Americans found themselves forced to recognize Native sovereignties and to compete with European empires in securing favorable agreements with Native peoples. Creek connections to European empires epitomized these challenges. Thomas Jefferson lamented that, through his access to Spanish and Loyalist networks, McGillivray “enjoyed a monopoly of the commerce of the Creek nation” which emboldened him. Jefferson observed that McGillivray “consider[ed] these privileges as the principal sources of his power over that nation” and that he would not part with them in negotiations. Creeks had proven that they could resist American demands over the course of the previous decade, leaving the United States few means to extract concessions from them. To entice McGillivray into signing a treaty, the federal government had to acquiesce to his demands.<sup>10</sup>

Foreshadowing the relationship between the development of federal jurisdiction and Native sovereignties, Jefferson recommended placing a veneer of American regulation over the Panton and Leslie “monopoly.” The president would issue licenses to all traders operating among the Creeks, but “[w]hen a citizen applies for a license who is not of M<sup>c</sup>.Gillivray’s partnership, he will be told that but a given number could be licensed by the treaty, and that the number is full.” In short, federal officials would only approve applicants from among Panton and Leslie’s traders. Jefferson advocated a sham licensing system that would provide the illusion of federal control over Creek trade. That way, the U.S. could protect its theoretical authority to regulate Indian commerce, while in practice bowing to McGillivray’s wishes. He attempted to rationalize his decision by

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<sup>10</sup> Jefferson to Washington, [New York], July 29, 1790, PLC, reel 5, ff. 1574-58.



suggesting that federal officials might convince McGillivray and Panton to “substitut[e] citizens of the U.S. instead of British subjects” as their traders, thereby salvaging in part the administration’s commitment to “excluding both British and Spaniards from tha[t] country.” Nevertheless, Jefferson admitted that Creeks had a right “to withhold their commerce, to place it under what monopolies or regulations they please[d],” essentially conceding that they could do little to prevent Creeks from trading with whomever they chose. The report constituted a startling admission of the limitations of American power relative to the Creeks and exposed the contradictions inherent in the administration’s concept of U.S. and Native sovereignties.<sup>11</sup>

Jefferson’s recommendation followed a general tendency within the Washington administration towards quietly recognizing Native sovereignties, even while asserting claims to exclude others from their territory. The matter was not just practical, but ideological. Administration officials had trouble reconciling U.S. colonialism with republican ideology. Jefferson’s admission that Creeks had the right to regulate their own trade revealed a hesitation to disregard what he would have considered the natural rights of Native peoples. Other figures made statements that complemented Jefferson’s. Henry Knox advised Washington that Native polities “ought to be considered as foreign nations, not as the subjects of any particular state,” hence the need to negotiate treaties with them as if they were sovereign states. In public, administration officials disguised such sentiments to protect their claims in trans-Appalachia and forestall European influence in the region. Privately, they acknowledged that Native lands remained outside American control and Native peoples outside the reach of American law. The Washington

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

administration consistently acknowledged Native self-governance in policy decisions and presumed it lacked the right to interfere with their internal affairs, even as it sought to keep Europeans out of their council houses.<sup>12</sup>

The administration's compromises on Creek trade reveal its insecurities regarding U.S. and Native sovereignties. Washington himself realized that the agreement with McGillivray on Creek trade contradicted his administration's doctrine, so much so that he felt he compelled to defend it in private remarks to the U.S. Senate. Nodding to most Americans' wish to halt Indian trade with British and Spanish agents, Washington lamented "the caprice of two foreign powers [Britain and Spain]" among the Creeks. However, he argued that to exclude British and Spanish traders "will require time, as the present arrangement [Creek trade via Panton and Leslie] can not be suddenly broken without the greatest violation of faith and morals." The president proposed to solve this dilemma by appending a "secret article" to the treaty, which he would submit to the Senate for ratification but not publish in the public copies of the treaty. Most likely, federal officials kept these provisions secret because they knew that they would foster public outrage, while also acknowledging greater weakness on the world stage than the United States wished to project. American leaders wanted to demonstrate the new nation's strength to European audiences, particularly regarding its insistence upon policing trans-Appalachia. A public confession of their inability to keep Spanish and Loyalist agents out of this territory would have contravened this agenda.<sup>13</sup>

The "secret article" regarding Creek trade sought to pander to American hard-liners while keeping federal policy flexible. It made a half-hearted commitment to forcing

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.; Knox to Washington, [New York, July 7, 1789], in *Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, 3:134-40; Ablavsky, "Beyond the Indian Commerce Clause," 1060-62.

<sup>13</sup> Washington to the U.S. Senate, New York, August 4, 1790, PLC, reel 5, ff. 1584-56.

the Creeks to trade exclusively with American citizens in future, stipulating that “if substantial and effectual arrangements shall be made for that purpose by the United States,” Creek trade “shall be carried on through the Ports and Citizens of the United States” by August 1, 1792. Until then, “the said Commerce may be carried on through its present channels and according to its present regulations,” meaning through Spanish ports and British goods via Pantón and Leslie. The nebulous wording of this provision allowed federal officials to take any course of action they wished, as it did not define what “substantial and effectual arrangements” were. In practice, the secret article offered a resounding victory for Creek sovereignty in trade and negotiation, at least as vested in the person of McGillivray.<sup>14</sup>

The weakness of the United States also provides a crucial context to McGillivray’s decision to cede the Oconee lands. The mēkko did not cede this territory from a position of vulnerability, as Americans had no way of compelling him to agree to it. Rather, he chose to do so in exchange for the rewards American negotiators offered him in return. Additional “secret articles” show that the United States granted McGillivray the rank of brigadier general in the United States Army, which came with an annual stipend of \$1,200. Resembling the commissions that Spanish and British officials granted McGillivray, the secret articles once again revealed how closely American policies followed those of contemporary European colonial regimes. While compelling him to swear an oath of “allegiance” to the United States, the vow had more symbolic than real consequence. His military rank was ceremonial, employed both as an honorific and to justify the stipend. The secret articles obligated him to do nothing more than “use

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

his highest exertions to cultivate the firmest friendship between the United States and the said Creek nation.” This vague requirement placed little serious burden upon McGillivray. The Treaty of New York benefitted McGillivray greatly, while ordinary Creeks would have to bear its cost.<sup>15</sup>

### THE TREATY’S RECEPTION

The Treaty of New York not only contradicted the will of a majority of Creeks, but also contravened the Creek method of forming diplomatic agreements. Like Washington, McGillivray seems to have understood that the Treaty of New York would draw complaints from the people he negotiated on behalf of. Unlike the President, he made concessions without seeking the consent of most of his fellow leaders. McGillivray must have suspected that Lower Creeks would not agree to the cession of the Oconee lands, for he brought few of them along. While a Lower Creek delegation did participate in the treaty’s signing, this group did not include prominent *mēkkvlke* but lesser figures who lacked the appropriate standing in their communities. Only a handful of the Upper Creek *mēkkvlke* attended as well. McGillivray’s exclusion of most of the principal leaders from negotiations signifies not only his self-aggrandizing, but that he anticipated being unable to obtain their consent.<sup>16</sup>

U.S. officials recognized that the treaty required consensus among the Creeks as a whole. They expected McGillivray to circulate the treaty among the nation and discuss it in council and attached additional secret articles to the treaty, offering gifts and stipends

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<sup>15</sup> Secret Articles from the Treaty of New York, August 7, 1790, in *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, ed. Hunter Miller (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931-48), 2:343-44; McGillivray Oath of Allegiance, New York, August 7, 1790, Henry Knox Papers, Gilder Lehrman Collection, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

<sup>16</sup> The treaty’s signatories are listed in Treaty of New York, August 7, 1790, Papers of Andrew Pickens, Manuscripts, mssPC 1-51, doc. 8, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

to the Creek mēkkvlke that could not attend. The agreement granted each of them an annual stipend of one-hundred dollars and, following British practice, a “great medal” signifying their status in the eyes of federal leaders. Notably, almost all of the leaders listed in the article had opposed McGillivray at one time or rivaled him in stature, suggesting that federal officials recognized that they possessed enough support to mount resistance to the treaty. Moreover, many of them had dealt amicably with American negotiators prior to Georgia officials’ attempt to take them hostage. Federal officials must have hoped that they could win back the favor of these men. The article tabbed Hopothle Mēkko, Okfuskee Mēkko, Efv Haco (the Mad Dog), Nehē Mēkko, and Yvholv Mēkko as recipients. Together, they represented to leadership of the major Creek etvlwvlke. Other than Hopothle Mēkko, none of them appeared among the treaty’s signatories.<sup>17</sup>

The need for Creek leaders as a whole to agree to the treaty ultimately made it unenforceable and McGillivray’s feeble attempts to circumvent this requirement only poisoned his relationship with other mēkkvlke. When the treaty party returned to Creek country, Creek leaders called a general meeting to discuss the agreement. An American observer reported that when McGillivray announced the contents of the treaty, some Creek leaders accepted the cession but “others threw their Tobacco into the [council] fire in disgust.” Perhaps hinting at this reception, another American visitor to Creek country felt compelled to mention his efforts to “impress on the Jealous Minds of the indians in general, that the White people of the United States, were sincere and candid in all their

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<sup>17</sup> Secret Articles from the Treaty of New York, August 7, 1790, in *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 2:343-44. Many of the individuals listed in the treaty and its secret articles, particularly the great medal recipients, are referred to by their titles, not their proper names. The “*efv*” in Efv Haco literally translates to “dog,” but “*Haco*” is a formal title used by warriors, pronounced “Ha-cho,” and usually spelled by English-speaking contemporaries as “Hadjo” or “Haujo,” and “usually translated as ‘Crazy.’” Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, s.vv. “efv,” “Haco.”

overtures of peace.” These statements elicited no response from federal officials. Few Euroamericans thought to take note of the treaty’s reception among the general congress of the Creeks. Possibly, they placed too much stock in McGillivray’s leadership, presuming that he and the New York delegation had already secured the agreement of the towns as a whole. Subsequent events would disprove this notion.<sup>18</sup>

Most Creeks refused to honor McGillivray’s treaty, rendering it a dead letter. The most vehement repudiation came from the Lower Creeks who lived adjacent to the ceded lands. A handful of lesser Cowetas and Cussetas and a lone representative from Rē Kackv had joined McGillivray in New York, but their most important leaders had not. Consequently, those communities led the charge against the treaty. Most Lower Creek communities had no representation at all. In particular, those towns that had associated with Bowles, Osuche, Chehaw, and the Flint River towns, did not participate in the negotiations. These communities continued to send warriors to expel Americans from the Oconee lands as if the treaty had never occurred. For this reason, historian J. Leitch Wright has rightfully argued that “the question of who profited most from the treaty is academic, because few of its provisions were ever executed.” The cession McGillivray and Washington arranged did not actually take effect until many years later and then only after the negotiation of a new treaty.<sup>19</sup>

McGillivray saw the Lower Creeks as naïve and foolhardy, refusing to accept their rejection of the treaty gracefully. He complained that “these lower Town Indians

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<sup>18</sup> James Casey to Knox, entry for October 20, 1790, Philadelphia, March 13, 1791, *Papers of the War Department*, <<http://wardepartmentpapers.org/docimage.php?id=5120&docColID=5564&page=7>> (accessed January 9, 2015); Caleb Swan to Knox, Philadelphia, May 2, 1791, Caleb Swan Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

<sup>19</sup> Wright, “Creek-American Treaty,” 380.

seem wholly insensible of the destruction from which they have been saved by their friends,” asserting that they would have withered under Georgia’s attacks if not for him and the other Creek negotiators. Demonstrating that the Lower Creeks led the charge against the treaty, he complained that he had “no reason to be so much dissatisfied with the upper towns.” An American observer described McGillivray as being enraged that the Lower Creeks “had shamed him in his own country and made him out a liar before the white people.” Yet McGillivray had no one to blame but himself for exceeding his authority. The lie was his alone and one longstanding; Lower Creeks merely exposed it.<sup>20</sup>

### **TROUBLES IN NEW ORLEANS AND APALACHEE**

The year 1790 represented a dark time in Creek country. Complementing the failure of the Creek and Cherokee delegation in London and the drama surrounding the Treaty of New York, Spanish relations with the Lower Creeks and Miccosukees decayed. Already on shaky footing for a number of years, these groups’ relationship with Spanish officials began to boil over into violence. In November 1790, while on their way to receive a gift from the governor at New Orleans, a party of Cowetas looted and burned some properties along the Pearl River. In the process they seized two canoes, traveling to the colonial capital in property stolen from Spanish subjects. The timing of their attack, en route to meet with the governor, indicates that they intended it as both a protest and a warning. Spaniards had not performed their role as allies, particularly in their failure to support them in the face of American attacks. By attacking Spanish colonists

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<sup>20</sup> McGillivray to Panton, Little Tallassee, October 28, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 2362, and in Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 298-300; Middleton Statement, [New York], December 21, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 1436, and in Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 300-01.

For secondary accounts of the fallout from the treaty, see Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 46-52; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, ch. 7; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 214; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 86-9; Wright, “Creek-American Treaty,” 381-82, 392-97.

immediately prior to a diplomatic meeting, Cowetas attempted to communicate their anger, setting a tone for the impending discussion.<sup>21</sup>

Although Governor Miró gave the Cowetas their usual presents, he showed no sign of making significant concessions. Indeed, he refused to play into the Cowetas' game, pretending that the attacks had no connection whatsoever with their visit. He even claimed that he had not realized that the party who approached New Orleans had been the same who carried out the attacks. In his words, he "could not have imagined that people who would come and manifest themselves as Friends of Spain... would have had the audacity to commit hostilities along the way." Was Governor Miró truly ignorant of the Cowetas' actions? To not even suspect the Cowetas would have been uncharacteristically dense of the governor. Rather, Miró sought not to embolden the Cowetas by recognizing the attack, nor to anger them by withholding presents. Instead of addressing the Coweta party directly, Miró complained of their conduct to McGillivray. Yet to comprehend McGillivray's diminished standing among the Lower Creeks, he expected the mēkko to correct the Cowetas and ensure they never behaved in such a manner again.<sup>22</sup>

Miró's actions surrounding the Pearl River incident reveal his awareness of Lower Creek and Miccosukee anger, as well as his determination not to concede to their demands. Just prior to the Cowetas' visit, Miró had laid out a plan for cutting the distribution of presents at St. Marks. Miró viewed the gifts as no longer necessary. "At the beginning of the settlements [the recolonization of Florida]," he explained, "it was very necessary and advantageous to give some gifts, since on the other hand it would not have been possible to establish ourselves." Having reestablished themselves in Florida,

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<sup>21</sup> Miró to McGillivray, New Orleans, November 20, 1790, PLC, reel 6, ff. 174-77.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



Miró continued, “we can try to entirely deny them our presents, since it would be much better to only distribute them in the capital [Pensacola].” The governor had grown weary of acquiescing to Creek power and sought to exert great control over cross-cultural interactions. Apalachee posed a particular problem, as it lay fully within Creek territory, remote from other Spanish settlements and vulnerable to Native pressure. Pensacola’s distance from Creek country, and its more populous and better-defended situation, would limit their ability to demand gifts. Ominously, Miró warned that “if the claims of our Apalache Indian neighbors should grow too strong, then we would have to take the course which our minds dictate.” Responding to his inability to manage the Creeks as he wished, Miró had decided he would attempt to discipline them, first by denying them gifts, then by exerting force if necessary.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the incident on the Pearl River, Miró went ahead with his plan to curtail the gifts at St. Marks, ignoring the Cowetas’ message. The Spanish commander at the Apalachee post, Luís de Bertucat, understood the implications of Miró’s decision. The commander harbored anxieties about the Miccosukees’ refusal to obey anything resembling central authority. He described the Miccosukees as “the most Savage of the Savages,” emphasizing that “they do not subject themselves to the voice of Alexander McGillivray.” Bertucat realized that the governor relied overmuch upon the *mēkko*, having learned that his word carried little weight among the Miccosukees. He could sense their anger upon informing them of the change in policy and did his best to conduct diplomacy, “receiving their chiefs at his table” to discuss affairs. The commander feared that “if they were not to administer them, at the very least some provisions; then “the

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<sup>23</sup> Miró to Luís de Las Casas, New Orleans, September 10, 1790, AGI, PC, leg. 1440 and PLC, reel 5, ff. 1722-26.

Individuals of this Post would be in grave danger, and this is because they do not consider [such things] as gifts but as a sort of hospitality.” The isolated officer quickly gathered the rules of Creek diplomacy. To withhold gifts represented a breach of alliance and an end of amicable relations. By discontinuing the distribution of presents in Apalachee, Miró risked drawing Creek wrath upon St. Marks. Convinced that Miró had not understood the consequences of his decision, Bertucat prayed that he would reconsider.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, Bertucat’s superiors had already anticipated his complaints and understood exactly the kind of reaction their policies would provoke. Spanish governors had made a conscious decision to risk alienating the Lower Creeks and Miccosukees over the issue of gifts. While Miró never commented upon how he expected the garrison at St. Marks to cope with the fallout from this move, he probably reasoned that the fort would protect them from Miccosukee aggression. Miró and his peers preferred the courting the wrath of the Lower Creeks and Miccosukees to committing to the expense of supporting them in war and the resulting provocation of the Americans. That decision made their settlements a target of Creek attacks alongside American ones.

Despite the failure of the London delegation, Creek outrage over the Treaty of New York and Spanish policies also created another opportunity for Bowles and his consortium. With their access to the sea and relative isolation from the major trade and communication routes of the greater region, Miccosukees found connections with the Bahamas particularly appealing. Bertucat noticed the Miccosukees’ gravitation toward Bowles and its association with Miró’s decision to cease gifting at St. Marks. He warned

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<sup>24</sup> Luis de Bertucat to O’Neill, San Marcos de Apalachee, September 26, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 40 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 993-95.

the governor that the “news that there is nothing for them at this Post, produces the best effect in favor of Bowles, and a very poor one for us.” Likewise, as soon as Bowles caught wind of the Treaty of New York, he began referring to it as “a Sham.” Bowles saw so much opportunity in the situation that he could not decide whether McGillivray or Spanish authorities presented a better target for his invectives. One observer reported him as decrying McGillivray in one breath, before claiming “McGillivray is nothing” in the next and turning his ire towards the Spanish officials. Bowles did not turn Creek sentiment against the treaty or Spanish officials as McGillivray, Panton, and Spanish governors would later contend. The adventurer simply responded to a movement already afoot in Creek country, played the role of agitator, and tried to take advantage of the situation to meet his own ends.<sup>25</sup>

The contentious mood among the Lower Creeks even allowed Bowles to show his face in Coweta after his diplomatic failure. Upon returning to the Flint River, Bowles apparently gathered a few of his allies from Osuche, Chehaw, and the Miccosukees “to proceed up to the Coweta Towns.” Hoping to capitalize on anger over the Treaty of New York, Bowles stopped in Coweta and gave a talk before a Lower Creek council, of which no extant record exists. He remained long enough to send out a number of letters from there. According to second-hand reports, he even persuaded one hundred Coweta warriors to travel with him to help establish a port at the mouth of the Apalachicola River, all with the approval of Coweta’s mēkko. This decision reflected Coweta and Creek tradition more so than the influence and stratagem of Bowles. It followed in the vein of Coweta attempts to establish a base for Spanish trade at St. Marks in the 1760s

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<sup>25</sup> Bertucat to O’Neill, at the mouth of Apalachee Bay, September 24, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 40, doc. 770 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 984-88; Thomas Forbes to John Leslie, New Providence, August 1, 1791, PLC, reel 6, ff. 877-82.

and 1770s, themselves drawing on well over a century of Creek and Apalachee looking to the post as a hub of their connections to the outside world.<sup>26</sup>

As with the Spaniards before them, the Lower Creeks and Miccosukees wanted British colonists to create an outpost in Apalachee for trade. Much as Tunapé and Escochabé had offered St. Marks to Cuban officials decades prior, collectively the Lower Creeks selected “a Large tract of Land...for our friends the English to come and settle upon and bring goods amongst us.” Creeks still viewed Apalachee as Creek land, which they were free to manage as they saw fit. Because of its large bay, its miniscule European presence, and its situation at the mouth of the Apalachicola River system, Lower Creeks once again looked to Apalachee as the logical place for a European trading outpost. As before, they valued Bowles as a vector, a means of communicating their desires to more powerful figures in the Bahamas and Britain. Like the Cuban fishermen before him, Creeks saw Bowles as a convenient medium, not a mastermind.<sup>27</sup>

As Lower Creeks and Miccosukees worked to expand their connections, Upper Creeks sought to curtail them by targeting Bowles. Many Upper Creeks had grown to view these towns’ militancy as a liability. McGillivray had obvious reasons for wanting to put a stop to the violence on the Oconee, but other Upper Creeks had motives as well. They knew that both Americans and Spaniards would hold all Creeks accountable for Lower Creek and Miccosukee attacks on their colonists. To a growing number of Upper Creeks, the distant Oconee lands must have appeared unworthy of continual warfare and threats of trade sanctions from Spanish and American officials. Increasingly, they viewed

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<sup>26</sup> Bertucat to O’Neill, San Marcos de Apalachee, December 15, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 40, doc. 785 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1259-62; Okillissa Chupka to George Wellbank, Coweta, June 5, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 155.

<sup>27</sup> Okillissa Chupka to George Wellbank, Coweta, June 5, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 155.

Bowles and his associates' encouragement of hostilities and promises of munitions as the principal enablers behind these attacks. Around the time that Bowles returned from Coweta, three Tuckabatchee warriors went out to the Flint River towns to murder Bowles. Although McGillivray claimed to have "sent" them, more likely the Tuckabatchee *mēkko*, Efv Haco, played a significant role in conjunction with McGillivray. Upper Creek leaders had regrouped around a desire for peace with Americans and Spaniards, even at the expense of the Oconee lands.<sup>28</sup>

The Tuckabatchee attempt to assassinate Bowles hints at the complicated relationship between Creek communities. Bowles took refuge in the Chattahoochee River towns of Chehaw and Osuche, preventing the assassins from harming him. The Tuckabatchees dared not violate these communities' space. As autonomous communities Osuche and Chehaw had a right to conduct diplomacy with whomever they wished and could offer protection to whomever they chose. If the Tuckabatchees were to violate that right, they would not only provoke a reaction from those two communities, but would risk the ire of other Creek towns as well. As this incident shows, the complex patchwork of autonomy and connection between Creek communities could variously facilitate or restrict Creek behavior.<sup>29</sup>

The constraints that Creek autonomies placed upon McGillivray accelerated a breakdown in Spanish-Creek networks. He rationalized his inability to govern the Lower Creeks as an act of magnanimity, offering them a chance to come to their senses, "that

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<sup>28</sup> McGillivray to O'Neill, October 27, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 38 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1117-19; McGillivray to Panton, October 28, 1791, AGI, PC, legs. 39 and 2362 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1120-33; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 221. On September 20, Efv Haco called a "general meeting" of Creeks at Tuckabatchee, presumably to discuss both Bowles and the Treaty of New York. See Casey to Knox, Philadelphia, March 13, 1791, *Papers of the War Department*, <<http://wardepartmentpapers.org/docimage.php?id=5120&docCollID=5564&page=7>> (accessed January 9, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> McGillivray to Panton, October 28, 1791, AGI, PC, legs. 39 and 2362 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1120-33.

they might of themselves be Convinced of [Bowles's] Lies.” In truth, he lacked the ability to do anything about the situation. Lower Creeks' harboring of Bowles and continuation of the war over the Oconee lands served as a stark and humiliating reminder of the limits of his authority.<sup>30</sup>

To compound matters, the treaty itself had reawakened distrust between Spanish officials and McGillivray. While they had wanted peace between Creeks and Americans, the governors of Louisiana and West Florida feared that a Creek-U.S. alliance might work to their detriment. Rightfully, they also suspected that McGillivray had signed an agreement compromising his commitment to promote Spanish interests. Not only did they demand McGillivray explain himself, they tried to pressure him into providing copies of the treaty. The stress of the situation caused McGillivray severe migraines and triggered what he described as a “nervous breakdown.” The mēkko found that he could do little to halt the waning of his influence outside the Upper Creek towns.<sup>31</sup>

For all the trouble that Lower Creeks and Bowles caused their Upper Creek, Spanish, and American counterparts, their efforts to build useful networks fared little better. Financial obstacles hampered their attempts to initiate an Anglo-Creek trade. Miller and Bonamy proved unable to produce regular shipments of goods. From 1787 to 1791, the company only outfitted three small cargoes: the first being Bowles's initial voyage to Creek country in 1788, the second his return later that year, and the third the Creek and Cherokee delegation's 1791 homecoming. Although no detailed account of the first two voyages' cargo exists, they seem to have consisted mostly of gunpowder.

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<sup>30</sup> McGillivray to Miró, Pensacola, February 26, 1791, PLC, reel 6, ff. 560-82.

<sup>31</sup> McGillivray to Miró, Little Tallassee, August 28, 1791, PLC, reel 6, ff. 942-44; McGillivray to Miró, Pensacola, December 30, 1791, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1287-94 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 301-03.

Although more diverse, the cargo for the third voyage may have been the most pitiful of all. It consisted of “a small quantity of powder and balls, one box of arms, two swivel-guns and some catapults, and provisions for the voyage.” One observer valued the cargo at no more than £300, but even that sum probably overestimates the company’s finances; another observer “firmly believe[d]” the supplies “were taken from the royal warehouses.” Without Dunmore’s willingness to embezzle Crown property, Miller and Bonamy might never have provided a single shipment of Creek goods.

Further proof of the company’s struggles come from the expedition’s delays. Upon their return from London, the Creeks and Cherokees remained stuck in Nassau for three months, in part due to the trouble scrounging up supplies and in part due to the poor condition of their return vessel. The intervening year had not been kind to the small schooner that the delegation had obtained with Lord Dorchester’s funds in Quebec. It stood “much in want of Sails & riggings and several repairs” and could not sail “with any degree of safety.” Bowles lacked the money to repair it, and had to lean on Miller for a loan. In turn, Miller expected the Crown to reimburse this loan, as well as the costs he incurred on Bowles’s behalf prior to his return from London. Expenditures for mounted for both Bowles and the company, with little in the way of returns to offset them.<sup>32</sup>

Needing supplies to maintain his remaining support among Lower Creeks, Bowles elected to steal them. Instead of building a port in Apalachee, he and his Lower Creek associates chose to mount a raid the Pantan store on the Wakulla River, just east of present-day Tallahassee. Unguarded and vulnerable, the store presented no challenge for

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<sup>32</sup> Edward Landers Deposition, St. Augustine, August 8, 1791, AGI, PC, leg. 151B, ff. 631-32; Bowles to Dunmore, Nassau, July 8, 1791, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 207; Bowles to Dunmore, Nassau, July 9, 1791, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 209; Bowles to Grenville, Nassau, July 22, 1791, NA-UK, CO 23-31, ff. 200 A-B; Young Deposition, Pensacola, August 30, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1393-1405.

the party. Creek warriors held the storekeepers, Robert Leslie and John Forrester, hostage while they broke into the storehouse and divided the guns, ammunition, blankets, and clothing amongst themselves.<sup>33</sup>

The raid served multiple purposes for the parties involved. For Bowles, it not only provided his Creek allies with arms and goods, it represented a step towards his goal of supplanting Panton and Leslie in the Indian trade. For the Lower Creeks, in addition to providing needed supplies, the raid sent a message to Panton and Leslie about reciprocity and proper behavior. Creeks manifested their discontent with trading relationships through the raiding and plundering of trading houses. They intended most of these raids to serve as acts of protest and corrective discipline. Often, they targeted locks on the doors of trading houses and their stores rather than traders themselves. To Creeks, the locks symbolized an attempt to keep what they considered shared property sequestered from the surrounding community. The breaking of these locks, then, served as a symbolic gesture that contested traders' ability to keep members of the community apart from the goods that they needed. Rarely did they attack or assault the traders themselves, usually only doing so after repeated patterns of abuse. Almost always, the participants in such raids resumed their relationships with the traders after the resolving their disputes.<sup>34</sup>

The actions of the Osuches and Chehaws in the Apalachee store raid support the notion that the raiders only intended to voice their discontent with the company and secure access to the goods and supplies they believed the company owed them as allies. For one, they did not harm the storekeeper, John Hambly, or his staff, allowing them to

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<sup>33</sup> Testimony of John Hambly, St. Augustine, January 26, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 479-99; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 40-47; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 221; Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 65-67.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Paulett, *An Empire of Small Places: Mapping the Southeastern Anglo-Indian Trade, 1732-1795* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 166-69.



leave the store and seek refuge in Fort St. Marks unmolested. Secondly, Hambly's interaction with the leaders of the raiding party provides evidence that Creeks still respected the bonds they had forged with him. Hambly understood the power of these relationships, and utilized them to counter Bowles's influence. During the break-in, Hambly sought out the leader of the Creek party. In a deposition, Hambly described him as: "a very old Indian" from Rē Kackv "who seemed to be at the head of the Indians." Despite not knowing the man's name, Hambly immediately recognized him as an elder who had the power to potentially restrain the younger warriors. Upon identifying the man as the leader of the party, Hambly set into a harangue, telling him that

this Store was established here in the time of the English with the universal consent, and approbation of the Indian Nation, in order to provide them with all that the red people needed...you know very well that the Indians asked the Governors of the King of Spain to permit the said Store to stay, for the same purpose....what the Indians were currently perpetrating in that Store would be lamented by them, their Women, their Children, and even by their future generations.

Hambly played the role of the benevolent European father, providing for the Creeks, arguing that both Spaniards and Britons had placed the store there for their benefit. He attempted to shame the unnamed elder by reminding him of the years of ties between the store and the surrounding Creek communities, warning him that the raid could possibly break those ties, to the Creeks' detriment. They and "their future generations" would regret their actions if they persisted: who else would "provide them will all that the red people needed?" The Lower Creek raiders had attempted to shame the company by breaking into the store, but Hambly turned the situation around on them. By shaming

them for their use of violence against friends and providers, he accused the Creeks of abandoning their own obligations and warned them of the potential consequences.<sup>35</sup>

Hambly's instincts proved correct. By invoking the language of obligation, his words resonated with the Creek elder and convinced him that the party had gone too far in protesting trader and company behavior. The elder stated that "he had not come to do what was being done: That his wish had only been to solicit some provisions." Whether true or an effort to displace blame for their behavior, the elder's implication was that Bowles had concealed his intentions from them until arriving at the store. The elder's story matches up with other evidence, namely that Coweta leaders had approved Bowles's journey to Apalachee and allowed warriors to travel along with him under the pretense of establishing a port. Realizing that Bowles had usurped his leadership over the party, Hambly found it easy to persuade the elder to help rein him in. Drawing the attention of the Creek warriors, the elder insisted "that he wanted the muskets to be returned to the place from which they had been taken." A cowed Bowles "ordered that the muskets be placed under the shed of the House," without uttering a word of protest. With this brief statement, the Rē Kackv demonstrated the limits of Bowles's influence as well as the power that the language of obligation carried in Creek negotiations.<sup>36</sup>

Hambly also provided a sobering reminder to the Lower Creek party that their involvement with Bowles carried considerable risk. While younger warriors appeared unconcerned, Creek elders grasped the long-term consequences of their actions. They realized that their communities relied Panton and Leslie's stores for supplies and that satisfactory alternatives had yet to materialize. In fact, Bowles's need to attack the

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<sup>35</sup> Testimony of John Hambly, St. Augustine, January 26, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 479-99.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Apalachee store demonstrated his associates' inability to replace Panton and Leslie's networks. They could not provide the goods Creeks desired, compelling Bowles to use force to procure them. Creek elders realized that the assault on the store might have alienated their principal connections to the outside world without having secured an adequate replacement.

The storekeeper's harangue also reminded the party of the danger of increasing discord among the Creeks. Hambly noticed that "there is not among you a single man from the Upper Creeks" when he surveyed the party. Supposing that the Upper Creeks would not approve of such actions, he warned the Rē Kackv elder that that "when they learn what you all have done here, they will place the blame upon you, since without your consent these two white men [Bowles and an associate of his, William Cunningham] could not have done anything." Hambly knew that Bowles carried little power beyond what the Creeks chose to give him. At the same time, he invoked the complicated relationship between confederation and autonomy among the Creeks. While each Creek community, or at least each etvlwv, had the freedom to pursue its own relationship with outsiders, all of the Creek towns had a certain level of responsibility towards one another. Upper Creeks felt that Lower Creek violence carried a growing liability for them and the potential fallout from the Apalachee store raid would only increase such concerns.<sup>37</sup>

For nearly one hundred years, the Creeks had held unified councils and attempted to coordinate their diplomacy. When some communities felt that the actions of others violated the good of the whole, the former had a variety of options available to them. Creeks might handle the disputes internally, denouncing one another in councils or

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

pressuring offending towns or clans to make compensation to Europeans or Americans. However, when pressed by colonial officials, they might choose to disassociate from the offending communities. In the early 1770s, when Coweta and other Lower Creek towns began attacking Georgians who had encroached on their lands, surrounding British colonial governments placed an embargo on all Creek trade. Upper Creeks, angry that the Cowetas' actions had threatened their access to goods, denounced the Lower Creeks and sought to create separate trade networks through Mobile and Pensacola that would exclude them. Speaking to the governor of Georgia, the mēkko Emistisiguo stated that he wished for the Lower Creeks to “[s]tand for [t]hemselves” and deal with the consequences of their actions alone. Like Emistisiguo some twenty years prior, Upper Creek leaders might have sacrificed the Lower Creeks in order to preserve their own interests. Potential measures even extended to cooperation with punitive Spanish or American actions. As Tuckabatchee assassins had already set out against Bowles, the prospect of his turning Creeks against one another did not seem remote.<sup>38</sup>

Hambly's role in defusing the Apalachee store raid demonstrated why Bowles had sequestered the Creek and Cherokee travelers in Nassau years prior: Creeks always remained open to the influence of a persuasive speaker. Bowles's associate William Cunningham picked up on the threat that Hambly posed, and attempted to stop his conversing with the Rē Kackv elder. Hambly reported that Cunningham “threatened more than twenty times to take his life if he [continued] to speak Indian.” The storekeeper further embarrassed Bowles when he pointed out that a medal Bowles had given to the elder was fraudulent; it did not bear the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales, as he had

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<sup>38</sup> Talk between James Wright, Captain Aleck, Emistisiguo, and Santiago, Savannah, April 14, 1774, in Juricek, *GFT*, 138-142.

claimed. His presence posed a serious and multifaceted threat to Bowles' intentions, for he understood the use of persuasion in Creek leadership and diplomacy. By reminding Creeks of the consequences of their actions, by restoring the good faith between the company's agents and their indigenous partners, and by unveiling some of Bowles' more clever deceits and pretensions, Hambly could persuade Creeks to turn away from violent action, disrupting the convergence between their aims and Bowles's.<sup>39</sup>

The fissures between Bowles and his Native partners became even more apparent when a Miccosukee party arrived to join Bowles. The immediate reaction of the "Miccosukee Chief," most likely a *mēkko* named Kinache, revealed that he neither expected nor countenanced a raid upon the store. Upon his approach to the trading post, he hesitated "as if reluctant to approach the House" until Hambly reassured him that there was no danger. Kinache demanded that Bowles explain his actions, whereupon Bowles "took him to a secluded place" and conferred with him for some time, out of earshot of Hambly. Upon his return, Kinache told Hambly what had transpired. Bowles had avoided discussing the raid altogether, rattling off incendiary rhetoric designed to convince Kinache that he was the Miccosukees' only "friend." Bowles argued that the Miccosukees had "been poor, miserable, and deceived by the people that provided them with goods," and that "McGillivray himself in whom they had placed such confidence has deceived them, giving their lands to the Americans, and placing the money in his pocket." In contrast, Bowles claimed that he had been deputed by the King of Great Britain to protect them and their lands, and would provide them "with a Port Open to all Nations, and where they would always find what they needed cheap." Regarding the

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<sup>39</sup> Testimony of John Hambly, St. Augustine, January 26, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 479-99.

looting of the store, Kinache stated “that the Partisan of Bowles had not told him a word of this event; And since they had been false with him on that matter, he was convinced that everything else were false” too. Kinache had made up his mind that Bowles and the more militant Lower Creeks in league with him were not trustworthy, siding with Hambly and the company.<sup>40</sup>

Hambly ultimately failed to prevent the ransacking of the store, but because of him the raid created a rift among the Lower Creeks, Miccosukees, and Bowles’s associates. Cunningham and a few of the younger Creek warriors took some muskets, flint stones, blankets, gunpowder, and musket balls despite the Rē Kackv elder’s disapproval. However that decision drove a wedge between Bowles and some of his most important allies, revealing fractures in his alliance with certain Lower Creeks and the Miccosukees. The Rē Kackv elder had tried to stop the looting, while Kinache and the Miccosukees refused to participate or share in the stolen goods. Instead, Miccosukees escorted Hambly and his partner Robert Leslie to Fort St. Marks. Even Okaiegigie, Bowles’s longtime Creek associate, split with him. According to Leslie, Okaiegigie “had drunk a little too much” during the raid and began “to express his sentiments [concerning Bowles] with such frankness” that two fell began to fight. Their quarrel forced Okaiegigie “to flee leaving his wife to follow with his horses.” Okaiegigie’s brother James Perryman apparently had “to hide in a sack of salt in order to save himself,” as an enraged Bowles “sent three Indians after them in order to kill them if possible.” Cunningham, who had also grown drunk and belligerent, had his own falling out with the Creek warriors and fled to plead for refuge at Fort St. Marks. What should have been a

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

triumph degenerated into a senseless fight among drunken men. Bowles's conduct in leading the raid on the Apalachee store had alienated nearly everyone in partnership with him, even his oldest and closest ally. Only young militant Creek warriors remained alongside him.<sup>41</sup>

If Bowles's own allies found reason to distance themselves from him, his actions at the store further alienated those who had remained aloof. For the Upper Creeks and Alachua Seminoles, the raid cemented their disdain for Bowles. The Upper Creeks, at least according to McGillivray, sent out another party to try and kill or capture him. McGillivray also tried once again to persuade "the Cowetas and Cussetahs to go, and either to take him or put him to death." Seminole leader Payne condemned the action, stating that "he had known that among the Seminoles there were some bad leaders, but that he now knew that there were worse among the lower Creeks." "[W]ith respect to Bowles," Payne remarked that "this man had deceived him once, but would not deceive him a second time...Bowles whatever his luck never would be useful to [him], nor to the Seminole Nation." Payne also told Hambly that "Bowles with his recent misdeeds only increased the chance that he would end up the victim of his own lies." What exactly Payne implied remains unclear. At the very least, it portended Bowles's rejection by the Creeks; at worst, it suggested that Bowles might wind up dead. As it turned out, Payne's words would prove prescient.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.; Robert Leslie to John Leslie, San Marcos de Apalache, January 31, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1504-58; Bowles to Burgess, Camp ["Appalachie"], February 7, 1792, AGI, PC, leg. 1446 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1568-80; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 224.

<sup>42</sup> McGillivray to James Seagrove, Little Tallassee, March 25, 1792, ASP-IA, 1:295; Testimony of John Hambly, St. Augustine, January 26, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 479-99.

## A STAND AT FORT ST. MARKS

After the Apalachee store raid, the remnants of the party moved on to the outskirts of Fort St. Marks, setting up what Bowles called “Camp Appalachee” on the Ochlockonee River. There, they tried to figure out what to do next. The supplies from the store had solved their immediate material needs, but little else. The pilfered goods would eventually run out and Bowles had yet to offer his allies a sustainable source of gifts or trade. The party also found itself short of important items such as horses. Meanwhile, the raid would almost certainly provoke a response from Panton and Leslie, Spanish authorities, and maybe even from other Creeks. The Lower Creek party had worsened rather than improved their lot.<sup>43</sup>

The Lower Creek allies realized the tenuousness of their situation, as they began demanding “to know the Reason of [Miller’s] delay with the Vessels” bearing their gifts and supplies. Their protestations reached such a level that they compelled George Wellbank, one of Bowles’s associates, to carry them to Nassau. Wellbank set out in late January “With five Indians in a Canoe” before they were “obliged to return owing to bad Weather” and, according to Wellbank, “the timidity of the Indians.” Although the old Creek fear of the seas might have cropped up when confronted with a storm, Wellbank might have been venting his frustrations with the Creeks or covering for his own “timidity.” The eagerness that the Lower Creek party showed for traveling to the Bahamas suggests that they would not have abandoned the voyage easily. Bowles’s

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<sup>43</sup> Bowles to McGillivray, “Camp Appalachie,” January 31, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1490-93; Bowles to Dunmore, “Camp Appalachie,” February 6, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, ff. 152-53 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1538-42; Bowles to John Burgess, Camp [“Appalachie”], February 7, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1568-80 and *FHQ* 9, no. 3 (Jan. 1931): 166-70.



Lower Creek associates had run out of patience, no longer content to wait for their Anglo collaborators. Every additional week spent waiting tested their endurance.<sup>44</sup>

Bowles turned to every avenue he could think of to save himself. He wrote to Lord Dunmore, begging him to press upon Miller for the delivery of the goods. He asked James Burgess “send whatever corn or other produce” he could from the Flint River towns, as well as a spare horse. He even had the nerve to ask McGillivray for four horses, acting as if “the miserable propositions...of the Americans” had disrupted a “friendship which has reigned for so long between us.” Needless to say, Bowles’s attempt to rewrite the history of his and McGillivray’s relationship did not succeed, nor did any of his other pleas. In effect, the adventurer found his connections useless.<sup>45</sup>

The absence of trade or material support forced Bowles to conduct another raid, a decision that led directly to his capture and deportation. In early February 1792, only a month after the attack on the Apalachee store, Bowles and his allies decided to take Fort St. Marks. The party of two hundred well-armed Creek warriors outmatched the handful of soldiers and cannon that manned the rotting wooden quadrangle. Yet, Spanish authorities outfoxed Bowles and neutralized the threat. They did so by turning his own ambitions against him. Armed with the knowledge that Bowles had sent numerous unanswered petitions to the Minister of the Indies, the fort’s captain lured Bowles inside its confines by claiming that he had the minister’s reply in hand. He then convinced Bowles that the Governor of Louisiana wanted to negotiate and that he should proceed to

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<sup>44</sup> George Wellbank to John Miller, Osuche, June 19, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, ff. 156-57.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.; Bowles to Dunmore, “Camp Appalachie,” February 6, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, ff. 152-53 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1538-42; Bowles to Burgess, Camp [“Appalachie”], February 7, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1568-80 and *FHQ* 9, no. 3 (Jan. 1931): 166-70; Bowles to McGillivray, “Camp Appalachie,” January 31, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1490-93.

New Orleans under an armed guard. This step prevented the Creeks from attacking the fort after Bowles's capture. Bowles sent a letter to the Creek party, asking them to await his return within forty days and to "remain quiet and peaceable." With the departure of the armed sloop, Spanish forces had secured Bowles without provoking a Creek assault on St. Marks. Through subterfuge, they averted disaster without firing a single shot.<sup>46</sup>

Spanish authorities believed that the capture of Bowles would allow them to "cut off all communication between the partisans of Bowles and [New] Providence."

However, they overestimated the extent to which Bowles commanded these networks. Creeks themselves had sought out and maintained their connections with British colonists in the Bahamas and would continue doing so after Bowles's capture. After four months awaiting the anticipated supplies from Nassau and with no word from Bowles, a number of Lower Creek towns took matters into their own hands. In June 1792, an assortment of the *mēkkvlke* and *tvstvnkvke* of some of the lesser towns of the Lower Creeks (Coweta Hitchiti, Chehaw, Palachicola, and *Rē Kackv*) assembled to discuss the matter at Coweta. Okillissa Chupka, the Coweta Hitchiti *mēkko*, spoke for the group in expressing his frustration to Bowles's associate Wellbank. He complained that a number of them "went down to the Mouth of our River Okalockney [Ochlockonee] to meet [the British] and see them in quiet Possession of the Lands we had laid out for them, but after remaining there a long time, the Messenger returned without them." He implored Wellbank "to send to our friends the English to come along...and we will find Land for them and give them

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<sup>46</sup> Francisco Xavier Gussy to O'Neill, San Marcos de Apalache, January 30, 1792, AGI, PC, leg. 2362 and PLC, reel 6, ff. 1454-62; Enrique White to José de Hevia, Pensacola, February 15, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1514-15 and 1668-69; Hevia to Bowles, on board the ship *Galga*, February 22, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1737-38; Hevia to Bowles, San Marcos de Apalache, February 24, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1739-41 and 1743-44; Bowles to the Chiefs of the Creek Nation, San Marcos de Apalache, February 28, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1764-66; Hevia Diary, February 4-29, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1524-35; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 47-52; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 222.

what Protection is in our Power.” Along with the message, Okillissa Chupka sent his brother Hopothle Hopoyv, also called the Warhunting Warrior by English speakers, to confront Wellbank and carry the message of the mēkkvlke to Nassau.<sup>47</sup>

The Lower Creeks placed immense pressure upon Wellbank. Soon after receiving their message, Wellbank urged Miller to “make all the Expedition you can” in preparing the supplies. When he wrote to Dunmore a few days later, he claimed that he lacked the time to write a full letter, as “the Chiefs are hurrying me to get the Canoe away.” The arrival of a Spanish agent seeking to meet with Lower Creek leaders led Wellbank to fear a rapprochement between the Lower Creeks, Spain, and Panton and Leslie. He warned Miller that if he could not get the goods to the Ochlockonee within sixty days, the Lower Creeks might abandon them for good. Sometime around the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, less than three weeks after the Coweta meeting, Hopothle Hopoyv, Philatouchee, and Tvskenēhv piled into a large canoe and set off from Osuche for the Bahamas.<sup>48</sup>

Once again, Lower Creek ambitions fell victim to the inadequacy of their British contacts. Neither Miller and Bonamy nor Dunmore had the supplies that the Creeks needed. The governor alluded to “the Necessity of drawing through the Medium of the Commissary for some supplies for the Indians while here,” likely just to meet basic needs such as food and provisions. Moreover, he had no ability to intervene in their matter diplomatically or military. Dunmore’s desperation led him to once again ask his superiors to provide a supply of presents, despite their repeated warnings. With little else to draw

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<sup>47</sup> Okillissa Chupka to Wellbank, Coweta, June 5, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 155; Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 226. Interpreter Julian Carballo identified Okillissa Chupka as a Coweta mēkko; see Carballo to White, San Marcos de Apalachee, March 12, 1792, PLC, reel 6, ff. 1847-48.

<sup>48</sup> Wellbank to Miller, Osuche, June 15, 1792, with a postscript dated June 23, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, ff. 156-57; Wellbank to Dunmore, Osuche, June 18, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 154. For the Spanish agent, see Baron de Carondelet to Pedro Olivier, New Orleans, March 30, 1792, PLC, reel 7, ff. 230-35.

upon, Dunmore persisted in using outdated reasoning and arguments to make his scheme work. He insisted upon the presents in order to “keep up the friendly intercourse and attachment of those People, which in case of a Spanish or American War, might be found serviceable.” Yet, with “a Spanish or American War” no longer a concern, his pleas fell on deaf ears in Whitehall. Secretary of State Henry Dundas never even bothered replying to his request.<sup>49</sup>

When the subject of the Creek visit turned to Bowles, the delegation once again found itself disappointed, ultimately proving unable to get British officials to intercede on behalf of Bowles. Though they did not need him to sustain ties with Nassau, they still viewed Bowles as useful and wished for his return. Dunmore noted that they “seem[ed] very uneasy about M<sup>r</sup>. Bowles” and his imprisonment. Unfortunately, Dundas had prior notice of Bowles’s activity and had already made up his mind on the subject. Officials in the Foreign Office had spoken with representatives of the Spanish Court and discovered Bowles’s having committed “the most unjustifiable proceedings within the territories of his most Catholic Majesty.” Bowles’s actions embarrassed Whitehall, as Dundas noted that “his being a British Subject & a half pay Officer...is a great aggravation of his Crime, tending to implicate the nation” in his actions. This consideration essentially precluded any chance that the Crown would ever seek to cooperate with Bowles or Dunmore again and ensured that Bowles would remain in Spanish captivity for the foreseeable future.<sup>50</sup>

Even the Creek delegation’s proposed land cession in Apalachee failed to have the desired effect. For one, they proved unable to communicate it accurately to the Crown

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<sup>49</sup> Dunmore to Henry Dundas, Nassau, August 28, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 151.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.; Dundas to Dunmore, Whitehall, August 8, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, ff. 127-28.

due to their reliance upon Dunmore. The governor noted the “Talk I have had with Houthlie Opie, or the War hunting Warrior and the [Chehaw] King” Philatouchee on the subject. When relaying their offer to Dundas, Dunmore altered its terms. The Lower Creek party wanted a British presence in Apalachee for the purposes of dialogue and trade. They offered not a permanent cession of that territory, but a conditional right of occupation. Instead, Dunmore claimed “they are ready to Cede any Part of [their land] to Great Britain, that may be thought proper for establishing Settlers amongst them.” The nuance of the Creek offer disappeared in Dunmore’s account. The governor described it as a simple land cession, implying a total surrender of sovereignty over the territory with no conditions attached. Moreover, while the Creeks specifically offered their land in Apalachee, Dunmore stated that they would give up “any Part of it” at Britain’s discretion. Considering the presence of English-speaking Creeks in the party, and Dunmore’s own history of Native land speculation, the governor’s refashioning of the Creek offer was probably intentional rather than a product of misunderstanding. Dunmore valued Creek sovereignty when it helped him flout Spanish trade restrictions, but it ultimately interfered with his ambitions of speculating in Creek land. In service of his ultimate goals, he painted their offer as a surrender of territorial sovereignty and the potential founding of a new British colony.<sup>51</sup>

The liberties Dunmore took with the Creek plea point to a broader problem in cross-cultural communications and the limitations of Creeks’ maritime borderlands. Even if Dunmore had accurately related the land offer, it probably would not have done them much good. Creek sovereignty proved useful to both Britons and Spaniards when it

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<sup>51</sup>Dunmore to Dundas, Nassau, August 28, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 151; Okillissa Chupka to Wellbank, Coweta, June 5, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 155.

limited the claims of other empires, but they sought to ignore it when it impeded their own imperial aims. Unfortunately for the Lower Creek party in Nassau, they had little leverage to convince Britons to bargain with them. While the sea had developed into a porous boundary for Creeks, it was not so porous that the Bahamas had to fear Creek attack or needed to count upon Creeks for their defense. At that time, the Crown also had little desire to invest itself on the mainland. Creek trade provided an insufficient enticement and the Crown did not want to provoke Spaniards or Americans. The Lower Creeks' offer of land, conditional or not, interested Whitehall so little that Dundas ignored it. The visit with Dunmore seems to have finally convinced Creeks to give up on the Bahamian route, for they would not come to Nassau again for nearly twenty years.<sup>52</sup>

While the failure of the expedition to London and the Creeks' lack of success in the Bahamas dealt them a serious blow, affairs north of the Ohio extinguished their efforts to salvage their British connections. As with the Cherokees, their final attempts came at the 1792 council at the Glaize and their voyage to the Great Lakes in 1793. A handful of Creeks went along with Wellbank, some Chickamauga Cherokees, and the Shawnee delegation to the Maumee Rapids. They carried with them a plea from a handful of Lower Creek *mēkkvike*, including Okillissa Chupka, which they addressed to Alexander McKee, the British agent stationed there. Employing language by then standard in such pleas, Okillissa Chupka, *Tvstvnvke Hopoyv*, and Houthlie Hopoyv *Mēkko* told McKee that they looked to the British "as a Child would look for an absent father." They stated their determination to expel American colonists, "or die in the attempt," and repeated their frustrations with Spanish colonial officials and Panton and

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<sup>52</sup>Dunmore to Dundas, Nassau, August 28, 1792, NA-UK, CO 23-31, f. 151.

Leslie's merchants, seeking British trade to alleviate both ills. They sent the plea along with Wellbank, who accompanied the Shawnees to the Cherokee towns, and then up to the Great Lakes region for the unsuccessful visit with British Indian agents.<sup>53</sup>

Alongside the sting of British rejections, Lower Creek militants had to deal with intensifying opposition in Creek country. While the series of pan-Indian councils had emboldened them, it also amplified the determination of those who opposed them. Many Upper Creeks followed the same course as McGillivray, seeking to distance themselves from British alliances and the pan-Indian movement in favor of strengthening ties with the United States. Wellbank's fate reflected the deep divisions in Creek country. Upon his return, Wellbank found that not only had Panton "offered a Reward of 2000 Dollars" for his head, but a number of Upper Creeks stood ready to collect. Upper Creeks sought to rid Creek country of all elements that sought to disrupt their rapprochement with the United States or revive pan-Indian alliances, including vestiges of Bowles's expedition.

In particular, Wellbank found that the Tuckabatchees and their mēkko, Efv Haco, "would permit no 'Northern Indians nor white People from the Northern Indians to enter that Country on pain of Death.'" Efv Haco, whom Wellbank described as "a very turbulent fellow and a strong American" partisan, was the same mēkko who likely coordinated the Tuckabatchee attempt on Bowles's life. Only after intercession from the Cherokees did Efv Haco relent and allow Wellbank to travel through the Upper Creek country, but only if Wellbank promised not to "give any Talks there." Whereas Cherokees grew more united in the wake of devastating American attacks, divisions

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<sup>53</sup> Okillissa Chupka, Houthlie Hopoyv Mēkko, and Tvstvnyke Hopoyv to McKee, Coweta Tallahassee, April 12, 1793, in Hamer, "British in Canada and the Southern Indians," 120-21; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 80-83.

among the Creeks widened. Outsiders like Wellbank, who stood in the midst of heated debates among the Creeks, courted danger.<sup>54</sup>

Sure enough, Wellbank's end came at the hand of Upper Creek warriors. Some individuals broke into the house where Wellbank lodged among the Cherokees, rifling through his papers. When Wellbank heard that "a Trunk of Silverware were taken into the Creeks [territory] by a Creek fellow," he "Supposed it to be his" and foolishly traveled "to the Creeks in quest of his property." Upon his return, Wellbank stopped at Eufala, an Upper Creek town that one of Panton's agents described as a logical waypoint, it being "the nearest Creek Town to the Cherokees." Unfortunately for Wellbank, a group of intoxicated and agitated Eufalas ensured that he never made it back home. According to the agent, they "fell upon him, and put him to death in a manner too shocking to relate." With Wellbank's bludgeoning, Creek efforts to reach out to British colonists, agents, and officials came to a bloody end.<sup>55</sup>

The failure of the Creek-Shawnee-Cherokee mission to Detroit also represented the end of significant pan-Indian diplomatic cooperation for nearly a generation. As Creek and Cherokee efforts to sustain relationships with British colonists fell dormant, the glue that held attempts at a broad alliance between Native peoples disintegrated as well. Without the hope of support from British arms, Creeks and Cherokees ceased their campaigns alongside Shawnees and it appears that their diplomatic journeys traversing the Ohio and Cumberland River valleys ended shortly thereafter. Shawnees, Miamis and

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<sup>54</sup> Wellbank to McKee, Cherokee Nation, April 12, 1794, in Hamer, "British Canada and the Southern Indians," 129-33.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.; John McDonald to McKee, Lower Cherokees, December 26, 1794, in Hamer, "British Canada and the Southern Indians," 133-34; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 100-01.



other Ohio Valley peoples continued their close cooperation, but even they faced dwindling British support.<sup>56</sup>

Eventually, despite their proximity to British forts and the regular presence of British and French Canadian traders in their towns, Ohio Valley Indians found it impossible to resist making concessions to the United States. Previously, even with the Washington administration's efforts to reorganize and strengthen the U.S. Army, American troops proved unable to overcome the united forces of Ohio Valley Indians and their supplies of British arms. The most notable instance of Shawnee and Miami success actually occurred in 1791 and 1792, when they humiliated and annihilated federal forces. Nevertheless, just two years later the U.S. Army overcame the allies, forcing them to surrender most of present-day Ohio for good. A decline in Anglo-Native cooperation had created an opening that the United States federal government took advantage of.<sup>57</sup>

In 1794, Britain confirmed the shift in its Indian policy by agreeing to evacuate the posts its troops held in the southern Great Lakes. The action not only placed British agents at an even further remove from many Native peoples inside the territories claimed by the United States, it signaled Britain's unwillingness to invest significant resources in helping Native peoples defend the Ohio Valley. Thus, the setbacks suffered by the Creeks reflected a general retrenchment in British-Native cooperation against the United States. While the United States had made several notable political and military reforms throughout the preceding decade, ultimately Anglo-Americans' success in seizing Native

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<sup>56</sup> Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 111-12; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 99-102.

<sup>57</sup> Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 106-15; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, ch. 7; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 74-100.

territory had less to do with the growth of an American juggernaut than it did the growing isolation of Native peoples.<sup>58</sup>

For Alexander McGillivray, the failures of his rivals and enemies brought little comfort. A broken man, McGillivray began to withdraw from political affairs over the course of 1792, concentrating on managing his plantations at Tensaw. McGillivray's semi-retirement did not last long. Always in poor health, he would not live long enough to see the humbling of Bowles and the Lower Creeks reach its zenith. In February 1793, McGillivray died of "a Complication of disorders of Gout in the stomach attended with a perepneumony," a buildup of fluid in the lungs resulting from pneumonia, at Pantón's house in Pensacola. The location of his final days reflected both his success at building networks and the ultimate marginalization that his failed ambitions caused him. As Gregory Waselkov has illustrated, Tensaw occupied a liminal space between Anglo-American, Spanish, and Creek societies with its community of Anglicized Creek planters. The inhabitants of Tensaw at once existed in all of these worlds, but truly belonged to none of them. As for Pensacola, as familiar as it was to McGillivray, it was not home; his own actions had driven him from the Tallapoosa River communities of his mother's kin. Even more fitting, McGillivray died not in the presence of other Creeks, but among his political and commercial contacts in West Florida.<sup>59</sup>

While all of this occurred, Bowles languished in a Madrid prison cell. From New Orleans, Spanish authorities sent him to Havana, and thereafter shipped him off to Spain

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<sup>58</sup> Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 113-15; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 171-72; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, 95-98.

<sup>59</sup> Pantón to Carondelet, Pensacola, February 16, 1793, in PLC, reel 8, ff. 510-13 and Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 353; Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 52-53; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 86-89; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, ch. 1.

in chains. His erstwhile associate, William Cunningham, would soon join him. Bowles would attempt to plead his usefulness as a Spanish agent to the royal court at Madrid, but to no avail. The Spanish Crown decided to keep Bowles and Cunningham as far away from North America as possible, but no longer wanted them at court either. In 1794, both prisoners boarded a ship destined for the South Sea. Spanish officials had sentenced them to spend the rest of their lives in exile in Manila, where they would hopefully fade into obscurity without a chance of recovering their political ambitions.<sup>60</sup>

The tribulations of McGillivray and Bowles had much broader implications than their personal ruination. Together, they symbolized the collapse of Creeks' Atlantic network-building efforts. Neither could overcome the reluctance of British and Spanish officials to provide support to the Creeks. Creeks counted on being able to repair such connections and supported both McGillivray and Bowles because of their seeming ability to preserve or rebuild them. The actions of both men suggest how important these networks were, both to their personal position and to the Creek communities. McGillivray thought he could replace, or at least augment, his Spanish networks with American ones, but many Creeks felt that the cost of drawing closer to the Americans proved too high and rejected his agreement. Bowles would seek to replace trade and diplomacy with pillage and plunder. Most Creek leaders found that option too risky and unsustainable. Their respective catastrophes not only paralleled the decline of Creek alliance-building efforts but came about as a direct consequence of them. Without those alliance networks, both men became useless and powerless, and Creeks struggled to find ways to adapt to their growing isolation.

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<sup>60</sup> Bowles to the Duke of Alcludia, Cárcel de la Villa, Madrid, July 14, 1793, AGI, PC, leg. 2371 and PLC, reel 8, ff. 1318-24; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 57-60.

The diplomatic fiascos of the early 1790s represented the true turning point in Creek history relative to European and Euroamerican colonization. Up until this point, they maintained legitimate hopes of preserving the dynamics of the colonial era and proved capable of leveraging colonial competition in their favor, as decades before. While the disappointment of Spanish networks and the loss of British ties did not doom the Creeks, it forced them to change their strategies relative to Anglo-American colonial expansion, and placed them in a significantly more precarious state. The loss of British contacts, in particular, helped create a chain reaction among Native peoples in the Eastern Woodlands, so that the active diplomatic cooperation between Creeks and other Native peoples such as the Cherokees and Shawnees declined as well. The calamities of the early 1790s would force Creeks to cut back on their diplomatic outreach and find other ways of defending their sovereignty that evaded open conflict and did not rely on support from outside allies, whether Native or non-Native. As a result, Creek diplomacy in the Atlantic and across the continent entered a fallow period for much of the following two decades.



## Chapter 6

### **“Every door is shut against them”: The Creek and Seminole Wars and the Failure of Diplomacy, 1803-1818**

Crossing the threshold of the governor’s house in Pensacola, Creek leader Peter McQueen and prophet High-Headed Jim traveled at the head of a band of Creek warriors, come to demand what Spain owed them. This assemblage of Creeks belonged to a group that Americans would come to call the “Red Sticks,” after the red-painted war clubs many of them used in battle. They had decided upon war as the only way to right the wrongs of Anglo-American colonialism and its effects upon Creek country. That endeavor required the Red Sticks to obtain stockpiles of arms and ammunition, and this, they believed, they were entitled to as part of their defensive alliance with Spaniards in Florida. After a series of threats and harangues, the Red Sticks eventually obtained a supply of ammunition. On their return home, they encountered a party of the Mississippi Territory militia. The ensuing battle, named the Battle of Burnt Corn after a nearby spring, represented the first engagement between Creeks and American troops in war Americans would alternately refer to as the Red Stick War or the Creek War.<sup>1</sup>

The Creek move on Pensacola and the Battle of Burnt Corn that followed have become an integral part of the historical narrative of the Red Stick War. Lost in this focus on violence is the fact that Creeks had tried to obtain said aid through more peaceful means for decades. Disputes with Spanish Florida officials over provisions of arms and ammunition had raged since the 1780s. In general, Creek dissatisfaction with the terms of Spanish alliances stretched back even further, and paralleled Timucuan, Apalachee, and

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<sup>1</sup> For the origin of the term “Red Sticks,” see Kathryn E. Holland Braund, “Red Sticks,” in *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War & the War of 1812*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 84-104.

Apalachicola complaints from the late seventeenth century. Since the 1760s, Creeks had sent dozens of diplomatic envoys and missives to British and Spanish territories and outposts throughout the Atlantic. Only after the repeated failures of their pleas and attempted negotiations did Creeks turn to violence and anger, demanded that the Spaniards of Florida reciprocate their end of the bargain.

Scholars have described the Red Sticks as “traditional” and “conservative,” yet it is important to note that their wide-ranging envoys, multilateral dialogues, and bevy of external cultural and political influences belie the kind of insularity readers normally associate with those terms. Red Sticks drew upon traditional Creek sentiments, beliefs, and practices, but reinvented them to suit their times and circumstances, while also adapting and incorporating elements from the outside world. Those Creeks who came to be called Red Sticks participated in a vibrant, broad, and interconnected world, and the landscape they inhabited was still dominated by a variety of peoples and powers, governed by diplomacy, negotiation, and exchange. In fact, the very birth of the Red Stick uprising and the associated Nativist movements north of the Ohio River reflected this. When many Creeks and other Native peoples felt that the United States had grown to hold undue influence over their political and military affairs, they responded by rejecting established leaders and anointing new ones. Every time Americans attempted to marginalize Native opposition to their policies and desires, Native peoples found a way to circumvent American interference. Like other Native peoples, Creeks continued to maneuver in the midst of imperial and colonial struggles to bring their agendas to the fore and assert their place in early America.

Viewed in light of Creek diplomatic efforts over the previous four decades, certain aspects of the Red Stick movement appear less a radical reinvention of tradition than a seamless continuity with the more aggressive strands of Creek diplomatic culture. Like Tunapé, Okilissa Chupka, Alexander McGillivray, and other mēkkvlke, Red Sticks looked south, to Pensacola and to Nassau, to Spanish and British officials, for support. Through Spanish and British diplomacy they sought to alleviate their material wants, draw upon the symbolic, spiritual, and diplomatic capital that alliances with powerful outsiders brought, and secure assistance against Anglo-Americans and their Creek allies. Just like the Creeks who forged connections with Bowles, they looked east to the Bahamas as the means of British deliverance from the American goliath. They hoped that Britain provide men and arms to assist them in their struggle. They hoped that Britain would serve as guarantor of their rights and that British officials and diplomats would argue for their entitlement to the sovereign privileges accorded to European and Euro-American nations. Although the Red Sticks sought to transform their, their diplomacy represented a clear extension of precedents set in the late eighteenth century. Like many of their ancestors, they saw the Florida coast and the Caribbean as their avenue to a wider world, their link to an international, trans-Atlantic diplomatic sphere that would strengthen them.

Many scholars have attributed the Red Sticks' and other Nativists' eventual collapse to poor strategic design, fanatical impetuosity, and an overzealous rejection of outside influences or technologies. In fact, Red Sticks engaged in extensive dialogue with outsiders; the only influence they rejected was that of Americans. Their ideology proved quite flexible with regard to incorporation of European military technologies and



cooperation with European officials and military forces. Instead, it was the failure of British and Spanish allies to support Red Sticks in a timely or sufficient manner that proved the most decisive factor in their defeat.

While the rise of the Red Sticks and various other Nativists reflected the still-contested nature of the trans-Appalachian region, they also ushered in a turning point in North American history. Americans refused to give up their vision a world in which their nation dominated the trans-Appalachian region. As they acquired fiscal and political stability and strength, U.S. federal and state governments devoted greater effort and resources towards seizing control of the territory between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. The War of 1812 would come to represent a major shift in the political and diplomatic order of trans-Appalachia, as American victory over the Red Sticks and their various British and Native allies finally placed the United States in a position to begin imposing its vision upon the region.

An analysis of Red Stick diplomacy helps explain why the United States eventually secured control over the trans-Appalachian region, why the preservation of Creek sovereignties ultimately required removal from their homelands, and reveals how much these projects depended upon transatlantic networks. The decline of trans-Appalachia's Native peoples occurred in inverse proportion to the strengthening of the United States and the fading of Europeans' colonial presence on the North American continent. The combined efforts of Creeks, Shawnees and other the Native peoples of trans-Appalachia contained the territorial growth of the United States for nearly four decades following American independence. Conversely, the failure of these peoples' efforts opened a floodgate of American colonization that spread across most of the

continent within the ensuing six decades. Together with the work of other Nativists, Red Stick diplomacy provides the crucial context to the transformation of North America in the early-to-mid nineteenth century.

### **TRADER DEBTS AND “HUNGRY YEARS”**

Creeks truly began to feel the effects of their diplomatic isolation after 1800, worn down by years of continual Anglo-American pressure and confronted by policy changes by two crucial institutions. Scholars debate just how revolutionary the U.S. election of 1800 truly was, but in the realm of Indian affairs it unquestioningly brought to power a federal government, and particularly a presidential administration, more committed to the acquisition of Indian lands than its Federalist predecessors. While Federalists had of course pursued policies aimed at reducing Native sovereignties, and Creek sovereignty in particular, they had actually served as a moderating influence upon the aggressiveness of the Georgia state government and the communities on the Creek-Georgia borderlands. Federalists had expressed ambivalence about both western expansion and the sovereign rights of Native polities, and Creeks had been able to use them to restrain state and local interests.

In contrast, the new Jeffersonian Republican administration embraced the acquisition of Native lands and the gradual elimination of Native sovereignties without hesitation. It also began to curtail the practice of gifting during annual congresses, confident that absent real British or Spanish competition, it no longer needed to win the favor of Creeks and other Native peoples. For the Creeks, the 1802 Treaty of Fort Wilkinson and the 1805 Treaty of Washington signaled a greater commitment on the part of U.S. federal government towards procuring Creek lands. Creeks could no longer use

the federal government as a counterweight against local and regional foes, leaving them without even the mild support that the Washington Administration provided a decade earlier.<sup>2</sup>

Compounding these matters, Creeks suffered from the twin devastation of famine and the decline of the deerskin trade. For much of the first decade of the nineteenth century, hunger plagued Creek country. Historian Claudio Saunt referred to this period spanning 1804-1812 as “the hungry years,” a time in which crops failed repeatedly, game depletion left meat scarce, and growing inequalities in land usage and food distribution led to starvation for many. The reduction of game proved especially burdensome, as not only did it take away a food supply for Creeks, but it also cost them valuable deerskins. Debt-driven overhunting and the destruction of hunting grounds by Anglo-American farmers and planters combined to shrink the deer herds spanning the region. On top of all that, the deerskin market continued its decline in Europe and prices for skins continued to fall. Both the supply of and demand for deerskins plummeted simultaneously, leaving Creeks unable to procure food and goods in a time of great need.<sup>3</sup>

Goods not only became increasingly difficult to obtain in Florida, they became much more expensive. The Napoleonic Wars wrought havoc upon transatlantic trade, with attacks on commercial vessels driving up prices throughout the Atlantic world. Panton and Leslie’s British subjecthood offered them little protection. Company ships fell victim to Royal Navy prize hunters and British privateers, who justified their conduct by

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<sup>2</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 178-9; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 193-8; Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, ch. 5; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 141-3. In particular, the Administration sought land for the construction of roads that would allow U.S. citizens easy access to newly purchased lands in Louisiana. See Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South*, esp. 50-60.

<sup>3</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 178; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, ch. 9.

accusing the company of aiding the enemy. The company passed on the costs of the trade's collapse to Native peoples by devaluing the credit they offered for deerskins and increasing the credit they demanded of hunters and traders to purchase goods. These factors not only made it harder for Creeks and other Native peoples to obtain European goods, it drove them further and further into debt whenever they could acquire them. While Creeks could live without imported tools and clothing, the collapse of the trade left them unable to pay existing debts, unable to obtain firearms and ammunition that were crucial to both self-defense and hunting, and unable to procure food they needed when their own crops failed.<sup>4</sup>

Panton and his successor John Forbes, who took over the company after his death in 1801, set about balancing the company's accounts on the backs of Native hunters and traders. The burden fell especially hard on Creeks, Seminoles, and Miccosukees, who represented the brunt of the company's business. The total amount of the company's debt ran into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and little under half of it pertaining to these three groups. The figures for the debt account not only for the Creeks' sizeable trade, but also damages from the Lower Creek and Miccosukee raids on the Apalachee store. In 1797, Panton calculated Creeks and Seminoles at over \$122,000 combined. In 1803, they still owed over \$113,000. The next closest tribe, the Choctaws, owed less than half that amount, \$46,091. Of these totals, the company claimed that \$41,000 derived from thefts and destruction of property at the Apalachee store. Once the company saw an opportunity to collect, its forgiving attitude towards the Creeks' and Miccosukees' collaboration with Bowles dissipated. All of the above sums included substantial interest charges, which the

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<sup>4</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 178; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, ch. 10, esp. 222-23.

company seems to have calculated at six percent per annum. As some of the debts had lingered twenty years or more, many of the debts had more than doubled in value due to accrued interest. Most southeastern Indians appear to have been unaware of these interest charges during this time and would have considered them unjust.<sup>5</sup>

Panton and Forbes could not count upon the Spanish colonial governments in Florida to aid them in the collection of this debt. As the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars dragged on, the Spanish Crown abandoned the region to focus on more pressing issues. In 1795, Spain signed the Treaty of San Lorenzo, ceding its claim to (mostly Native) lands it had disputed with the United States. In 1803, it would sell Louisiana to the United States via France. The debilitating effects of these wars upon metropolitan Spain provided the international context for metropolitan neglect, and its effects upon trade and communications weakened the Spanish presence that remained in Florida. Spanish officials struggled to keep basic functions of colonial government in operation while defending against Anglo-American freebooters and raiders. After 1803, the Spanish military and political establishment in the Floridas ceased taking proactive measures to counter American influence or support Native peoples.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The figures depended upon the factors' own bookkeeping. Coker and Watson suggest they took advantage by exaggerating some of these debts. See "Debts due Panton, Leslie, and Co. by the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Indians," Chickasaw Hay Town, Choctaw Nation, August 20, 1803, NARG 75, M 271, reel 1, f. 227; Samuel Overton, et al., "Report of a claim of John Forbes & Co.," *American State Papers: Public Lands*, eds. Asbury Dickins and James C. Allen (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1859), 4:159-63. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 162-63; 227-28.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Flagg Bemis, "Pinckney's Treaty: America's Advantage from Europe's Distress, 1783-1800," in *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History*, ed. Gilbert C. Din, vol. II, *The Spanish Presence in Louisiana, 1763-1803* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1996), 28-39; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 200-02, 249-50; Elena Sánchez-Fabrés Mirat, *Situación histórica de las Floridas en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII (1783-1819): los problemas de una región de frontera*, (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1977), ch. 6; Arthur P. Whitaker, "The Retrocession of Louisiana in Spanish Policy," in *The American Historical Review* 39 (1934): 454-76.

For Creeks and their Native neighbors, the twin realities of Spain's crisis and Panton and Forbes's debt collection had the unfortunate effect of bringing Panton, Forbes, and the U.S. federal government into alliance. No longer able to rely on the Spanish administrations in East and West Florida, and desperate to resolve Native debts, both Panton and later Forbes began to view the United States as a valuable partner. They realized that the United States had grown stronger than the Spanish colonies in the region at the same time that he began to despair of the sustainability of this company's business model. Both men decided to use Americans' newfound regional power and their hunger for Creek and other Native lands to their advantage. Panton and Forbes, citing Native peoples' inability to repay their trading debts in deerskins or other goods, demanded that they cede land as compensation. Panton approached Benjamin Hawkins about U.S. cooperation in the matter, suggesting land as the only sufficient form of compensation the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws possessed. Hawkins responded favorably, but nothing concrete occurred before Panton's death.<sup>7</sup>

Forbes's effort to bring Panton's debt collection plan to fruition became the defining mark of his leadership of the company. Under Forbes, the company planned to acquire land cessions from the Creeks, aided by pressure from American agents such as Hawkins. The company would then sell the ceded land to the United States in turn for the U.S. federal government's repayment of the company's debts. U.S. General James Wilkinson vouched for Forbes to senior Administration officials. "Mr. Forbes," he wrote, "possesses a cordial disposition, to promote the views of Government in our Indian Concerns, by every means in his Power." On Wilkinson's advice, Forbes traveled to

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<sup>7</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 177-78; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 226-29.

Washington to meet with Secretary of War Henry Dearborn in 1803-4. The trip to the capital sealed his working relationship with the federal government.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, the firm that had once regarded the preservation of Native territory as crucial to its existence had now become an instrumental force in encouraging southeastern Indians to part with their land. Founded by fierce Loyalists who reviled the United States, Panton, Leslie, and Company had morphed into a key ally of American imperialism. Renamed John Forbes and Company after Panton's death, the mercantile firm that once served as a major counterweight to American ambitions in the Gulf South became a primary agent in aiding the United States' colonial policies. Relations between Creeks and the company declined even further, as the company developed into an increasingly adversarial force.

### **THE FORBES PURCHASE**

Creeks sought to maneuver as best they could in this political climate, and Lower Creek and Miccosukee communities decided to attempt to wring whatever advantages they could out of a land cession by making the ceded territory a base for British colonists. In 1804 and 1811, various Creek leaders sold merchant firm John Forbes and Co. tracts of land in Apalachee. Together, these lands became known as the Forbes Purchase or the Forbes Grant. Bowles's old associate Thomas Perryman, formerly Okaiegigie but now known as the Hopvyē Mēkko, drove these negotiations. Company partner James Innerarity referred to him as "the steadiest promoter of the [1804] Grant." He and other leaders wanted to persuade the Forbes and Co. merchants to maintain their unprofitable

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<sup>8</sup> James Wilkinson to Henry Dearborn, Fort St. Stephens, October 7, 1803, NARG 75, M 271, reel 1, ff. 241-48; Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 179-80; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 235, 240-42, ch. 12.

store in Apalachee, while also reintroducing a British colonial presence in the region via migrants from the Bahamas. This would create opportunities for trade and diplomatic interaction, and would draw in Britons to help protect the region from the Americans.<sup>9</sup>

The tactic of inviting British colonists to Apalachee revived a strategy employed by previous generations of Lower Creeks. Cowetas had invited Spaniards in Cuba to resettle in the region throughout the 1760s and 1770s and had offered to set up a British outpost at the head of the Apalachicola River in the 1790s. In 1810, just prior to the last of the Forbes Purchase cessions, several Creek leaders requested Spanish approval for a plan to establish “a Port of Entry on the River apalachicola” allowing them to trade with “foreign market[s].” With no reply forthcoming, these leaders turned to the Bahamas in the fall of 1811, hoping to set up British trade networks and seek Spanish permission later. Flint River leader Kenhagee (Okaiegigie/Hopvyē Mēkko’s father) brought their offer to John Forbes, as well as to the governor of the Bahamas, Charles Cameron, both of whom resided in Nassau at the time. That old associates of Bowles and other British colonists from the Bahamas played such a prominent role in the Forbes cessions reveals how prior connections remained influential to Lower Creek leaders and how they continued to adapt their diplomatic strategies to changing circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

Hopothle Mēkko, the longtime veteran of Creek politics, provided weight to Kenhagee’s mission. By 1810, Hopothle Mēkko had become speaker of the relatively new institution of the Creek National Council. The National Council represented an evolution of the yearly assemblies that Creek chiefs held to coordinate affairs between

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<sup>9</sup> James Innerarity to William Simpson, Pensacola, September 24, 1804, PLC, reel 15, ff. 1010-15.

<sup>10</sup> Creek and Seminole Deposition, Chiscatalofa, May 25, 1804, PLC, reel 15, ff. 797-806; Creek and Seminole Deposition, Pensacola, January 22, 1811, PLC, reel 18, ff. 486-502.



them as a whole. It remained an experimental body, with its power and function still open to debate. While some mēkkvike wanted to transform the council into a central government with coercive authority, similar to the U.S. Congress, others wanted to preserve it as a collaborative and advisory body. Regardless of the competing visions of its future, the National Council maintained a respected status among both Upper and Lower Creeks. The holder of the post of speaker could claim a certain amount of authority and represented the voice of a sizeable portion of Creeks. So in 1811, when Hopothle Mēkko sent out a petition to King George III by way of Kenhagee and Cameron, it represented the wishes of thousands of beleaguered people. It also showed that some Upper Creeks had once again joined Lower Creeks and Miccosukees in seeking British ties, indicating a renewed yearning for new diplomatic channels.

The invitation for a British colony in Apalachee represented an attempt by Creeks to preserve the terms of colonial diplomacy, particularly a diverse web of connections and their interdependence with Euroamericans. Hopothle Mēkko and Kenhagee called for the establishment of a port under the direction of British colonists at the head of the Apalachicola. By means of this port, they hoped to have a regular trade and dialogue with Britons and solicit assistance whenever needed. The British colonists could do as they wished within the confines of this cession, as long as they fulfilled an obligation to help protect and provide for their neighbors. In essence, Creeks sought to restore an Anglo-Creek relationship where both parties supported one another in an alliance against common enemies. Creeks would depend upon Britons for supplies and diplomatic capital, while Britons would rely on Creeks for protection and defense.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hopothle Mēkko to King George III, Tuckabatchee, September 1, 1811, NA-UK, CO 23-58, ff. 90-91.

Unfortunately, Creeks found that Britons were still not interested in reviving old relationships on former terms. Kenhagee paid two visits to Nassau in 1811, the second of which included invitations to “a dinner from the Governor and some of the principal people there.” Despite the cordial reception, his visits did not generate much of a response. Forbes had little interest in further investment in Creek trade or Creek country. He advised Kenhagee of “the impossibility of sending settlers according to their request” and the company’s representatives in Florida openly discussed the possibility of closing the store in Apalachee. Governor Cameron also gave them little in the way of gifts or encouragement. War had not yet broken out between the United States and Great Britain, but tensions between the two countries over maritime rights made conflict a definite possibility. Officials in the Bahamas did not want to provoke an outbreak of hostilities by aiding the Creeks without approval from the home government in Britain.<sup>12</sup>

Intended to alleviate their woes, the Forbes Purchase instead worsened matters for most Lower Creeks and Miccosukees. Forbes and Company did show interest in recruiting colonists to purchase Apalachee lands, but not the kind that Creeks or Miccosukees sought. Rather than reaching out to Britons in the Bahamas, the company advertised lands to Anglo-American planters. This decision threatened to ignite a combustible situation. An anonymous memorandum given to a surveyor hired by Forbes offered a warning that the company ignored. In its report on the territory, the memorandum stated that “the Indians are desirous of seeing the lands settled, but they have strong objections to the Class of Americans known under the Appellation of Crackers...in short [they desire] Honest Men of every description.” Neither this observer

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<sup>12</sup> Edward Doyle to John Forbes, Prospect Bluff, September 1, 1811, PLC, reel 18, ff. 802-06; John McKee to James Monroe, Fort Stoddert, March 25, 1812, PLC, reel 18, ff. 992-96.

nor the Miccosukees considered most Americans “Honest Men.” Anglo-American “Crackers” had earned the disdain of Indians, Loyalists, and Spaniards alike through their violent and disrespectful behavior. Regardless of these warnings, Forbes and Company began contracting with American firms for sales of land, as exemplified by their agreeing to sell a plot of 12,000 acres on the Apalachicola to Hinton James and Company of North Carolina. Had war not intervened, these companies would have sold parcels of this land to the very “Crackers” that Creeks disdained. By choosing to sell to American companies, Forbes and Company had violated the wishes of the mēkkvlke and the spirit of the Forbes Purchase.<sup>13</sup>

Some Lower Creek and Miccosukee leaders had foreseen the company’s duplicity and tried to block the cession, but the company used a mixture of promises and threats to overcome their resistance. During the 1804 talks, Kenhagee and fellow former Bowles ally John Kinnaird attempted to halt the negotiations, fearing that the company’s “Sole intention was to settle the Country, with a set of vagabonds from Georgia & South Carolina.” James Innerarity swore “that our intentions were to settle the land principally with people from the Bahamas, & from the other English, Spanish & French Colonies.” Yet he mostly relied on pressure over persuasion, threatening to sever all ties with the Flint River and Miccosukee towns “unless these boundaries were Confirmed.” Coweta mēkko Tvstvnvke Hopoyv, whom English-speakers called the Little Prince, “called [Kenhagee and Kinnaird] together & harangued them for an hour or two,” after which the holdouts agreed to the deal. Innerarity cited Tvstvnvke Hopoyv’s presence as vital in securing the 1811 cession as well. The company’s allies among the Lower Creeks

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<sup>13</sup> “Memorandum given M<sup>r</sup>. Dan<sup>l</sup>. Blue” [anonymous], Pensacola, December 14, 1809, PLC, reel 17, ff. 1470-73; Contract between John Forbes and Company and Hinton James and Company, Charleston, January 3, 1811, PLC, reel 18, ff. 472-76.

provided the muscle that merchants and traders lacked, forcing their neighbors to approve prejudicial agreements.<sup>14</sup>

Tvstvnvke Hopoyv's involvement reflects how Coweta and Cusseta grew to consider the Apalachee lands expendable, while other Lower Creeks continued to prize them. Increasingly concerned with maintaining existing connections over exploring new ones, Coweta and Cusseta leaders saw the cession as an easy solution to their debt problems. With inferior ties to existing networks, other Lower Creeks still valued Apalachee for its potential in fostering communications and trade. Moreover, an Apalachee cession appeared much less threatening from a Coweta or Cusseta perspective than a Miccosukee one. While the lands lay nearly two hundred miles from the principal Lower Creek etvlwvlke, the cession would bring Americans into the Miccosukees' immediate vicinity. While most Lower Creeks and Miccosukees split on the issue, Cowetas and Cussetas had fewer stakes in preserving the lands and compelled their peers to decide in favor of the cession.

The Forbes Purchase reveals a continuing disjuncture between Creek and European understandings of land cessions, territorial sovereignty, and their relationship to diplomacy. To the members of Forbes and Company, the purchase voided all Creek claims over the ceded territory. Company officials operated under the premise that they could resell this land to whomever they wished, as long as they accorded with Spanish laws and respected Spain's overlapping claim of sovereignty over the territory. They took Kenhagee and Hopothle Mēkko's comments about recruiting colonists from the Bahamas as a suggestion, whereas the Creek leaders intended it as a precondition of the cession.

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<sup>14</sup> James Innerarity to Simpson, Pensacola, September 24, 1804, PLC, reel 15, ff. 1010-15; [James] Innerarity to John Forbes, Pensacola, February 9, 1811, PLC, reel 18, ff. 512-16.

From the perspective of these Creeks, the company committed an unconscionable breach of alliance by inviting enemies from Georgia into their midst. Decades earlier, when Spanish officials invited Anglo-American planters to settle in Tensaw, Upper Creeks objected on this very same principle. Creeks had granted their negotiating partners the right to live in and make use of these lands; they did not grant absolute right over them. For the company to act otherwise invalidated the agreement and constituted a hostile act in the eyes of many Creeks.

The Lower Creek and Miccosukee response to the Forbes Purchase reveals how company decisions helped to bring about the Red Stick and Seminole Wars. In early 1812, a year before the breakout of war, Miccosukees took up arms against incoming Anglo-American planters. Troubles began with Miccosukees raiding Anglo plantations. The company's surveyor, who also became a planter in Apalachee, complained "that the Indians stole two horses from me" and began to worry that "if there cannot be an Effectual Stop put to those things; it will be Vain, it will be Madness in us to proceed any further in Settling in this Land." Not even a month later, the surveyor reported that he had recovered his horses, in a condition "much abused," and then had them stolen again. The company threatened to close the Apalachee store if the Miccosukees did not cease interfering with the company's plans. They proposed using the store as leverage to force *mēkkvlke* to restrain their communities' warriors and make the Apalachicola River safe for planters. Said employees threatened that "if those councils [of the Miccosukees] make any hesitation [in complying with their demands] we will abandon [the store] instantly...[and] we will levy on the land for our past losses, bringing it to the hammer." The ominous conclusion to this statement indicated a threat not only to give up the trade,

but to solicit a military response from Spanish and American troops. This passage emphasizes how the company adopted an increasingly adversarial role with Lower Creeks and Miccosukees. Knowing the leverage their control of the trade gave them, company officials used the threat of abandonment and the specter of a military invasion as a means of coercing compliance.<sup>15</sup>

Leaders among the Miccosukees, wary of the closing of the store and the stoppage of trade, sought to reassure the company and the migrants. Each time the surveyor had his horses stolen, Kinache, the principal mēkko of Miccosukee, “sent Indians after them.” When Edmund Doyle, the company’s storekeeper in Apalachee, hosted prospective planters from Georgia, he noted that “the Indians have received them kindly,” most likely due to the protection of Kinache and other leaders. Yet, the matter had escaped their control, and many Miccosukees began to blame them for the making the cession to Forbes and company in the first place. As far back as 1811, company officials had heard rumors “among the Mickasucky Indians, who threatened to destroy the [company’s] Store [in Apalachee], and kill Perryman, Yohullo Emathla, the Big Warrior, [illegible], who had been active in giving their consent to the new Cession.” Although Miccosukee leaders reassured the party that the rumors were untrue, subsequent actions of Miccosukee warriors suggested that the discontent grew with every American migrant that came to Apalachee.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Blue to John Innerarity, Prospect Bluff, April 7, 1812, PLC, reel 18, ff. 1004-06; Blue to John Innerarity, Prospect Bluff, May 1, 1812, PLC, reel 18, ff. 1057-59; James Innerarity to John Innerarity, Mobile, May 15, 1812, PLC, reel 18, ff. 1100-03.

<sup>16</sup> Blue to John Innerarity, Prospect Bluff, April 7, 1812, PLC, reel 18, ff. 1004-06; Edmund Doyle to John Innerarity, Apalachicola River, May 2, 1812, PLC, reel 18, ff. 1065-66; [James] Innerarity to John Forbes, Pensacola, February 9, 1811, PLC, reel 18, ff. 512-16.

## RED STICKS AND “PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES”

While the Forbes Purchase produced a great deal of tension, negotiations for the Upper Creek debt provoked widespread controversy. Forbes held the Upper Creeks responsible for a combined debt of \$40,000: \$21,000 of it the principal, with an additional \$19,000 worth of interest charges. The partners insisted upon an extraordinary amount of debt service and demanded repayment in full at the annual meeting of Creek leaders in Tuckabatchee. The company acknowledged that it would never receive the full sum for which it asked, using the starting figures as a baseline for negotiations. Nevertheless, they expected Creeks to repay the majority of this debt and to do so within two to three years. To contribute even half of what the company asked within that time frame would have placed severe hardship upon them.<sup>17</sup>

The company increased the burden of the debt by refusing to consider land cessions as compensation. Instead, they demanded that reimbursement come out of the Creeks' annuity payments from the U.S. federal government in the form of cash and goods. At the time, the total Creek annuity was \$17,000. To repay the full debt in three years would have required would have required the Creeks to surrender two full years' worth of annuity and nearly half of the third year's. This burden would fall most heavily on Creeks who did not have investments in land, slaves, and trading posts to rely upon, as many of them depended upon necessities that the annuities provided, such as food, blankets, clothing, and hunting equipment. Drawing repayment from the Creek annuity would also hold both Upper and Lower Creeks responsible for the debt, distributing part

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<sup>17</sup> John Innerarity, *Journal of Travel to and Proceedings of the Creek congress at Tuckabatchee*, October 14 – November 1, 1812, PLC, reel 18, ff. 1438-51 and *FHQ* 9, no. 2 (Oct. 1930): 67-89; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 261-63. The figure for interest charges comes from subtracting the stated principal of the debts from the total amount requested by Innerarity.

of the burden to Creek communities that had already extinguished their obligations and had parted with a wide swath of land to do so. Even a partial fulfillment of these terms portended devastation for a large chunk of the Creek population.<sup>18</sup>

As one might expect under such conditions, the negotiations proved contentious. For one, the company's newfound arrogance and disregard for Creeks was on full display. Company partner John Innerarity represented the firm at Tuckabatchee and conducted his business with a sense of entitlement, his temper perhaps exacerbated by weariness from travel and a "severe cold & headache." On more than one occasion, he referred to his "patience being exhausted" and at one point stormed into the Tuckabatchee squareground and demanded that the *mēkkvlke* settle his business. He dismissed various proposals, including an offer of land cessions and payments of \$1500 per year, as "more like mockery than fair proposals." Innerarity's imperious demeanor clashed with the deliberative nature of Creek councils and added to insult to already tense negotiations.<sup>19</sup>

The prior instance of the Forbes Purchase also affronted the Upper Creeks on multiple levels. Upper Creek leaders believed that the Lower Creeks had acted inappropriately by not consulting them. Facing rapacious demands for land from the United States, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee leaders had collectively agreed not to make any new land cessions without consulting one another. John Innerarity knew this going into the Forbes Purchase negotiations, as both Hawkins and a company employee warned the partners as far back as 1804 that the Upper Creeks might not consider the cession binding without being consulted. That the company went ahead with

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<sup>18</sup> Innerarity Journal, entry for October 31.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, entries for October 28-30.



the cession anyway irritated Upper Creek leaders, who felt the company should have respected the collective agreement. Upper Creek leaders also felt that cession should have covered their debt relief as well, not just that of the Lower Creeks. Tuckabatchee mēkko Tvstvnvke Rakko (the “Great Warrior,” called Big Warrior by English speakers), had replaced Hopothle Mēkko as speaker of the National Council and helped negotiate on their behalf. He warned Innerarity in private that the mēkkvlke “would recur to the subject of the Apalachee lands,” claiming that “they had not been regularly sold in the House of Talks but that [the company] had gotten a few drunken Chiefs to give it away.” No such duplicity had occurred, but the tone of Tvstvnvke Rakko’s warning voiced many leaders’ anger with company for both allowing the Lower Creeks and Miccosukees to ignore the pact against cessions and their refusal to cancel the Upper Creek debt as well.<sup>20</sup>

The debts themselves represented an additional and particularly burdensome intrusion of Anglo-American financial and economic systems. Even leaders normally sympathetic to the United States and Forbes and Company balked at the company’s application of interest charges. Tvstvnvke Rakko showed every intention of aiding Innerarity with the collection of the company’s debts, lodging him at his home and serving as his liaison throughout the early portions of the council. However, he warned Innerarity that he “must not think of charging them with interest although it was the custom of the whites, for the Nation would pay none.” Creeks found the concept of interest foreign and punitive, believing that obligations between peoples should remain mutual and equitable regardless of the time elapsed. That a normally conciliatory mēkko

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., entry for October 29; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 254-55.

such as Tvstvnvke Rakko would mount resistance to Innerarity spoke to the unpopularity of the company's demands and the distress they would cause most Creeks.<sup>21</sup>

Rather than viewing the debts as a commitment past due, Creeks looked upon trade as a continuing cycle of obligations, perpetual and unchanging in nature unless explicitly broken or altered by one of the parties. Tvstvnvke Rakko stated that the Creeks would not even "pay the principal [of the debt] unless we [Forbes and Company] would bind ourselves to trade with them as formerly & allow them a better Price for their skins & lower the prices of our goods." While company officials felt that the Creeks had shirked their duty to repay the traders, Creeks viewed the increase in trade prices as an act of bad faith on the part of the merchants. By this point in time, Creeks certainly understood how Euroamerican market economics functioned with regard to trade and prices, but they objected to its application in this instance and fashion as a violation of prior agreements. During the initial negotiations between Spanish officials, Panton and Leslie, and the Creeks in the 1780s, company officials agreed to adhere to a set tariff or exchange rate of skins to goods that fixed the company's prices. Yet the company and its traders quickly broke the agreement, responding to fluctuations in transatlantic trade by altering prices. Creeks had resented the fact for years and with prices reaching new highs by the 1810s, this long-standing issue loomed over debt negotiations.<sup>22</sup>

The near-universal opposition among Creeks to Innerarity's proposal forced the company to concede on the issue of interest. During the negotiations, the council refused to "do anything if [Innerarity] mentioned any more about interest." Tvstvnvke Rakko told the company official that "the Chiefs of the Nation did not think like [Innerarity]"

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<sup>21</sup> Innerarity Journal, entry for October 29.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., entry for October 29.

regarding the fairness of interest payments and felt he “wanted to tear the very skins off their backs, [as] it would take them a long time to pay [him] even the principal” of the debts. Ideologically, Creeks rejected the principle outright. Even from a practical standpoint, Tvstvnvke Rakko argued that the payment of interest would prove impossible. If “the wives, children & poor People would be left for three or four years naked,” Big Warrior griped, “then how could they pay [the company] interest?” The metaphor of torn flesh evoked the physical and psychological pain the interest charges would force Creeks to endure. Creek leaders realized what Innerarity did not or could not care to understand, that the Creek population could not hunt under conditions of extreme deprivation, and that many might even starve given the gravity of the famine. Innerarity offered to halve the interest before finally surrendering on the point altogether.<sup>23</sup>

Negotiations provided a hollow victory for Creeks, for the final agreement still forced them to foot a massive bill in an extremely short period of time. With the removal of interest charges, the Upper Creek debts dropped from \$40,000 to \$21,000, but the conditions of repayment still proved stifling. Innerarity insisted that they pay that entire sum within a year, surrendering the whole of the annuity for 1812, which Hawkins was to distribute at the congress, and pay the remainder from the 1813 annuity in a year’s time. The settlement demonstrated that the Upper Creeks still had a great deal of bargaining power. Even threats from U.S forces could not coerce repayment from them. Innerarity’s frustration at having to haggle with the Creeks, combined with the company’s misfortunes at sea, made Innerarity “quite tired & sick of the business” and eager to

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., entry for October 31.

extract whatever cash payments he could. Still, the need to deliver up \$21,000 of goods within a year's time during a period of want remained painful.<sup>24</sup>

### **REVIVALISM AND THE RESURGENCE OF NATIVE ALLIANCES**

Among Upper Creeks in particular, the negotiations at Tuckabatchee amplified a trend towards the violent rejection of Anglo-American influences. In the months prior to the meeting, some Upper Creeks began threatening Tvstvnvke Rakko for his continual cooperation with American officials. In May 1812, a group of Creeks who attacked American colonists on the Duck River in Tennessee “state[d] that that they are determined for war [against the Americans] & that if the Big Warrior does not ~~sanction~~ approve of what they have done that they will kill him.” Mēkkvlke often attempted to restrain Creek violence against Euroamerican neighbors, but whether warriors listened to them or not, they seldom threatened such leaders with death. The demand that Tvstvnvke Rakko support them or face assassination signaled a new turn in community relations among the Creeks. In the past, Creeks might have denounced the mēkkvlke who supported land cessions, but their violence usually turned towards the outsiders who brokered such deals with them. However, starting in the 1810s, Creeks began to threaten community leaders whom they viewed as supporting interests opposed to the greater good. Political disagreements escalated from the realm of debate and intrigue towards open violence both within and between individual etvlwvlke.<sup>25</sup>

The reopening of British contacts and the revival of pan-Native alliances further north help explain the increased boldness and aggression on the part of some Creeks as

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., entry for October 31.

<sup>25</sup> G.W. Sevier to Wade Hampton, Fort Hampton, May 26, 1812 and postscript of May 29, 1812, Addition to the John Sevier Papers, Tennessee State Archives [hereafter TSA], Nashville.

well as their willingness to attack members of their own communities. Dialogue with British agents gave them hope of material support, alliances with members of other tribes gave them the reassurance of force in numbers, and the revivalist aspects of pan-Nativism not only gave their actions a sense of purpose but influenced the way they perceived the actions of mēkkvlke such as Tvstvvnke Rakko. Throughout 1811-12, Shawnee warrior Tecumseh and a Shawnee-Kickapoo delegation traveled throughout Native communities south of the Ohio River, eventually making their way to Creek country. A number of Choctaws, Cherokees, and Creeks accompanied the delegation, the latter two groups consisting of returning visitors and dissidents who had relocated north of the Ohio some years prior, desiring to continue fighting against American colonists. Following in the footsteps of Shawnee, Creek, Cherokee, and other Native leaders of the late eighteenth century, Tecumseh and the members of the delegation sought to renew to project of a vast Eastern Woodlands Indian confederacy, united with and supplied by British agents in a struggle against the United States.<sup>26</sup>

The turmoil within and without Creek country played a significant role in Tecumseh's reception, but so too did the long-standing ties between the Creeks and Shawnees and the continued presence of Shawnee communities in Creek country. In fact, contemporary reports suggested that Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa's mother hailed from Sawanogee, the Shawnee community near Tuckabatchee, and that both men spent part of

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<sup>26</sup> Hawkins reported that the delegation that arrived in Tuckabatchee contained "19 Choctaws, 46 Cherokees and 16 Shawnees from the Northwest including 2 or 3 from tribes not known to us for want of interpreters." The Choctaws probably joined when Tecumseh passed through their country, and Hawkins ignored the Creeks accompanying him. See Hawkins to William Eustis, Creek Agency, September 21, 1811, LJWBH, II:591-92. For an overview of the delegation's journey, see Dowd, "Thinking outside the Circle: Tecumseh's 1811 Mission," in *Tohopeka*, 30-52; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 145; John Sugden, "Early Pan-Indianism: Tecumseh's Tour of the Indian Country, 1811-1812," *American Indian Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 273-304; Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), ch. 19.

their childhood there. A Creek translator named Seekaboo who lived among the Ohio Valley Shawnees also accompanied the delegation. Together, the existence of a Shawnee community in Creek country, Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa's Creek ties, and the presence of Seekaboo helped create a certain level of intimacy and brotherhood between the visitors and their Creek hosts that did not exist in Tecumseh's other stops south of the Ohio. The arrival of the delegation represented the culmination of years of Creek-Shawnee connections and trans-Ohio diplomacy.<sup>27</sup>

Tecumseh's timing proved as opportune as John Innerarity's was poor. Not only did his appearance at Tuckabatchee coincide with the annual meeting of the Creek council, that year's congress featured U.S. agent Hawkins pressing Creeks, Choctaws, and Cherokees to accept the construction of a federal road through their territory. Hawkins's imperious tone enraged the Creeks, as he stated that "he did not come there to ask their permission to open a road, but merely to inform them that it was now cutting." Hawkins satisfied himself with the knowledge that the increasingly powerful, pro-U.S. *mēkkvlke* would not oppose the road and warned any malcontents not to oppose the works. This blunt and humiliating reminder of their increasing marginalization and weakness left many Creeks eager for a chance to strike back at the political, cultural, and economic forces engulfing Creek country. The Shawnee warrior arrived to find an eager audience for his words.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hawkins to Eustis, Creek Agency, January 13, 1812, LJWBH, II:601; H.S. Halbert and T. H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814*. (Chicago, Ill.: Donohue & Henneberry; Montgomery, Ala.: White, Woodruff, & Fowler, 1895), 40; Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 115-18; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 243, 246.

<sup>28</sup> *Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger*, October 17, 1811, quoted in Sugden, "Early-Pan Indianism," 285; Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 121; Sugden, "Early Pan-Indianism," 284-85.

The Tecumseh delegation recognized the social, cultural, and political divisions present among Native peoples throughout the southeast and sought to keep his message secret not only from Americans but also hostile figures from among the peoples he visited. For instance, Tecumseh recognized that the Chickasaws had drawn close to American agents and traders. Thus, when the delegation passed through Chickasaw country, Tecumseh not only declined to speak before them, he refused to divulge his plans to Chickasaw leaders. For their own safety, the members of the delegation would not even reveal from whence they came, for fear that their tribal affiliations would out them as anti-American instigators. Tecumseh made but one appeal, to the Chickasaw leader Chinubbee, who throughout the 1780s and 1790s had led those Chickasaws who preferred alliance with Spain to one with the United States. Similarly, Tecumseh refused to speak before Cherokee leaders gathered at Tuckabatchee, even when pressed by one of the chiefs. After visiting the Creeks, the delegation appears to have neglected Cherokee county, presuming their leaders too intimate with the Americans to trust. The delegation's behavior towards Chickasaws and Cherokees reveals their understanding of the diplomatic and cultural divides among Native peoples south of the Ohio and the savvy with which the group selectively disseminated its message.<sup>29</sup>

The delegation behaved in similar fashion with Americans and Creeks who embraced Anglo-American socioeconomic ways. Hawkins reported that Tecumseh and the Shawnee delegation refused to deliver their full message while whites were present, and testimony from Samuel Manac, an Upper Creek planter close to American officials

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<sup>29</sup> For the delegation's journey through Chickasaw country, see Sugden, "Early Pan-Indianism," 278-80; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 241, 248. For background on Chinubbee, see Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*. For the Cherokees, see *Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger*, October 17, 1811, quoted in Sugden, "Early-Pan Indianism," 284; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 245, 248.

and traders, reveals that they treated Creeks such as himself the same. Manac reported that “every day whilst I was there [at Tuckabatchee], Tecumsee refused to deliver his talk.” When prompted to speak, Tecumseh declined, claiming “that the Sun had gone [down] too far that day.” The day after Manac left, the delegation finally delivered its message. Tecumseh’s deception was so thorough that Hawkins initially believed that the delegation had come to advise the Creeks against accepting “a war pipe” from Native peoples west of the Mississippi. Only months later did he realize that Tecumseh had given out hostile talks in secret and then only after the tvstvnvke of Tuckabatchee informed him of the fact. Together, the evidence indicates that Tecumseh and his delegation deliberately refused to reveal their plans to forces they perceived as hostile, whether Native or Anglo-American. As the false talk he gave in Hawkins’s presence and the excuse he gave to Manac indicates, Tecumseh employed subterfuge in order to ensure that the uprising he sought to foster would remain secret from forces that could potentially crush it.<sup>30</sup>

Responses to Tecumseh’s speech throughout the Native polities south of the Ohio demonstrated that Creeks alone embraced wide-ranging diplomatic networks designed to

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<sup>30</sup> Because Tecumseh and the northern delegation only spoke in the presence of “traditional” Creeks and Choctaws who mostly could not write, the only contemporary accounts of his speeches come from heavily biased sources that were not present at the talks, such as Hawkins and Manac. Hawkins’s information came from Tvstvnvke Hopoyv of Tuckabatchee, who only reported to him months later. Henry Sale Halbert and Horatio Bardwell Cushman separately conducted interviews during the 1880s and 1890s with Choctaws who relayed second-hand accounts and a single primary account from the meetings, as well as with Anglo-Americans who reported stories they heard from Creeks and Choctaws decades earlier. In the 1830s and 1840s, a Natchez Indian and brother-in-law to one of the Red Stick leaders, George Stiggins, produced a second-hand account of Tecumseh’s visit to the Creeks. U.S. Superintendent of Indian Trade Thomas McKenney obtained an account from Creeks of the Tuckabatchee meeting in 1827. McKenney mistakenly reported that Tecumseh had also traveled down to the Seminoles. See Hawkins to Eustis, Creek Agency, January 13, 1812, LJWBH, II:601; Dowd, “Thinking Outside the Circle,” 43-44; Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, introduction and ch. 2; Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1833-34), 1:63-65; Sugden, “Early Pan-Indianism,” 280-82, 287-88. No reliable transcripts exist of Tecumseh’s speeches, and Dowd refers to them all as “bogus” and “fanciful.” Sugden identifies Cushman and McKenney’s accounts as particularly suspect.



thwart American influence. The Choctaws were only other potential source of significant support, but their leaders ensured that few would commit to the delegation's plans.

Tecumseh gave a speech among the Choctaws prior to visiting the Creeks, but Choctaw leader Pushmataha threatened anyone who joined him with death and Choctaw leaders expelled Tecumseh under threat of execution. A handful of Choctaws would later aid the Red Sticks, but those aligned with the Americans far outnumbered them. After leaving the Creeks, the delegation would then travel to the Osage communities west of the Mississippi, with whom Tecumseh also had little success.<sup>31</sup>

Even among Creeks the delegation provoked controversy, amplifying existing discords. A number of Creeks, particularly most of the *mēkkvlke*, wanted nothing to do with further bloodshed, and disavowed Tecumseh's message. *Tvstvnvke Hopoyv*, Hawkins's main informant on Tecumseh's speeches, called the Shawnee "a mad man (*Haco Haugee*) or a great liar in fact both," and claimed that the *mēkkvlke* would "take no notice of [the delegation's] foolish talks." However, many of Tecumseh's Creek hosts approved of his message and supported his efforts. The spread of a new war dance among the Creeks best demonstrates the immediate impact of Tecumseh's speech. The dance derived from Shawnee rituals, its foreign origins confirmed by the fact that it took place as a preparative for combat, whereas Creeks normally held war dances after a battle. Samuel Manac confirmed the dance's connection to Tecumseh's influence by reporting that only after the Shawnee visit did "any of our people [begin] to dance the war dance." In response, men who American observers called "shakers" became more and more

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<sup>31</sup> For Tecumseh's time among the Choctaws, see Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, 41-55; Sugden, "Early Pan-Indianism," 279-83; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 241-43. For the Osages, see John D. Hunter, *Memoirs of a Captivity among the Indians of North America* (London: Longman, et al., 1824), 43-38; Sugden, "Early Pan-Indianism," 292-94.

prominent in Creek public displays, performing what they described as trembling, jerking, and convulsive dances. Those wary of the political and socioeconomic changes overtaking Creek society found solace in the speeches and rituals of Tecumseh, which not only gave them the confidence to oppose their foes, but provided them with a public display to broadcast their rejection of Anglo-American influences.<sup>32</sup>

As Gregory Evans Dowd argues, scholars have probably overemphasized the prophetic aspects of Tecumseh's visit among the Creeks and the roots of the Red Stick movement lie in long-term political and socioeconomic concerns. Nevertheless, as the spread of the Shawnee war dance demonstrates, spiritual and ritualistic matters pervaded the political movement that sprung up in Tecumseh's wake. Both Creeks and Shawnees viewed the spiritual and temporal worlds as interconnected and inseparable; Tecumseh's speech, its Creek reception, and its aftermath reflected this. The drive to expel Anglo-American influences from Native polities adopted an air of ritual purification. Tecumseh claimed that those who cleansed their communities of this presence would receive spiritual favor, while those who refused would suffer continued defeat, hunger, and dispossession. According to oral histories recorded by scholars later in the nineteenth century, Tecumseh had warned that some sort of phenomenon would signal the spiritual force of his and his brother's movement. A few months later, the famed New Madrid earthquakes occurred and many Creeks looked upon them as an omen connected to Tecumseh's message. The supernatural did play a significant role in the development of

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<sup>32</sup> Hawkins to Eustis, Creek Agency, January 13, 1812, LJWBH, II:601; Samuel Manac deposition, Washington District, Mississippi Territory, August 2, 1813, ADAH, SPR 26; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 167-69; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 244.

the Red Stick movement, but this fact should not overshadow what modern readers might consider the more “practical” causes, influences, and agendas of Creek dissidents.<sup>33</sup>

Tecumseh’s diplomacy reflected the inseparability of the spiritual and the material by including material aid among his promises of spiritual blessings. The Shawnee leader vowed that Britain would come to the militants’ aid in the near future, providing arms and ammunition to Indians who opposed the United States. The United States’ declaration of war against Great Britain in June 1812 freed British agents to do so openly and overtly. Tecumseh and his brother, the prophet Tenskwatawa, led the Native peoples of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley into a military alliance with British Canadians against the United States. By then, a sizeable group of Creeks stood ready to offer their support, while also vowing to initiate an uprising in their own communities.<sup>34</sup>

Unlike in the 1780s and 90s, Nativist and anti-American sentiments took their greatest hold not among the Lower Creeks but the Upper towns. Tecumseh’s speech motivated large numbers of them to reinvent and reaffirm traditional rituals and spiritual practices. Heles Haco, an Upper Creek medicine maker and warrior also known by his English name Josiah Francis, accompanied Tecumseh to preach among the Osages. An Upper Creek *tvstvnyke* named *Tvstvnykuce* (Little Warrior) began gathering militants at the Hickory Ground in Upper Creek country, where they started practicing the war dances brought to them by the Shawnee delegation. This group soon traveled north,

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<sup>33</sup> Dowd, “Thinking outside the Circle”; Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 122-24; Sugden, “Early Pan-Indianism,” 288-91; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 249-51.

<sup>34</sup> For more on Tecumseh, Tenskwatawa, the pan-Native alliance north of the Ohio, and the British-Native war effort in the Great Lakes region, see Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, ch. 7; R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1984); Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Sugden, *Tecumseh*; Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier*, ch. 10.

making the first Creek visit to British Canadian officials in nearly twenty years. Matthew Elliott, the British Indian agent at Amherstburg (near Detroit, in present-day Ontario) wrote the Spanish governor of West Florida apprising him of the arrival of “some Creek Indians...from Your Part of the World.” A full year before war broke out in Creek country, the group had clear intentions of drawing the British, the Spanish, and the Ohio Valley tribes into a general conflict against the Americans. The group went seeking to know “whether...the English were strong in this quarter, and whether the Indians here were unanimous & willing to act against the Americans.” They left “fully satisfied on both these Points,” having participated alongside Shawnees, Miamis, and other peoples in a successful battle at the River Raisin (Frenchtown). Tvstvnkuce’s party of disaffected Upper Creeks had laid the groundwork for a formidable alliance spanning the region between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>35</sup>

By traveling northward, Tvstvnkuce and his party sought to forge a broad anti-American coalition by engaging both willing and reluctant partners. While the British and Ohio Valley Indians supported them, these Creeks also wanted to draw Spanish forces into the conflict and employed duplicity to achieve their aims. Tvstvnkuce misled Elliott into believing that they already had Spanish support. He claimed that they had received arms and ammunition from the governor at Pensacola and prepared for war under his sanction. Spanish officials had made no such commitment. In fact, they dreaded the war

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<sup>35</sup> Matthew Elliott to Mateo González Manrique, Amherstburg, October 26, 1812, AGI, PC, leg. 2369, ff. 48-49 and 180-81. For Heles Haco, see Hunter, *Captivity among the North American Indians*, 43; Sugden, “Early Pan-Indianism,” 294; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 92. For Tvstvnkuce, see Hawkins to Upper Creek leaders, March 25, 1813, in LJWBH, 631-32; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 250; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 249-50; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 89. Saunt suggests that Tvstvnkuce had lived among the Shawnees for fifteen years prior to these activities, but admits that other sources contradict the evidence for this. Waselkov lists Tvstvnkuce as from Hickory Ground, but may have confused the site of Red Stick meetings for Tvstvnkuce’s home community. Hawkins identifies him as hailing from Ue-Wohkv (or Wewoka) on the Black Warrior River.

brewing between Britain and the United States, hoping to remain out of the conflict as much as possible. The party attempted to solve this dilemma by deceiving Spanish authorities upon their return to Creek country. Rumors spread among Upper Creek militants that a British general in Canada had provided them with a packet to give to the Spanish governor, requesting that he provide them with a full supply of arms and ammunition. By producing false claims of support, Creek militants attempted to turn the Anglo-Spanish alliance and the poor state of communications between Canada and Florida to their advantage. The perceived support of Britons would legitimate them in the eyes of Spaniards and vice-versa, providing them access to munitions while forging a chain of alliance spanning trans-Appalachia.<sup>36</sup>

While nothing definitive links the rumors of British military aid to Tvstvnkuce's party, Elliott's letter suggests as much. By mentioning Tvstvnkuce's false assertion of Spanish support, the message reveals that the party intended to forge a military alliance with both the British and the Spanish through manipulation. The Upper Creeks' trip to Canada and their message to Elliott represented an attempt to shape diplomatic and military affairs in the region to their advantage, both by drawing upon outside assistance and by forcing their Spanish neighbors to support them in a conflict designed to settle long-standing issues in and around Creek country.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Elliott to Manrique, Amherstburg, October 26, 1812, AGI, PC, leg. 2369, ff. 48-49 and 180-81.

<sup>37</sup> Robert P. Collins, "'A Packet from Canada': Telling Conspiracy Stories on the 1813 Creek Frontier," in *Tohopeka*, 53-83.

## A CREEK CIVIL WAR

The diplomatic exploits of Tvstvnkuce and Tvstvnke Rakko reflected the growing political, social, economic gulf among the Creeks. When the two collided, they served as a catalyst for civil war. As Tvstvnke Rakko attempted to maintain peaceful relations with both Forbes and Company and the United States, he learned of Tvstvnkuce's expedition to British Canada. Upon his return, Tvstvnkuce's party attacked and murdered a group of Americans on the Ohio River, a move that led U.S. agent Hawkins to press Creek leaders "to turn out their warriors and deliver the murderers to me." Instead, the Creek National Council decided to put the party to death themselves. Traditionally, Creek mēkkvlke would have worked with an offender's clan, family, or community to secure justice, convincing them to mete out the appropriate punishment. However, Tvstvnke Rakko and the rest of the council decided to arrange for Tvstvnkuce's execution themselves.<sup>38</sup>

The council's decision represented an attempt to emulate the American judicial system by meting out violent punishments as a central governing body. In response to the May 1812 murders on Duck River, the council had executed eight men, including the party's leader, Hillabee Haco, whose body they unceremoniously dumped into the Coosa River. The council submitted seven others to the painful and disfiguring punishment of being "cropped [having portions of their ears and noses sliced off] and whiped." These sentences not only usurped the traditional means of dealing with murderers in Creek country, they denigrated the offenders. Such measures provoked the offenders' relations, friends and associates. In a political environment already tense from these prior

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<sup>38</sup> Hawkins to the Governor of Georgia [David B. Mitchell], Creek Agency, April 6, 1813, CIL, 192-93; Hawkins to Cornells, Creek Agency, March 25, 1813, LJWBH, II: 630-31.

executions, the debt negotiations at Tuckabatchee, and numerous other events, Tvstvnvke Rakko and the rest of the council decided to make another show of authority by executing Tvstvnvkuce. The warriors they sent out cornered the murderers and shot them all, leaving no survivors.<sup>39</sup>

The outrage over the murder of Tvstvnvkuce's party divided Creeks, particularly the Upper towns, into warring factions. Hawkins reported that "the opposition have been strengthened by the families of those executed" and confirmed their principal target as "the Chiefs & Warriors who enacted the orders of the Executive Council" in the assassination. Hopothle Mēkko, the former speaker of the Creek National Council who had reached out to British colonists in the Bahamas, sided with the movement and became their principal advocate among the old guard of Creek leaders. He called Tvstvnvke Rakko and his allies "people of the United States," and vowed "to put the Murderers [of Tvstvnvkuce] to death...march[ing] from Tookaubatchee to Cowetau [to] destroy all of them." In retaliation, Creek militants murdered a party headed by "Capt. Isaacs one of the Chiefs who led the warriors against the murderers." They and their associates, forming the core of what would become the Red Sticks, set about killing or driving out all leaders whom they perceived as under American influence.<sup>40</sup>

By the end of June 1813, the Red Sticks had seized control of most of the Upper Creek towns. Shocked mēkkvlke took refuge among some of the Lower Creek towns and Anglo-American communities in Georgia and Tensaw, "much surprised that the plan of

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<sup>39</sup> Hawkins to Mitchell, Creek Agency, August 31, 1812, CIL, 177-78; Hawkins to Mitchell, Creek Agency, September 7, 1812, CIL, 166-67; Hawkins to Mitchell, Creek Agency, April 26, 1813, CIL, 194.

<sup>40</sup> Hawkins to Mitchell, Fort Hawkins, June 21, 1813, CIL, 201; Tallassee Fixico to Hawkins, Creek Agency, July 5, 1813, "Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 1797-1815," typescript, ed. Louise Caroline Frederick Hays, 208-09, GDAH; Hawkins to John Armstrong, Capt. Carr's near Fort Hawkins, June 22, 1813, LJWBH, II:641.

prophets should have been kept secret from them.” Scots-Creek and Upper Creek leader Alexander Cornells blamed “Talks brought from [Tecumseh] the prophet of the Lakes” for inciting the violence. A group of Red Stick leaders, including Heles Haco, attested to the influence their dialogue with “the far savanners,” or Shawnees, had upon their movement. At the same time, they lambasted Creeks who “hold with the american[s] [and] the choctors [Choctaws]” and bragged about having a group of them “hem up close in ther fort,” most likely referring to the Anglo-Creek and Scots-Creek planters of the Tensaw, who took refuge in Fort Mims, a nearby bastion of the Mississippi Territory militia. A combination of long-standing and recent issues had led to the schism in Creek country. While the conflict centered on local and regional disputes, the outset of war between the United States, Britain, and various Native peoples north of the Ohio set these affairs into motion.<sup>41</sup>

### **RED STICK DIPLOMACY**

From the very beginning of the Red Stick movement, its Creek participants followed a proactive, network-building agenda that continued the diplomatic work of previous generations of Creeks. At the same time, their efforts demonstrated how the United States remained but one of a series of powerful polities vying for control of the area west of the Appalachian Mountains, which continued to function as a contested region.

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<sup>41</sup> Alexander Cornells to Hawkins, Capt. Carr’s near Fort Hawkins, June 22, 1813, CIL, 202-05; Manac deposition, Washington District, Mississippi Territory, August 2, 1813, ADAH, SPR 26; Josiah Francis et al. to Manrique, [Tuskegee, ca. July 1813], AGI, PC, leg. 2369, f. 179. For the development of the Red Stick War in general, see Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, chs. 5 and 6; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, ch. 11; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, chs. 4-5.



Most scholars have presented the Red Stick War as a tremendous and total shift in Creek affairs, a time when the politics and diplomacy of Creek country changed radically. In some ways this is an accurate assessment. Creek country split into two warring factions, creating a violent struggle between a militant anti-colonial faction, and a group increasingly led by a bi-cultural Anglo-Creek or Scots-Creek mēkko elite which prided themselves on their adoption of Anglo-American social and economic customs and their ties with prominent American citizens. While the former sought to preserve deliberative community- and clan-based politics, the latter gravitated towards a centralized system, where a council governed by mēkko elites enforced laws upon the rest of the Creek population. The tensions produced by these changes erupted into a conflict where Creeks essentially consumed themselves, trapped between two incompatible sets of values and methods of governance.<sup>42</sup>

To many contemporary observers, the Red Sticks' assaults upon Americans and those Creeks that adopted American ways seemed a sudden and unprovoked development. However, the sentiments expressed by the Red Sticks had simmered in Creek country for some time. Optimistic colonizers such as Benjamin Hawkins chose to focus and report on the prosperous Creek planters who readily adopted elements of

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<sup>42</sup> Scholars have found it difficult to escape racial terminology in referring to figures like William McIntosh, who identified as Creek but also had Scots ancestry and became planters. Claudio Saunt wrestled with this dilemma and settled upon the Spanish term "mestizo," while Gregory Waselkov utilizes the French term "métis." Aside from the Eurocentric nature of these terms, they are problematic in other ways. Both are inextricably loaded with racial meanings, despite the efforts of both authors to repurpose them as cultural terms. This is all the more troublesome, as the Red Stick and U.S.-allied factions of Creeks did not split evenly along racial lines. As Waselkov himself points out, mixed race individuals such as William Weatherford and Peter McQueen formed part of the Red Stick ranks, and "full-bloods" such as Tvstvnvke Rakko led the U.S. allies. As such, I will avoid employing distinguishing the two factions by race, and instead use the terms "Red Stick" and "U.S.-allied Creek" or "Allied Creek," following the practice of David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler. See Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 2-3; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 14; Heidler and Heidler, *Old Hickory's War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), 14.

Anglo-American land usage, property ownership, and political and social structure, ignoring the many Creeks who did not know English, did not own and rejected the very idea of owning plantations, disdained trends towards political centralization, and had few material resources. Correlating Anglo-American ways with poverty and suffering, these Creeks' spite for cultural adaptation grew by the year. As the deerskin trade declined and left more and more Creeks who relied on it destitute, their numbers swelled as well.

While the research of modern-day scholars has contributed to a better understanding of the Red Sticks and their motivations, that scholarship is deficient when it comes to addressing Red Stick diplomacy. Scholars continue to emphasize the pan-Native and anti-Euroamerican elements of Red Stick, but fail to reconcile those trends with efforts to rekindle working relationships with Britons and Spaniards. Just as their spiritual, martial, and socioeconomic beliefs and practices revitalized and innovated upon tradition, so too did their attitudes toward connections with whites.

Red Sticks did not shun engagement with the Euroamerican world, only a relationship with the United States that necessitated profound transformations in the ways they lived. Americans had proven their determination to refashion or eradicate Creek societies and Red Sticks felt that the colonizing impulses of the United States required definitive rejection. Creeks embraced Spaniards and Britons, however, because those societies offered valuable material and diplomatic connections without threatening the very fabric of Creek society. Although Spain and Britain both had their own colonial designs upon the Gulf region, by the early nineteenth century those designs did not threaten Creeks or Creek country. Both groups sought to form alliances with Creeks that would help them protect and defend coastal outposts, plantations further south and west,

and maritime trading routes. Red Sticks understood that British and Spanish ambitions could be compatible with their own and sought their support when plotting their assault on U.S. interests in and around Creek country.

Immediately after expelling the mēkko elite and their sympathizers, Red Sticks turned to Spanish authorities for assistance in sustaining their movement. Once again, Spanish authorities failed to prove helpful. The governor of West Florida gave them a supply of musket balls and gunpowder, but only when the Red Stick party began to threaten him. Red Stick leader Peter McQueen reproached Governor Mateo González Manrique for speaking with “two tongues,” having “two hearts,” and of being “an American,” essentially accusing him of duplicity and being in allegiance with their enemies. The governor attempted to appease them with a more benign supply of presents, including sixty blankets, three-hundred pairs of scissors, one-hundred shaving razors, and large quantities of silk ribbon, vermilion, tobacco, and food. Normally, Creeks would have accepted these gifts with respect and made great use of them, but in the context of war Red Sticks rejected them with disdain. Forbes and Company partner John Innerarity claimed “they set no bounds to their fury, scattered the Vermillion in the sand, flung the beads in the air and trampled upon the blankets” while demanding twenty-five “cases” of gunpowder. Such behavior not only communicated rage, it served a symbolic purpose. By casting their presents upon the ground, Red Sticks showed that they considered Spaniards’ alliance worthless if it would not provide aid in time of war. Affairs in Creek country had reached a point where Creeks refused to countenance half-hearted gestures of

friendship any longer. Without a willingness to support Red Sticks in dire need, gifts which Europeans themselves often referred to as trinkets meant little.<sup>43</sup>

In general, the Red Stick party behaved in a manner indicating that they considered Spanish officials under an obligation to assist them. Their request began with a written introduction bearing the names of Red Stick leaders Heles Haco, Youtower Hougo, and Three Heads. The three leaders forwarded a “letter from canada,” which may have been a copy of the letter Elliott wrote Manrique the year before. Referring to McQueen, the head of the party, they pleaded that in light of “the coston [custom] for king[s] to recive present we hope...[you] will bestow some present[s] on him and his company.” However, as the Spanish governor wavered in his response, McQueen and the rest of the delegation lost their temper. Innerarity later stated that

“McQueen came with all his Warriors...in all their military attire with their shaker [a prophet named High-Headed Jim] who trembled, grinned horribly, & made the most convulsive movements so as to endeavour to inspire terror.”

Innerarity, as an opponent of the Red Sticks and a target of their anger, had a vested interest in portraying them as hostile and terrifying. However, his description of the “convulsive movements” of “their shaker” fits other eyewitness descriptions of Red Stick rituals. High-Headed Jim’s gestures had the dual purpose of intimidating Innerarity and the Spanish governor while emboldening the party to voice long-suppressed grievances.<sup>44</sup>

Red Stick leaders’ own recounting of the meeting confirmed the tensions between themselves and Spanish authorities. They would complain to British officials that “the

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<sup>43</sup> Manrique, List of Gifts Given to Red Sticks, Pensacola July 22, 1813, AGI, PC, leg. 1794, enclosed in no. 94; John Innerarity to James Innerarity, Pensacola, July 27, 1813, PLC, reel 19, ff. 484-512. Innerarity estimated that Spanish authorities gave out about 1000 pounds of gunpowder.

<sup>44</sup> John Innerarity to James Innerarity, Pensacola, July 27, 1813, PLC, reel 19, ff. 484-512.; Francis et al. to Manrique, [Tuskegee, ca. July 1813], AGI, PC, leg. 2369, f. 179.

Spaniards are weak frail friends” and how “in our distress they turned us into the Woods like dogs.” Considering past cooperation and exchanges of gifts as forming a lasting alliance between them and Spanish colonists, Red Sticks felt that Spain had for too long shirked its obligations. Dating back to the 1780s, when Spanish officials curtailed Creek arms and ammunition despite their serving as the buffer between the Spanish colonies and the United States, Spanish Florida benefited from the presence of the Creeks while giving them very little in return.<sup>45</sup>

While past inaction led Red Sticks to complain of Spanish parsimony, in truth the governor could have done little to help them. Manrique’s recalcitrance centered upon the colony’s weakness and lack of supplies. The governor repeatedly told the Red Sticks that he did not have arms to give them and the capital’s garrison actually suffered from a lack of equipment. The Napoleonic occupation of peninsular Spain, the Spanish-American wars of independence, and the havoc which naval warfare wrought upon maritime communications and trade crippled East and West Florida. The colonies’ civil and military institutions drew most of their funding from the *situados*, or subsidies, apportioned by the Spanish Crown via the Captain General in Havana. The Florida *situados* derived from Mexican silver shipments that passed through Havana on their way to peninsular Spain. War on the seas disrupted shipping and communications throughout the Gulf of Mexico, while colonial rebellions in New Spain interrupted the silver supply. At the time of the Red Sticks’ visit, the governor of West Florida reported that the public treasury was “exhausted of money” and by 1815 he could complain that “for five years this Province has been without its *Situados*.” Spanish troops went years without pay,

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<sup>45</sup> Cappachi Mēkko, et al., to Alexander Cochrane, [ca. July-September, 1814,] NA-UK, Admiralty (hereafter ADM), 1-505, ff. 165-66. “Cappachi” may signify the word “*cvpakkē*,” meaning “angry, mad.” Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, s.v. “*cvpakkē*.”

lacked adequate uniforms or munitions, and often subsisted on half-rations. Spanish officials' dearth of funding left the Floridas scarcely able to continue functioning, let alone aid others or plan for war.<sup>46</sup>

To demonstrate reciprocity, Red Sticks offered to conduct military actions on behalf of Spain, but these proposals frightened Spanish officials who wanted nothing more than to keep their weak and impoverished colonial establishments away from conflict. Heles Haco and other Red Sticks offered to lead an attack against the American city of Mobile and return it to Spain, boasting that they could feed themselves "with all of the Corn we have taken [from the territory] up to Begbee [the Tombigbee River]." Manrique had to beg them not to make an attempt on Mobile, "due to the harm that it would cause the Spaniards." Spanish Florida's weakness explained why, in spite of the Spanish Empire's alliance with Great Britain, the colonies there sought to avoid involvement in the war between Britain and the United States at all costs. Terrified of provoking an American invasion they lacked the capability to repulse, authorities in West Florida sought to avoid provoking the United States and that meant distancing themselves from the Red Sticks.<sup>47</sup>

The Red Sticks had wanted to forge an alliance with both the Spaniards "and with the English their brothers." Repulsed by the former, they turned back to the latter as their only potential means of support. The Bahamas, closer to Creek country than other British

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<sup>46</sup> Manrique to Apodaca, Pensacola, August 16, 1813, AGI, PC, leg. 1794, no. 96; Manrique to Apodaca, Pensacola, March 14, 1815, AGI, PC, leg. 1796, no. 451; Owsley, *Struggle for Gulf Borderlands*, 20-24; Sánchez-Fabrés, *Situación histórica de las Floridas*, 284-87.

<sup>47</sup> Manrique to Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, Pensacola, July 23, 1813, AGI, PC, leg. 1794, no. 94; John Innerarity to James Innerarity, Pensacola, July 27, 1813, PLC, reel 19, ff. 484-512; Francis and Mouganehche to Manrique and Manuel Gonzalez, [ca. August, 1813], AGI, PC, leg. 1794, enclosed in no. 168; Manrique to Red Stick leaders, Pensacola, September 29, 1813, AGI, PC, leg. 1794, enclosed in no. 168.

possessions, still home to a number of former mainlanders with experience in Creek affairs, and a longtime site for Creek diplomatic entreaties, became the locus of Anglo-Creek dialogue and eventually the staging ground for British operations in the Gulf region. In September 1813, with the Red Stick revolt in full swing and war already declared between Britain and the United States, Kenhagee, his son Hopvyē Mēkko, and another Red Stick named Alexander Durant appealed to Governor Cameron. They asked him to send “armes and powder and Leed [lead] and Gun flints as Soon as possable” and to send it “to the Entrance of the River appe Lache Cole [Apalachicola].” They emphasized that they looked to the British as “old frinds” and in fighting the Americans claimed that they were fighting “to defend our Rights a Gainst our Enemies and the Enemies of Grat Briton.” To advance their plea, and answer any questions the governor may have, the Red Sticks sent along “M<sup>r</sup>. Henry Durgen our Inarpeter [interpreter].” Committed to a joint Anglo-Native war effort linking campaigns north and south of the Ohio River, Red Sticks laid the groundwork for sustained cooperation and dialogue by sending over an interpreter, who would essentially function as an ambassador.<sup>48</sup>

Red Sticks drew upon past instances of Anglo-Creek cooperation and intermarriage, continuing the decades-long practice in which Creeks evoked historical ties and the notion of a perpetual alliance to frame their calls for assistance. On top of the Red Sticks’ collective plea, Durant sent a personal appeal that “the American Government and our Nation is at war destroying slautereng of each other.” With “the horrad situation that the spanish Government our Friends is in at present,” British officials were their only hope of relief. After establishing the Red Sticks’ need for help,

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<sup>48</sup> Alexander Durant, Nēhē Mēkko, William Perryman, and Thomas Perryman to Cameron, “Creek Nation” [Apalachicola River], September 11, 1813, NA-UK, CO 23-60, f. 111.

Durant pointed out his family's ties to the British service: he noted that his uncle was Alexander McGillivray, presuming that British officials would recall that mēkko's Scottish parentage as well as his aiding British forces during the American Revolution. At the same time, Durant left no ambiguity as to his political and social identity. Explaining what he saw as his place between two worlds, one British and the other Creek, he stated that "I am a native of the land but have got my [Anglo-American] education," adding that "I love my Country and my people [the Creeks]." The British were "our old friends," a people with historical ties to the Creeks. Durant made the Red Stick appeals personal by crafting an individual message that highlighted his own familial and social ties to Anglo culture and the British service. He used his own background to draw attention to the history many Red Sticks shared with British colonists and attempted to leverage that past to reopen a dormant alliance and diplomatic channel. Durant's plea reveals how the Red Stick movement, far from rejecting "mixed blood" individuals and ties to Euroamerican societies, embraced connections to British and Spanish colonists dating back to the beginnings of European colonization in what is now the southeastern United States.<sup>49</sup>

The buildup to British intervention in the Red Stick War demonstrates the vital role that colonists and royal officials in the colonies, particularly in the Bahamas, played in serving as middlemen between Creeks and the Crown. Unlike in 1811, the enthusiasm of Durant and other Red Sticks for a British alliance met with reciprocation in Nassau and elsewhere. The declaration of war not only liberated colonial and military officials to

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<sup>49</sup> Durant to Cameron, Apalachicola River, September 11, 1813, NA-UK, CO 23-60, f. 110.



take more active measures, it left British military and political officials eager for opportunities to prove their merit by aiding the war effort.

For Governor Cameron, the Red Sticks presented an opportunity to make himself and his colony central to the British war effort against the southern United States. While the governor harbored a genuine concern for Red Sticks, he and other British officials thought primarily of their convenience to British military strategy. Cameron wrote to the Foreign Office to appeal for help and drew upon knowledgeable observers to make his case. In late 1813, the governor forwarded two sets of anonymously authored intelligence from Creek country to Earl Bathurst, Secretary of the State for War and the Colonies. The first noted the precariousness of the Creeks' situation and their potential utility to the British war effort if properly supplied and their efforts harmonized with the British war planning. Without British assistance, this observer noted, "it is evident that they must be crushed." This observer feared that the Red Sticks' "ascendancy" in Creek country would result in "a premature aggression on the Americans, which will render their future services ... totally impotent." Yet, the Red Stick uprising had proved "premature" only from the perspective of British imperial planners, who had placed the Creeks out of mind until the Red Sticks forced the issue. From the Red Sticks' perspective, decades of creeping U.S. influence had made their movement a long time in coming. British forces had waited until the Red Sticks had made a definitive move to even begin planning a campaign in Creek country and then complained when the Red Sticks outpaced the slow-moving gears of the British military bureaucracy.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cameron to Earl Bathurst, Nassau, November 30, 1813, NA-UK, CO 23-60, ff. 131-37.

Despite frustration over the Red Sticks' timing, Cameron's second set of intelligence shows that British imperialists did take Red Stick needs, plans, and demands seriously. Most notably, the document advised on how to form a port in accordance with Red Stick pleas. It recommended using the Royal Navy to establish a post along the Apalachicola River, almost certainly taking its cue from the Red Sticks' own suggestions while also observing that to utilize Spanish ports such as Pensacola would jeopardize Spanish neutrality. Along with this intelligence, Cameron forwarded a detailed list of arms, ammunition, food, and supplies needed to enact this plan, including an estimate of their cost. Overall, he recommended that the home government spend over £18,000 pounds on the Red Sticks, a sum that included the purchase of 50,000 pounds of gunpowder, 100,000 musket balls, and 1,000 "Indians Guns such as are made for y<sup>e</sup> Canadians." Astoundingly, Cameron's informant considered these but "the most essential Articles" and appended suggestions for additional items on top of his lengthy budget. Cameron and his associates wanted to invest as many resources as the Crown would give them in invading the mainland and aiding the Red Sticks.<sup>51</sup>

Cameron's observer was prescient in warning about the urgency of Red Stick aid. It would take nearly a year for the Royal Navy and Marines to come to the Red Sticks' relief. By then, their situation had worsened considerably. As the observer predicted, Red Sticks moved from attacking enemy *mēkkvlke* to the Americans themselves in short order and U.S. forces "crushed" them before the Royal Navy could mount an expedition. By mid-1814, a joint American-Allied Creek force, aided by Choctaws and Chickasaws, succeeded in retaking Upper Creek country. The invasion forced Red Sticks to retreat to

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

the Miccosukee and Seminole towns of Florida. Their allies north of the Ohio suffered a similar fate. American forces shot Tecumseh dead at the Battle of the Thames in October 1813 and defeated the Indian coalition shortly thereafter.

For both Creeks and Ohio Valley Indians, the setbacks resulted in American seizures of vast stretches of territory. In 1817, the U.S. federal government forced the confederated Ohio Valley peoples to cede their remaining lands and either move west or accept small reservations in their former homelands. On the heels of the Creek invasion, U.S. General Andrew Jackson forced both Allied Creek and surrendering Red Stick leaders to sign the Treaty of Fort Jackson. Rather than restore Creek country to U.S.-allied mēkko elite, Jackson took advantage of friend and foe alike, forcing them to surrender twenty-three million acres of Upper and Lower Creek territory. The lands included the domains of the Flint River and lower Chattahoochee River towns. While scholars normally describe the contest between Britain and the United States in the War of 1812 as a stalemate, for Britain's Native allies it represented an unequivocal defeat.<sup>52</sup>

British naval commanders wanted to send forces to the Creeks' aid, but both they and their political leaders prioritized the defense of British domains in Canada and the West Indies. Even with the Napoleonic Wars drawing to a close in Europe, the Royal Navy and Marines lacked the forces to pursue all of these objectives simultaneously. Admiral John Borlase Warren, commander-in-chief of British naval operations in North America, reported that he had sent two sloops to patrol the Florida coast, but complained that "not having any troops at my disposal it was impossible to afford the Allied Cause

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<sup>52</sup> Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, ch. 9; Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, esp. chs. 14 and 18; Heidler and Heidler, *Old Hickory's War*, chs. 1 and 2; Frank L. Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812-1815*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1981), chs. 3-8; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, ch. 11; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, chs. 7-8.

further aid.” Only when Sir Alexander Cochrane replaced Warren as commander-in-chief in North America in April 1814, bringing with him an influx of ships and personnel from Europe, could the Royal Navy send a detachment “to assist the Creek Indians with two thousand stand of arms.” It would prove too late to maintain the Red Sticks in control of the Upper Creek towns. A little over a week prior, the Battle of Tohopeka (or Horseshoe Bend) had ended in a Red Stick defeat, forcing individual Red Sticks to decide whether to surrender or flee south to Apalachee.<sup>53</sup>

### **EXILE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE RED STICK MOVEMENT**

In the aftermath of Tohopeka, the demographic, geographic, and strategic terms of Red Stick and British collaboration changed. The two sought to protect the Red Sticks in their new refuge while placing British forces in control of the lower Mississippi Valley. A significant number of Red Sticks had resolved “to abandon our Country rather than live in it as Slaves,” judging a life in exile better than living under the dominion of their enemies. The Red Sticks’ comparing their plight to that of slaves proved apt in a certain sense, as enslaved persons of color became crucial allies of theirs. What had begun as a predominantly Upper Creek movement increasingly drew upon Seminoles, Miccosukees, and especially peoples of African descent. Not only did Red Sticks encounter thousands of Afro-Seminoles, descendants of escaped slaves who had taken refuge in Florida, but refugees from plantations in the southern U.S. and Spanish Florida. As British forces promised freedom to enslaved persons throughout the surrounding region, refugees swarmed to Native communities and British camps in droves. Creek communities in

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<sup>53</sup> John Borlase Warren to John Wilson Croker, Bermuda, March 9, 1813, NA-UK, FO 5-96, ff. 206-07; Cameron to Bathurst, Nassau, April 17, 1814, NA-UK, CO 23-61, f. 61. For the Battle of Tohopeka and its consequences, see Braund, ed., *Tohopeka*; Owsley, *Struggle for Gulf Borderlands*, chs. 7 and 8; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, ch. 8.

Florida became some of the last places in the region where African Americans could escape from the oppressive structure of Anglo-American plantation societies and the backing of British arms created an added layer of security for refugees.<sup>54</sup>

The aims of Creek and African American refugees aligned with British objectives in their desire to secure the Gulf Coast and Florida peninsula as a region free of American influence. British officers valued the abilities of both Native and African-descended peoples in warfare and made them an integral part of their plans. Together, they comprised a substantial fighting force. While over 1500 Red Sticks died at American and Allied Creek hands and hundreds more surrendered, nearly 2000 made their way down to Apalachee and roughly 300 Seminoles marched west to meet them. Thousands of enslaved persons throughout the southern United States and Spanish Florida stood as a potential addition to their forces, of which several hundred would eventually join them.<sup>55</sup>

Admiral Cochrane personally selected Lt. Col. Edward Nicolls “to join the Indians in order to train them to oppose regular Troops” as well as “to raise a Regiment of Colonial Marines from the American Blacks.” He envisioned three crucial tasks for this force. First, British officers sought to use them to maintain Spanish posts in Florida. Like Spanish officials before him, Cochrane thought it necessary “to preserve the Indians from being destroyed by the United States,” as they were “the best barrier the Spanish Provinces in the Floridas can have” against the Americans. Spain, as Britain’s ally and a weakened imperial power that had grown dependent upon British trade and protection, could block American growth while facilitating British interests in the region.

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<sup>54</sup> Cappachi Mēkko et al. to Cochrane, [ca. July-September 1814], NA-UK, ADM 1-505, ff. 165-66; Nathaniel Millett, *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff and Their Quest for Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), ch. 2; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 274-75.

<sup>55</sup> Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 270, 276-77; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 142-43.

Miccosukees, Seminoles, and Red Sticks would continue to separate Spanish and American domains as a consequence of defending their own territory.<sup>56</sup>

The second part of Cochrane's plan had Nicholls employing Native and African-descended forces as a diversion against the southeastern United States, limiting the support the latter could provide against British campaigns in Chesapeake Bay and against New Orleans. Finally, Creeks, Miccosukees, and Seminoles would serve as intelligence gatherers and recruiters, collecting data on U.S. forces while helping to guide refugees to British lines. Nicholls acknowledged that "I shall have to depend on them for getting me information, as well as to distribute my Proclamation [offering to free slaves who joined British forces] and bring others over to our side." British commanders envisioned disparate bands of Native and African-descended peoples cooperating with one another as well as with British officers, united by their overriding desire to combat the United States and its allies. Although Nicholls would occasionally grow frustrated by Red Sticks' refusal to take commands from British officers in battle, for the most affairs went according to plan, with the allies working together in pursuit of safety and security.<sup>57</sup>

For Red Sticks and Miccosukees in particular, their collaboration with British forces represented the culmination of decades of diplomatic efforts. Finally, these groups received the diplomatic, material, and military support they had sought for years. The Red Sticks' ties to British forces bore fruit too late to prevent banishment from their home communities. However, British forces made the transition to a life in exile possible for many and prevented them from having to submit to the socioeconomic forces

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<sup>56</sup> Cochrane to Cameron, Bermuda, July 4, 1814, NA-UK, CO 23-61, ff. 101-02.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.; Cochrane to Red Stick leaders, Bermuda, June 29, 1814, NA-UK, ADM, 1-505, ff. 163-64; Edward Nicholls to Cochrane, Nassau, July 27, 1814, PLC, reel 19, ff. 1284-87; Millett, *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 59-60, 62-65.

overtaking Creek country. Starvation had induced a number of the Red Sticks to surrender to American forces for relief and the rations brought by Col. Nicolls kept the remainder from doing the same. “But for [British aid] we should all have perished,” stated Red Stick leaders, adding that since being driven from their homes, “famine, nakedness and their accompanying miseries have been our lot.” As the Black refugees that came into the panhandle undoubtedly arrived hungry as well, the Miccosukee towns would have been unprepared to feed and care for a sudden influx of thousands of people without British help, making the arrival of food and supplies crucial.<sup>58</sup>

British forces aided the refugees in other ways. Nicolls set them up with arms, and together the Red Sticks and African Americans build a fort to defend themselves at a site on the Apalachicola River called Prospect Bluff. At its peak occupancy in early 1815, up to 750 people of African descent occupied the fort at Prospect Bluff and over 1000 Red Sticks, Miccosukees, and Seminoles set up camp in its environs. Contemporary estimates placed the total refugee population in and around Prospect Bluff at that time at 2,810 people. Nicolls’ actions earned the enmity of both Americans and Allied Creeks. Hawkins referred to him as a “Second Bowles” due to his rallying of Creek dissidents. Both groups resented his recruitment of enslaved peoples, which they labeled “negro stealing.” Hundreds of Seminoles, Miccosukees, Red Sticks, and Black refugees served in British campaigns against the Americans in Mobile and New Orleans. Between 150 and 200 Red Sticks, Miccosukees, and Seminoles cooperated with British forces in the September 1814 assault on Mobile. Despite Spain’s status as British allies, British officers showed little respect for Spanish colonists and actively recruited enslaved

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<sup>58</sup> Cappachi Mēkko, et al, to Cochrane, ca. July-September 1814, NA-UK, ADM, 1-505, ff. 165-66.

persons throughout Florida to escape to British lines. As a result, during the campaign, over 100 enslaved persons in Pensacola took refuge among British forces and many others plantations scattered throughout the panhandle, St. Augustine, and the St. Johns River defected as well. British forces essentially assumed command at Pensacola and used it as the base for their campaign, while roughly 500 Red Sticks and 100 Black refugees helped to defend it from attack.<sup>59</sup>

Though most scholars have considered the Red Stick War and the British campaigns in the Gulf region as interrelated but distinct events, the latter represented both a continuation and a broadening of the former. Choctaws and Chickasaws who served alongside U.S. and Allied Creek forces in the invasion of Creek country continued to aid their American allies. 750 of them participated in Andrew Jackson's assault on Pensacola and they would aid the American general in subsequent campaigns at New Orleans and in Florida. Despite the general's betrayal of the mēkko elite, many Allied Creeks also continued to aid Jackson's forces. William McIntosh, a Lower Creek planter who had commanded Allied Creek forces in the Red Stick War, operated as a scout on behalf of Benjamin Hawkins. With 400-500 Creeks, he went to investigate Red Stick and British positions in Florida in order to provide intelligence to the American army and seize any weapons he could find stored by Red Sticks within U.S. territorial claims. While Red Sticks, Miccosukees, and Seminoles found solace in British aid, their Allied Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw enemies remained relentless in pursuing them. By joining forces with U.S. troops, these groups created a coalition rivaling that of their enemies.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Hawkins to Jackson, Creek Agency, August 30, 1814, with enclosure to Tvstvnvke Hopoyv and Tvstvnvke Rakko, in LJWBH, 2:694-95; Millett, *Prospect Bluff*, 66, 142-43.

<sup>60</sup> Hawkins to Jackson, Creek Agency, August 30, 1814, with enclosure to Tvstvnvke Hopoyv and Tvstvnvke Rakko, in LJWBH, 2:694-95; Benjamin W. Griffith, *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian*



Unfortunately, the outcome of the war would jeopardize the future of both the Red Sticks and enslaved refugees. The British-Red Stick coalition would fail to seize or retain any key strategic points aside from Apalachee. Americans and their Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek allies repulsed their combined forces at New Orleans and Mobile, and forced them to abandon Pensacola by early 1815. The lack of British military conquests neutered treaty negotiations, meaning that the war's end would force the evacuation of British military personnel, leaving the refugees to fend for themselves. British officers on the ground did what they could to fortify their allies' position in Apalachee in spite of these developments. In particular, Nicholls evinced a commitment to defending these communities that outstripped and at times defied his orders. The colonel ignored orders to evacuate, tarrying long after the rest of the British forces had withdrawn from the Gulf region. However, Nicolls' stalling only delayed the inevitable. When Hawkins protested Nicolls' continued residence at Prospect Bluff, he could no longer claim ignorance of the peace treaty and prepared his departure. Though the officer left what munitions and supplies he could to the refugees at the fort, he could give them no further material aid. From that point forward, Red Sticks, Seminoles, Miccosukees, and African American refugees would have to fend for themselves.<sup>61</sup>

Red Sticks responded to the impending British evacuation by planning yet another diplomatic effort. They realized that American and Allied Creek forces would most likely press for their destruction, viewing them as a perpetual threat upon their borders. Red

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*Leaders* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 164; Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, 280-81; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 80; Owsley, *Struggle for Gulf Borderlands*, 112-23, 115-16; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 278-79.

<sup>61</sup> Hawkins to Nicholls, Creek Agency, May 24, 1815, PLC, reel 20, ff. 507-08; Hawkins to Nicolls, Creek Agency, May 28, 1815, PLC, reel 20, ff. 509-11. For the end of the war and the British evacuation, see Millett, *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, chs. 4-5; Owsley, *Struggle for Gulf Borderlands*, chs. 16-17; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, ch. 12.

Stick leaders hoped that British forces would come to their aid if their enemies resumed the war effort. Nicholls encouraged them in their hopes by agreeing to carry Red Stick leader Heles Haco to London. Like other Creek leaders before him, Heles Haco sought to advance the Red Sticks' appeal for continued support to Crown officials in person. However, the Red Sticks did not rely on him alone. Red Sticks sent no less than four appeals to British officials in 1816, three of them to Governor Cameron. One pair of leaders even traveled to Nassau to plea with the governor themselves. While most British administrators viewed the Red Sticks as little more than expedients in their struggle with the United States, no longer of any concern now that the war was over, Red Sticks continued to view their alliance with Britain as a perpetual process. They expected British leaders to aid them whenever they were in need, in exchange for having agreed to help fight Britain's enemies.<sup>62</sup>

A number of Britons actually agreed that they shared a continuing obligation to their erstwhile allies, or at least saw economic opportunity in supporting the notion. Aside from Nicholls, various persons from around the British Caribbean volunteered to support both the Red Sticks and escaped slaves. Whereas Nicholls stretched the bounds of his authority in aiding the refugees, a Marine captain under his command, George Woodbine, outright defied his orders. Woodbine separated himself from the Royal Marines to operate independently in Apalachee. Woodbine acted less out of generosity than a hope of profiting off of the political turmoil in Florida. According to a leading

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<sup>62</sup> The fourth letter was addressed to Charles Bagot, British minister plenipotentiary to the United States. Tvstvnvke Rakko, et al., [Apalachicola River], [1816], NA-UK, CO 23-63, ff. 144-45; Cappachi Mēkko et al. to Charles Bagot, Takwaukee, November 8, 1816, NA-UK, CO 23-66, ff. 112-14; Tatsimatha and Tuskegee Tvstvnvke to Cameron, Nassau, December 16 and 19, 1816, NA-UK, CO 23-64, ff. 7-9. For the departure of Heles Haco and Nicholls, see *Royal Gazette*, March 1, 1817, in David E. Wood, ed., *A Guide to Selected Sources for the History of the Seminole Settlements at Red Bays, Andros, 1817-1980* (Nassau, Bahamas: Department of Archives, n.d.), 4; Owsley, *Struggle for Gulf Borderlands*, 181-82.

colonist in the Bahamas, “in 1814 & 1815 Woodbine obtained from the Creek Indians a grant of 40,000 Acres of land upon the Coast of Florida” in exchange for offering to bring the Red Sticks men and supplies. Still, his actions strengthened the refugee community in Apalachee. Born in Jamaica and a longtime resident of Nassau, Woodbine tapped into his Caribbean connections to support his operations, drawing upon them for resources and supplies. He set about organizing an expedition to support the Prospect Bluff population, traveling to Jamaica “for the purpose of procuring Arms and Ammunition” and attempting “to enlist some disbanded people of the West India Regiments.” Earlier, Nicolls had done the same, raising funds to purchase arms and recruiting militiamen from Nassau’s residents and enlisting the service of the 2<sup>nd</sup> West India Regiment stationed in the Bahamas. These Britons drew upon their own connections spanning the British Caribbean, hoping to merge these resources with those of the Prospect Bluff allies.<sup>63</sup>

The continual involvement of the West India Regiments and their veterans reveals how the British Caribbean’s people of color contributed just as much to the defense of Apalachee as their white counterparts. Composed entirely of Black troops, most of them purchased by the military from slave traders then freed for the purpose of enlistment, the West India Regiments served in merged units alongside African American refugees on the mainland. Nicolls thought that the employment of the West India Regiments “would have a very good effect [as] y<sup>e</sup> Blacks I think would the more readily join us if they saw men of their own Color.” Without enough evidence to say for certain, the presence of the West India Regiments may have helped persuade reluctant refugees that a better future

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<sup>63</sup> William Wylly to Cameron, enclosed within Cameron to Henry Goulburn, Nassau, November 12, 1817, NA-UK, CO 23-65, ff. 60-61; Nicolls to Cochrane, Nassau, July 27, 1814, PLC, reel 19, ff. 1284-87.

awaited them under British protection. However, even without the West India Regiments, enslaved people likely would have flocked to British lines anyway, as evinced by refugees who took shelter among British forces during the American Revolution. By all accounts, the West Indian troops appeared eager to serve as well, viewing the action in Florida as a chance to distinguish themselves in their new careers as soldiers. A good number of the troops may also have sympathized with enslaved African Americans and joined out of a desire to aid them.<sup>64</sup>

Another resident of the Bahamas, Nassau trader Alexander Arbuthnot, acted in the vein of men like John Miller, seeking to set up a Creek trade. He even took it upon himself to house and escort the two Red Stick emissaries that came to Nassau in 1816. Arbuthnot worked closely with Red Stick leaders and seemed to earn their trust. Despite his economic ambitions, he showed no evidence of being the sort of predatory schemer that Miller and Bowles were. Together, Arbuthnot and Governor Cameron tried to serve as the Red Sticks' go-betweens, bombarding Secretary of State Bathurst and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States Charles Bagot with their pleas. Both men believed the Red Sticks' case to be so strong that the home government's intervention was a foregone conclusion. Cameron went so far as to tell the Red Sticks "that His Majesty's Minister at Washington [Bagot] would be directed to secure" their lands for them. Arbuthnot commented that the Red Sticks "are much more moderate in their Complaints than the aggressions of the Americans warranted them in making." Their correspondence

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<sup>64</sup> Nicolls to Cochrane, Nassau, July 27, 1814, PLC, reel 19, ff. 1284-87. The best available source on the West India Regiments is Roger N. Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

operated on the assumption that, armed with their intelligence, the government had no choice but to act.<sup>65</sup>

### **A FINAL DIPLOMATIC EFFORT**

Red Sticks continued to show their diplomatic savvy, combining their usual strategies with an ever-evolving understanding of international law and politics. The Red Stick and Miccosukee grant of land to Woodbine followed the Creek pattern of lending territory to British colonists in exchange for trade, diplomatic, and military assistance. Without coercion, Creeks had offered land in Apalachee to both Spanish and British colonists at various points throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Regarding the British imperial state, their case for continued assistance relied not only on traditional notions of reciprocal alliance, but also the peace negotiations at Ghent in 1815. On repeated occasions, Red Sticks quoted the Treaty of Ghent in support of their demands. Specifically, they pointed to Article Nine, which stipulated that the United States returned all land it seized from Native peoples throughout the course of the war. Ensuring that they would go on record as a sovereign people expressing their consent to the treaty, Red Stick leaders even made sure to state that “We, the undersigned...declared by His Britannic Majesty to be a free and independent people, do, in the name of the said nation, agree to the ninth article of the treaty of peace.” By assenting to the treaty, Red Stick leaders asserted and defended their political sovereignty while laying claim to the protections extended by its terms.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Alexander Arbuthnot to Bagot, Nassau, January 8, 1817, NA-UK, CO 23-66, f. 111; Red Sticks’ Power of Attorney to Arbuthnot, Ochlockonee Sound, June, 17, 1817, PLC, reel 21, ff. 603-04 and 611-12; Cameron to Bathurst, Nassau, January 10, 1817, NA-UK, CO 23-64, f. 6.

<sup>66</sup> Statement of Heopaeth Mēkko [Hopothle Mēkko?], et al., Prospect Bluff, April 2, 1815, enclosed in Nicolls to Benjamin Hawkins, April 28, 1815, PLC, reel 20, ff. 332-33.

Nicholls himself used Article Nine to justify his continued presence in Apalachee, feeling that it was his duty to defend the Red Sticks from American aggression. From the Great Lakes to Creek country, the United States had failed to honor Article Nine, arguing that the Indian wars were conflicts separate from the war with Great Britain and thus not covered by the terms of the peace treaty. The notes of the British commissioners at Ghent and their instructions from Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh show that the article's authors understood its terms differently. Not wishing to repeat the mistakes of the Treaty of Paris of 1783, Castlereagh's earliest instructions insisted that Britain's Native allies "shall be included in the Peace" and "that a full and express Recognition of their Limits Shall take place." The British commissioners, on Castlereagh and Bathurst's instructions, held strong in the face of American intransigence and insisted that they accede to these conditions. Notes from lower-level imperial bureaucrats supported the application of Article Nine to the Creeks' situation. An unattributed annotation on Cameron's letter forwarding a Red Stick appeal remarked that if the accusation against the United States "proves true as asserted...there can be no doubt but that the Indians nations have a claim to the interference of G<sup>l</sup> Britain on their behalf."<sup>67</sup>

Despite the text of the treaty, multiple factors conspired against the Red Sticks. The United States government countered that the Treaty of Ghent did not represent the Creeks due to their signing a separate peace in the Treaty of Fort Jackson. On this occasion, the United States found Creek political sovereignty useful. As Creeks were not subjects of Great Britain, Americans argued that a treaty their leaders had personally signed would take precedence over one negotiated without their input and signed by

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<sup>67</sup> Nicolls to Cochrane, March 1, 1816, [London], PLC, reel 20, ff. 1169-75; Lord Castlereagh's instructions to Lord Gambier, et al., Foreign Office [Whitehall], July 28, 1814, NA-UK, FO 5-101, ff. 1-13; annotation on reverse of Cameron to Bathurst, Nassau, March 23, 1816, NA-UK, CO 23-63, f. 142.

British officials on their behalf. Red Sticks had anticipated this argument by affirming the terms of Article Nine in a signed statement and objecting that only Allied Creek leaders, not Red Sticks, had signed the Treaty of Fort Jackson. In turn, Americans dismissed Red Stick objections, claiming that the mēkko elite represented the Creeks as a whole. Both arguments ignored legitimate objections to their respective positions. Some Red Stick leaders had in fact signed the Treaty of Fort Jackson, those who had surrendered to Jackson rather than flee to Apalachee. However, neither Allied Creeks nor surrendered Red Sticks had freely consented to the American treaty. General Jackson had given them little choice in the matter, essentially forcing Creeks to sign his treaty at gunpoint. In light of these conflicting agreements, no clear legal path existed for the resolution of disputed Creek lands.<sup>68</sup>

The greatest obstacle for the Red Sticks involved a war-weary British public and a ministry unwilling to reignite conflict with the United States. By 1816, Britain and the rest of Europe had begun to settle into their first real period of peace in over two decades. Few would have been willing to spend the time, money, effort, and lives that launching another campaign against the United States would require. Even diplomatic pressure remained off limits. For nearly a decade, American embargos and open warfare had restricted trade between Britain and the United States. The Treaty of Ghent finally restored normal commerce between the two and both nations loathed to disrupt it yet again. A note found alongside one of the Red Stick memorials offered further commentary, seeking to duck British responsibility for the matter. This commenter acknowledged that “in the Negotiations at Ghent – we advanced a Claim to sanction

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<sup>68</sup> Hawkins to Nicolls, Creek Agency, May 24, 1815, PLC, reel 20, ff. 507-08; Hawkins to Nicolls, Creek Agency, May 28, 1815, PLC, reel 20, ff. 509-11.

Indians Nations as free & Independent...and all that was done on our Part was to stipulate that the Indians sh<sup>d</sup>. be restored to the Situation in which they were previous to Hostilities.” However, they qualified this statement by adding that “we did not stipulate that they should be maintained for ever in that Situation.” The legal gymnastics performed in this letter argued that if “the American Government admitted the Indians complaining to return to their former Situation for a week or a Month they [had] complied with the Treaty literally.” Reticent to ignite a diplomatic row, British officials decided that as long as the United States technically withdrew from Native lands at the end of the war, they could do as they wished with Native peoples and their territories thereafter. Though this condition did not actually apply to the Creeks, for the United States had completed its occupation of Creek land during the war and sustained it ever since, the comment’s tone signaled the intentions of the British home government: they would ignore the Americans’ violation of Article Nine.<sup>69</sup>

Though notes and instructions from the treaty negotiations show that the commissioners had wished to create and maintain an “Indian Territory” with bounded limits, postwar British officials retreated from that goal. Indeed, this observer stated that “I do not see, how...[the United States] are actually bound by Treaty to maintain [the Indians] in [their territory].” Castlereagh, Bathurst, and the British treaty commissioners had not viewed Article Nine as a toothless provision. Yet the desire for peaceful commercial relations with Americans rendered it so. By 1816, imperial policy had changed and the British state was no longer willing to provoke war with the United

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<sup>69</sup> [G. Castle?] to “Gen<sup>l</sup>. A \_\_\_\_ Esq.,” May 20, [1816], NA-UK, CO 23-63, ff. 323-24.



States. Native peoples such as the Creeks became the collateral damage of these policy shifts.<sup>70</sup>

On multiple fronts, Red Stick efforts amounted to naught. British diplomats did nothing to intervene in Washington. Cameron never received the authority or the resources to send further aid to the Red Sticks. Heles Haco, the Red Stick leader who went with Nicolls to London, waited for months at court. He never obtained his audience with Crown officials and Nicolls struggled to secure government reimbursement for his maintenance. Heles Haco returned to Apalachee, bringing with him a few supplies and gifts. Woodbine betrayed his allies, confiscating most of the supplies Heles Haco brought back. He began plotting with another adventurer, Gregor MacGregor, to create a separatist republic in Florida, ignoring the Red Stick cause.<sup>71</sup>

### **THE FIRST SEMINOLE WAR**

Arbuthnot continued sending out pleas, to British officials, to American officials, and even to Allied Creek leader Tvstvvnke Rakko, in a futile attempt to undo the effects of the war. American troops began to mass near Apalachee, pursuing Red Sticks and demanding the return of all runaway slaves. Eventually, they provoked a skirmish and used it as justification to launch an invasion. While scholars have linked this conflict to future struggles by naming it the First Seminole War, the American invasion was

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.; Bagot to Castlereagh, February 5, 1817, NA-UK, CO 23-66, f. 110; Heidler and Heidler, *Old Hickory's War*, 55-56.

<sup>71</sup> Nicolls to J. P. Morier, Durham Lodge near Eltham [London], September 29, 1815, PLC, reel 20, ff. 731-35; Nicolls to Alexander Gordon, London, September 24, 1816, PLC, reel 20, ff. 1612-14; Nicolls to Henry Goulburn, [London], October 8, 1816, PLC, reel 20, ff. 1630-32; Nicolls to Goulburn, [London], December 21, 1816, PLC, reel 21, ff. 105-07; Nicolls to Bathurst, Eltham, May 5, 1817, PLC, reel 21, ff. 524-26. For MacGregor, see T. Frederick Davis, "MacGregor's Invasion of Florida, 1817," *FHQ* 7, no. 1 (Jul. 1928): 2-71; Matthew Brown, "Inca, Sailor, Soldier, King: Gregor MacGregor and the Early Nineteenth-Century Caribbean," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 24, no. 1 (2005): 44-70; David Bushnell, ed., *La República de las Floridas: Texts and Documents* (Mexico D.F.: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 1986).

primarily a continuation of the Red Stick War. U.S. forces moved into Florida in pursuit of Red Sticks, seeking to resolve the lingering issues of that conflict. In 1816, the U.S. army attacked the Prospect Bluff fort and destroyed it. By mid-1818, the American army had advanced on and leveled the Miccosukee and Red Stick towns in Apalachee. They captured Arbuthnot and tricked Heles Haco and another Red Stick leader, Homathle Mēkko, into captivity by flying British colors and luring them on board a warship. The American army hanged all three and shot another British associate, Robert Armbrister, as enemies of the American state. The ensuing chaos forced Miccosukees, Red Sticks, and African American refugees to flee towards the Seminole towns of the Alachua prairie. American forces pursued them, advancing as far as the Suwanee River before turning back. The exiles would join the Seminoles permanently, making the Florida peninsula their new home.<sup>72</sup>

Although directed at Red Sticks, the American invasion had more serious consequences for the Spanish colonies in Florida. For decades, Spanish claims of jurisdiction and territorial sovereignty over Florida had restricted Americans efforts to strike against Miccosukees and Seminoles. The United States had acknowledged Spanish claims south of the thirty-first parallel in the Treaty of San Lorenzo, complicating any efforts to act against them. However, Andrew Jackson employed that very treaty to justify not only his reprisals against Red Sticks, Miccosukees, Seminoles, and refugee

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<sup>72</sup> Arbuthnot to Bagot, Nassau, January 8, 1817, NA-UK, CO 23-66, ff. 111; Arbuthnot to Bagot, [1817], PLC, reel 21, ff. 176-77; Arbuthnot to Cameron, [1817], PLC, reel 21, ff. 178-79; Arbuthnot to Big Warrior, Ochlockonee River, March 3, 1817, PLC, reel 21, ff. 411-12; Arbuthnot Journal, October 23 – November 10, 1817, PLC, reel 21, ff. 804-06; James Monroe, “War with the Seminole Indians,” Washington, March 25, 1818, ADAH, SGO 21738, “Collection of Records from Alabama and Mississippi Territories, 1806-1819,” Folder 5, “Records Relating to the Military and Indian Affairs, 1806-1817”; Trials of Arbuthnot and Armbrister, Fort St. Marks, April 26, 1818, PLC, reel 21, ff. 1206-08. Also see Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, ch. 2; Heidler and Heidler, *Old Hickory’s War*; John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America’s Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), ch. 3; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, ch. 12; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, ch. 7.

slaves, but also the seizure of Spanish posts in West Florida. Article V of the treaty stated that Spain and the U.S. “shall, by all the means in their power, maintain peace and harmony along the several Indian Nations who inhabit the country adjacent to the [boundary] lines” between them. Jackson accused Spain of failing to prevent Miccosukees, Seminoles, and Red Stick and African American refugees in Apalachee from harming American citizens. In 1814, he presented a copy to Governor Manrique, sarcastically accusing him of having “forgotten its existence” and demanding that he “avow [the Red Sticks as existing] under your Jurisdiction, & hold yourself accountable for their conduct, as Stipulated by the treaty of 1795.” As long as the “Hostile Indians & Negroes” inhabited Spanish claims and Spanish forces failed to do anything to prevent their attacks, Jackson would consider Spanish officials in breach of Article V. In turn, Jackson believed that Spanish violation of the treaty warranted his taking matters into his own hands as a representative of the United States government.<sup>73</sup>

That Spain lacked the ability to police “its Indians” did not absolve Spanish officials of guilt. Jackson and many other Americans considered Spanish weakness as a damning indictment. “Incompetency is alledged,” wrote Jackson, with Spanish forces “in a defenceless state” and unable to exercise their sovereignty over Native peoples and “Negroes.” He sneered at how “Indians & Negroes [had] demanded of you large supplies of munitions of war” and contended that they threatened to “[take] possession of your fortress” at St. Marks. Jackson turned Spanish protestations of impotence against them, arguing that the refugees overpowered Spanish forces and kept the St. Marks garrison

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<sup>73</sup> Treaty of Friendship, Limits, and Navigation between Spain and the United States, San Lorenzo, October 27, 1795, Art. V, *Statutes at Large of the United States of America, 1789-1873*, 8:140-43; Jackson to Manrique, Mobile, August 24, 1814, AGI, PC, leg. 1795, enclosed in no. 381; Jackson to Francisco Caso y Luengo, “Before [in front of] St. Marks,” April 6, 1818, AGI, PC, leg. 158B, ff. 494-95.

under siege. In Jackson's twisted and insincere logic, he would rescue the Spaniards both from the refugees and from themselves. "Not as the Enemy but as the Friend of Spain," he took possession of St. Marks and executed Arbuthnot, Armbrister, Heles Haco, and Homathle Mēkko. Whether unable or unwilling to prevent Indian attacks or repatriate escaped slaves, Americans considered Spaniards unfit sovereigns in Florida.<sup>74</sup>

By virtue of the Red Stick War and the Red Sticks' subsequent flight to the Miccosukee towns, the nexus between Spanish-Creek and Spanish-American diplomacy directly led to the Spanish Empire's loss of the Floridas. The Spanish Crown took the repeated violation of their colonial posts as a signal to sell the provinces to the United States before the latter took them by force for good. Within a year of Jackson's invasion, Spanish and U.S. negotiators agreed to the transfer of both East and West Florida. Despite Spanish attempts to distance themselves from the Red Sticks and their conflicts with American citizens, Americans chose to blame Spaniards for Creek, Miccosukee, and Seminole aggression. Past decades of pro-Creek Spanish policies, however half-hearted, provided a rationale, however questionable, for American actions and prefaced the transfer of Florida's colonial posts.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Jackson to Francisco Caso y Luengo, "Before St. Marks," April 6, 1818, AGI, PC, leg. 158B, ff. 494-95.

<sup>75</sup> For more on Jackson's invasion of West Florida, its relationship to the Red Sticks, Miccosukees, and Seminoles, and its role in securing the transfer of territorial claims over all of Florida, see Daniel Feller, "The Seminole Controversy Revisited: A New Look at Andrew Jackson's 1818 Florida Campaign." *FHQ* 88, no. 3 (Winter 2010): 309-25; Heidler and Heidler, *Old Hickory's War*; Rosen, *Border Law*; J. C. A. Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands: James Madison and the Spanish-American Frontier, 1776-1821* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 199-201.

## CREEKS OUSIDE THE ATLANTIC WORLD

“[It] was promised them by their friends the British at St. Augustine... [that] the American people should never get possession of their country, and he now begs to remind his good King of that Promise: the American people have so far encroached on their lands that every door is shut against them in order to get arms and Ammunition except thro’ the Spanish King.”<sup>76</sup>

Hopothle Mēkko, the aging Creek mēkko betrayed by Georgia leaders decades prior, penned these words in 1811 as part of his desperate plea to British King George III. Having found “every door...shut against them,” Hopothle Mēkko fought to pry them back open. Time and again, Creeks found the access points of the British and Spanish Empires at Pensacola, Havana, Apalachee, and Nassau closed to them. After decades of simultaneously attempting to expand and maintain their diplomatic networks, the trauma of the Red Stick and Seminole Wars forced Creeks to abandon their efforts. Though Americans had not yet obtained “possession of their country,” they had seized a large chunk of it. Perhaps more significantly, Americans had disrupted Creeks’ sense of security and compromised their sovereignty. Poverty and starvation gave the U.S. federal government unprecedented leverage over Creek leaders. Repeated invasions made clear that only the deepest recesses of the Florida swamplands would protect them from American aggression. Creeks had plenty of fight left in them and would never give up their aim to protect and defend their sovereignty, but for the first time the United States had forced them to negotiate and contend with American colonialism from a position of diplomatic isolation.

Kenhagee made one last attempt to secure help from the Bahamas, crossing over in a large canoe in September 1819 to plea with new Governor William Vesey Munnings.

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<sup>76</sup> Hopothle Mēkko to King George III, Tuckabatchee, September 1, 1811, CO 23-28, ff. 90-91.

Munnings housed them for a time but rebuffed their request for aid. Telling Kenhagee that “as the British Nation was now at peace with America; His Majesty would not deem it proper to interfere,” he gave Kenhagee’s party a few supplies and sent them back to Florida. Kenhagee’s rejection fittingly brought the relationship between Creeks and Britons in the Bahamas full circle. After all, Kenhagee and his son had led the charge to maintain ties with British colonists via the islands back in the 1780s. Munnings’ insistence that “the British Nation was now at peace with America” echoed the words of evacuating British officials at the end of the American Revolution. Kenhagee had heard them before, but his persistence had always uncovered with new opportunities for trade, intrigue, and diplomatic support. One could not fault him for making one last attempt, for neither he nor anyone else could have known that Britons had finished intervening in Creek affairs for good.<sup>77</sup>

The breakdown of British and Spanish alliances with Creeks and other Native peoples had the cumulative effect of altering the political and diplomatic order of trans-Appalachia. U.S. victories stretching from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico left Native peoples divided and defeated, their lands either ravaged by warfare or lost to invading Americans. Native militants lay at the mercy of not just Americans, but opponents within their own communities. Yet those Native peoples that negotiated with U.S. agents fared little better, as they found that their cooperation did little to forestall punitive demands and territorial seizures. The fate of the Creeks exemplified this state of affairs. The United States took advantage of the Red Stick War to seize millions of acres of land mostly belonging to its Creek allies. Allied Creeks joined Americans in taking

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<sup>77</sup> William Vesey Munnings to Bathurst, Nassau, September 30, 1819, Governor’s Dispatches, 1818-1825, Bahamian National Archives (hereafter BNA), Nassau, ff. 343-46; Munnings to Bathurst, Nassau, November 30, 1819, BNA, Governor’s Dispatches, 1818-1825, ff. 375-78.

vengeance upon Red Sticks and the majority of Creeks continued to resent and mistrust mēkkvlke who had worked closely with the United States.

The end of the European and North American wars of the 1810s extinguished Euro-Native connections in trans-Appalachia. With the independence of Mexico and the subsequent disappearance of the annual *flota*, the Spanish colonial establishment in Florida lost the principal source of its funds as well as its *raison d'être*. With Andrew Jackson's invasion and occupation of Pensacola and St. Marks, the Spanish Crown lost its will to continue defending Florida against American incursions. As for Britain, the combination of a war-weary public, the allure of commerce with the United States, and the empire's inability to derive any substantial gains from its military efforts in North America left Britons unwilling to interfere in trans-Appalachian affairs any longer. Cuba and the Bahamas remained as Spanish and British strongholds, but they now mattered little to Creeks. For the first time in over half a century, the ocean that separated Creeks from Britons and Spaniards represented a real barrier, one just as much metaphorical as physical.

## CODA

*“It’s hard to say who had the idea of going to Cuba. I was talking about what happened when the Creeks Oscar Holt and Sam Jones came down and talked to us, lots of talking, about what happened years ago, what type of people were here. Like the French were here, the British were here, the Spanish were here, and they [Holt and Jones] knew about all those things....So we had them and realized we had been treated okay for that time, so we wanted to get help from them. That’s how we started. When we started doing that, we got involved with different people like the Cubans.”*  
– Buffalo Tiger, as told to Harry A. Kersey, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

In 1959, a delegation of Miccosukee leaders traveled down to Havana to meet with Cuban President Fidel Castro. Perched in the Everglades at the southern tip of the Florida peninsula, the Miccosukees were in the midst of a recognition struggle waged on multiple fronts: against American politicians in Congress and against Seminole leaders on the reservations to their north. The journey came at the height of the U.S. federal government’s termination policy, which sought to abolish reservations and eliminate what aspects of Native sovereignties remained across the country. Termination gained traction as federal policy largely because many congressmen believed the concept of holding communal reservation land in trust clashed with the Anglo-American emphasis on individualism and private property. In particular, they worried it would make Native peoples sympathetic and susceptible to communist influences at the height of the Cold War. Ironically enough, federal efforts pushed some Native leaders and peoples, such as the Miccosukees, to look to communist nations and communist-inspired decolonization movements for inspiration and support, where they had not previously.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Buffalo Tiger and Harry A. Kersey, Jr., *Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 87.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of termination policy, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), ch. 23. For the ties between termination, communism, global decolonization movements, and Native activism, see Daniel M.



Complicating the problem of termination was the fact that for decades the federal government had recognized the Miccosukees not as a separate people, but as a part of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Thus, termination not only sought to remove any legal protections that the Miccosukees enjoyed, but also threatened to turn over Miccosukee land to the control of Seminoles. The tribe's decision to send representatives to Cuba was a last resort, an attempt to pressure an intransigent federal government to grant them legal protections for their lands and affirm their status as a people distinct from the Seminoles. In a strategy reminiscent of that employed by Cowetas and Apalachee Creeks nearly two centuries prior, Miccosukees looked to Havana for a diplomatic counterweight against Anglo-American officials pushing policies contrary to their interests.<sup>3</sup>

Miccosukees did not consider themselves as one with the Seminoles due to a myriad of cultural, linguistic, and political issues. The Seminoles were Muskogee-speaking cattle ranchers; the Miccosukees spoke Mikasuki, a Hitchiti-derived language unintelligible to Muskogee speakers, and subsisted upon hunting, fishing, farming, and tourism. In comparing the Miccosukees to the Florida Seminoles, Buffalo Tiger noted that "we had different languages and ate different foods...we didn't belong to that tribe...We tried to stay away from [the] Seminole Tribe." The federal government's arrangement threatened Miccosukee autonomy and identity. Becoming a part of the Seminole Tribe would effectively make Miccosukees subject to the wealthier, more numerous, and better connected Seminole population. Miccosukees worried that the Seminoles would not represent their interests, either in internal political decisions or in

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Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Harry Kersey explores termination policy, how it affected the Miccosukees in particular, and how it led to the Havana delegation in "The Havana Connection: Buffalo Tiger, Fidel Castro, and the Origin of Miccosukee Tribal Sovereignty, 1959-1962," *American Indian Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Fall 2001), 491-507.

external negotiations with the U.S. federal government. They especially feared Seminole control over their land. Emotionally and strategically, Miccosukees felt they should remain separate.<sup>4</sup>

While neither an elder nor a political leader among the Miccosukees, Buffalo Tiger quickly became their lead diplomat by the time of the Cuba visit. Many of the tribal elders did not speak English and lived mostly isolated from the Anglo-American world. Due to the violence and trauma of Creek and Seminole history in the century and a quarter following the Red Stick and Seminole Wars, most Miccosukee elders wanted little to do with most Americans, least of all the U.S. federal government. Growing up, Buffalo Tiger had been “taught not to work with the U.S. government” and in general “not to take anything from the white man.” Even the tourist industries Miccosukees relied on to survive were set up miles and miles away from the actual Miccosukee communities so that tribal members could keep Americans at arm’s length. But the vulnerability of the Miccosukees to the actions and policies of federal officials meant that they needed representation in Washington. Buffalo Tiger explained that he “could speak better English” and “had been around people in the city...I knew the white man’s ways pretty much.” He also had a knack for explaining complex negotiations with lawyers and government officials to tribal elders. Miccosukee elders needed a trustworthy and knowledgeable interpreter and go-between, and grew to confide in Buffalo Tiger as their representative.<sup>5</sup>

Alongside Buffalo Tiger, Miccosukee elders had tried multiple strategies for addressing their problems before deciding to appeal to Cuba. They had negotiated with

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<sup>4</sup> Buffalo Tiger and Kersey, *Buffalo Tiger*, 80, 86-7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 73, 81.

Bureau of Indian Affairs officials, to no avail. Reminiscent of the ways in which Creeks had tried to pit Congress and the state of Georgia against one another during the early Republic, the Miccosukees persuaded Florida Governor LeRoy Collins to advocate on their behalf, but to no avail. The state of Florida granted the Miccosukee tribe recognition, but that decision proved of little help. They needed federal recognition to ensure their separation from the Seminoles and the protection of their lands. Finally, Miccosukees representatives traveled to Washington to meet with BIA officials and members of the Congressional committee in charge of developing termination policy.<sup>6</sup>

The mission to Washington succeeded in convincing Congress not to enforce termination as regarded the Miccosukees and Seminoles, but left the problem respecting Miccosukee sovereignty and independence from the Seminoles intact. As Buffalo Tiger recounted, “it didn’t have to be just the government doing something to Indian people.” The quote problematizes a binary distinction between American colonizers and Native victims when evaluating the problems faced by Native peoples; disputes within and between Native communities presented additional challenges. The machinations of Seminole leaders continued to threatened Seminole autonomy, and the Miccosukees had just about exhausted all of their options in Florida and Washington. At that point, Buffalo Tiger had his fortuitous conversation with both Oscar Holt and Sam Jones, which gave birth to the idea of traveling to Cuba.<sup>7</sup>

The Miccosukee visit to Cuba also paralleled earlier eras of pan-tribal cooperation among Eastern Woodlands Native peoples, as it developed in consultation with others. Earlier in 1959, Miccosukees hosted a conference of various tribal representatives in

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., ch. 4; Kersey, *An Assumption of Sovereignty: Social and Political Transformation among the Florida Seminoles, 1953-1979* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 177-81.

<sup>7</sup> Buffalo Tiger and Kersey, *Buffalo Tiger*, 86.

conjunction with Mad Bear Anderson, a Tuscarora activist engaged in a lengthy dispute over tribal lands with the federal government. The assembled delegation discussed forming a united front and petitioning the United Nations for sovereign recognition. There they drew up four so-called “Buckskin Declarations,” written on dried deerskins, attesting to their demands. One of these documents remained with the Miccosukees, who carried it with them on their visit to Washington. The group then drafted a fifth buckskin declaration intended for Fidel Castro as a statement of amity, support, and solidarity. Anderson then accompanied the Miccosukee delegation to Cuba. Like in 1787, representatives from Native peoples north and south of the Ohio River met to coordinate their diplomatic efforts and strategize as to how to meet the external challenges they faced. Instead of wampum belts, these meetings produced and disseminated buckskin texts to spread their message.<sup>8</sup>

The Miccosukee message to Castro even directly referenced earlier Creek travels to Havana, explicitly placing the voyage in a broader historical and diplomatic context. The text made reference to “our forefathers [who] sailed from Florida in log canoes with animal-skin sails to Cuba, where they found friends who feasted and traded with them.” The delegation’s letter even mentioned specific agreements made with agents of the Spanish Crown, noting that “Our people made an alliance with your forefathers in 1785 and 1795,” almost certainly references to the 1784 Treaty of Pensacola and the 1793 Treaty of Nogales with officials in Spanish Louisiana. The passage makes clear that the

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<sup>8</sup> Kersey, *Assumption of Sovereignty*, 181-2; Paul Rosier, *Serving their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 227-8.

historical memory of Creek voyages to Cuba lived in the memories of Miccosukee people and continued to inspire and influence their relationships with the outside world.<sup>9</sup>

However, unlike the Creek travels of old, Buffalo Tiger and the Miccosukee delegation did not treat with the representatives of a global empire, as Cuba had long since separated from the Spanish Empire and functioned as its own sovereign nation. Moreover, Cuban leaders embraced the Miccosukees for their diplomatic and propagandistic value rather than any trade or military support they could provide. The Cuban government had just come to power in the wake of a bloody revolution and was still in the process of establishing itself and its legitimacy. While the new government had not yet declared Cuba a communist state, Fidel Castro had already begun drawing upon communist ideology and linking his regime to global anti-colonial movements. The government felt especially threatened by the United States, largely due to its close ties with the former regime and its supporters. Castro and the Cuban government intended to rally and maintain popular support through public displays of defiance against American power. The Miccosukees' visit dovetailed these aims. Rhetorically, the Cuban government linked the Miccosukees' battle against American colonialism with their own political revolution, with President Castro even offering the Miccosukees asylum in Cuba. Eager to play the role of anti-colonial provocateurs, Cuban officials welcomed the Miccosukees and professed their support.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Sovereign Miccosukee Seminole Nation to Fidel Castro, Chickee-Chobee, Everglades, July 25, 1959, quoted in Kersey, "The Havana Connection," 497-8.

<sup>10</sup> Juan Orta to Buffalo Tiger, et al., Havana, July 26, 1959, in Kersey, "Havana Connection," 498-9; Buffalo Tiger and Kersey, *Buffalo Tiger*, 87-90. For an overview of the Cuban Revolution of the 1950s and its global geopolitical context, see Louis A. Perez, Jr., *Cuba, Between Reform and Revolution*, 5th. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), chs. 11-12.

The Miccosukees, however, did not share the political ideology of the Cuban government, nor did they see Cuba's situation as the same as their own. While their journey to Cuba engaged with and took advantage of the ideological and geopolitical contest spanning the globe at the time, the Miccosukee diplomatic strategy drew upon indigenous political traditions much older than the Cold War, communism, or the modern anti-colonial movement. Miccosukees did not espouse communism and had no interest in such. As Native peoples, their relationship with colonialism differed dramatically from that of the Cuban revolutionaries, most of whom were descendants of colonizers themselves. On top of their political and economic concerns, issues of cultural autonomy and the preservation of Miccosukee identity pervaded their struggle. Castro's offer of asylum completely missed the point of the Miccosukee movement. They wanted an existence separate from outsiders, rooted in the lands that they had come to call home and continuing to exist as their own distinct community. For them, an offer to take up exile in Cuba was contrary to their goals.

Moreover, just as various Creeks had professed firm alliances with British and Spanish officials without ever intending to act solely in British or Spanish imperial interests, the Miccosukees never really made any commitment to the Cuban officials. Buffalo Tiger's reminiscences reveal not only a certain level of bemusement, but also a lack of genuine interest on the part of either the Cubans or Miccosukees. He recalled only meeting with Castro briefly. The president had "come and go quickly" and "made a little speech" of which little remained impressed upon Buffalo Tiger's memory. They only other event Buffalo Tiger recalled from the delegation's three-day visit was a speech Castro gave in a stadium, remembered mainly for its tedium (Buffalo Tiger remarked that

Castro spoke for “one whole afternoon” and “[didn’t] see how he could talk that long”) and the physical discomfort he felt in the sweltering sun. Cubans only mattered as powerful outsiders, as a means by which the Miccosukees could place pressure on the U.S. federal government for recognition.<sup>11</sup>

The Miccosukee journey to Havana brought about its desired results. Although the Miccosukee visit consisted of little more than the disinterested delegation sitting through hours of Cuban propaganda speeches, both the state of Florida and the federal government took it very seriously. Almost immediately upon their return, representatives from the state and the BIA called offering concessions. Within three years, Congress granted the Miccosukees recognition as a semi-sovereign tribal entity, separate from the Seminoles of Florida and entitled to their own separate reservation.<sup>12</sup>

The ramifications of these developments reverberated beyond Miccosukee and Seminole country. Miccosukees recognition signaled the beginning of the end for Congressional termination policy. Congress’s decision represented its first granting of reservation lands and tribal recognition since termination began. In the 1960s and 1970s, federal policies shifted away from termination towards self-determination, whereby the BIA would give funds to tribal organizations to employ as they saw fit. Miccosukees were some of the earliest adopters to take advantage of self-determination policies. Their proactive diplomacy had placed them in a relatively advantageous position and had a significant influence upon the world around them. Well after the halcyon-days of Creek power in what is now the U.S. Southeast, the diplomatic traditions of Muskogee- and

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<sup>11</sup> Buffalo Tiger and Kersey, *Buffalo Tiger*, 88-9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-2; Kersey, *Assumption of Sovereignty*, 183-7.

Hitchiti-speaking peoples remained alive, continuing to adapt to changing conditions and continuing to shape the world around them.<sup>13</sup>

Just as the Creeks of Coweta and Apalachee some two hundred years earlier, Buffalo Tiger of the Miccosukees looked to Havana to create new diplomatic connections and provide negotiating leverage with existing ones. The Miccosukee *mēkko* was more like Escochabé than Tunapé in his aims. Like Escochabé, Buffalo Tiger was less interested in forming a lasting connection with Cuba than with using Havana's officials to extract concessions from Anglo-Americans. The two centuries intervening created significant differences between the two cases. Escochabé negotiated from a position of strength, as the head of one of the most powerful communities in a wide swath of sovereign Creek territory. In general, Native peoples still dominated most of North America during Escochabé's time. Buffalo Tiger belonged to a people long in retreat from the destructive effects of Euro-American colonialism. They had been forced to take refuge in inhospitable swamps to preserve their independence, and even this had not rendered them totally safe. Whereas Escochabé negotiated with the agents of European empires, Buffalo Tiger wrangled with the heads of sovereign American nations. While the United States of America did not even exist when Cowetas loyal to Escochabé began traveling to Havana, it dominated the North American landscape at the time of Buffalo Tiger's voyage. While few in Escochabé's time predicted the U.S.'s explosive growth, its eventual domination over Native peoples such as the Creeks, or even its mere survival as an independent nation, America had become a global power by Buffalo Tiger's time.

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<sup>13</sup> Kersey, "Havana Connection," 502-5; Kersey, *Assumption of Sovereignty*, 187-93. For the decline of termination and the development of self-determination policies more generally, see Prucha, *Great Father*, ch. 24.



Yet, similarities still abounded in the efforts of both men. Both took advantage of simmering global conflicts to increase negotiating leverage with their neighbors. Escochabé struck in the midst of a centuries-long imperial struggle between Britain and Spain, courting the latter in a deliberate effort to make agents of the former nervous. Buffalo Tiger acted at the height of the Cold War and the in the wake of the Cuban Revolution, capitalizing on the United States' fear of global communism by treating with a state that had just declared its alliance with the Soviet Union. Escochabé and Buffalo Tiger took courses of action designed to correct the behavior of individuals who underestimated and discounted them. Their voyages were designed to make distant officials aware of the power they held as the representatives of strategically positioned communities. Finally, both men used Havana and its political leaders to make a point about sovereignty. Escochabé wished for Britons to know that Cowetas would not serve at their beck and call, that they still could dictate terms in Anglo-Coweta negotiations. Likewise, Buffalo Tiger wanted the United States to know that not only did the Miccosukees still exist as a sovereign people, but that they had the ability to transform their world by making alliances and connections with powerful outsiders.

Eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Creeks and their twentieth-century Miccosukee descendants both strategically employed Euro-American concepts of sovereignty and nationhood to maintain and preserve indigenous forms of community. Both groups sought the recognition of outsiders as confirmation of what already existed and so that others would respect sovereign rights that they believed they already possessed. Miccosukees developed institutions such as a tribal constitution "so we would be organized...and the Bureau of Indian Affairs would recognize it." They had

approached the Cuban government hoping to prove a point about their sovereignty and demonstrate that they were willing to appeal to an international community to secure their rights. Creeks signed treaties, represented themselves as a “Creek Nation,” and made appeals to the law of nations in an attempt to force Europeans and Americans to include them and their sovereign rights in an international diplomatic order. Creek thrived on cosmopolitanism and were some of the most aggressive network-builders of the eighteenth century Atlantic world. In contrast, most Miccosukees preferred to be left alone, unmolested by outsiders who had already caused them so much harm. Yet, both groups understood the power of diplomatic connections and did not hesitate to employ them when necessary to defend and protect their sovereignty. The latter had learned from the example set by the former, and carried it with them through their history.

The 1820s represented a point of divergence for the coalition of Red Sticks, Seminoles, Afro-Seminole, and various African-descended peoples that had developed over the course of the previous decade. The Creeks who had remained behind in Creek country, shorn of their most powerful outside connections and mostly purged of those who had fought to retain them, focused all their energies in attempting to negotiate as beneficial a relationship as possible with the agents and citizens of the United States. In this effort, those who escaped punishment at the hands of the *mēkko* elite began to cooperate with them. Like the Cherokees, these Creeks formed a constitution, codified power in a national governing body, and attempted to reshape their political and economic institutions to make them more commensurate with those of Anglo-Americans.

This effort brought some meager benefits, but mostly proved ineffective in helping them avoid the fate of other Native peoples. Moreover, it continued to drive

internal conflict between members of Creek communities. The continued drive toward an economic order based upon plantation slavery enriched and empower a few Creek leaders while disenfranchising and impoverishing most others. The connections of this *mēkko* little did nothing to stop the Creeks' loss of territorial sovereignty, as the U.S. federal government eventually enforced the westward removal of all but a few Creek planters who maintained a reserve in what is now southern Alabama.<sup>14</sup>

Many Creeks tried to take advantage of legal provisions allowing them to remain in Creek country if they became landholders and citizens under U.S. law, but rounds of violent displacement that constituted what one scholar has termed the “Second Creek War” made this impossible. Most of the remaining Creeks moved west to join the Creek Nation in Indian Territory, fled south to join the Seminoles, or remained behind as exploited laborers in Anglo-American society. The latter option forced Creeks to “occupy a shady, second-class position between whites and blacks” in the racial hierarchies of the American South. Such a socioeconomic environment took a toll upon Creek autonomy, and eventually, markers of Creek identity and community. Gradually, the Creeks who chose to stay in their homeland, forced to adapt to the changing world around them, began to “pretend not to be Natives” and “gradually blend in with blacks and whites.” These individuals and their descendants, suffering the most corrosive effects of colonialism, have only begun to uncover their historical and cultural identities and recover elements of their sovereignty over the past four decades.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

<sup>15</sup> Daniel T. Ellisor, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 429-30.

Removal westward helped Creeks maintain autonomy and political sovereignty for some time. However, the U.S. Civil War made clear the reverberating effects of colonialism. Conflicts generated by Anglo-American socioeconomic influence reemerged, drawn out by an Anglo-American political struggle that sucked Creeks and other Native peoples in like a yawning vortex. Both Confederate and Union soldiers and agents brought the Civil War to the doorstep of Indian Territory, through skirmishes and the attempts to recruit the allegiances of Native peoples. Changes begun in the late eighteenth century, when mēkkvlke such as Alexander McGillivray began adopting elements of Anglo-American plantation slavery, led many Creek political leaders to view their interests as aligned with those of the Confederacy. Federal officials used mēkko support for the Confederacy to launch further attacks on Creek sovereignty, attempting to abolish the Creek constitution and place all the Native peoples of Indian Territory under a single government. Such assaults continued throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Creek would only retain or regain many of the legal foundations of their sovereignty through tireless decades of petitions, demands, and bureaucratic wrangling.<sup>16</sup>

Yet even in the midst of Removal, Creek connection-building pervades their history. The trauma of Removal might have provoked a tendency among Creeks to retrench themselves in their new homes, avoiding potentially destructive contacts with the outside world, and especially with Americans. When they arrived in their new territory in the Arkansas Valley, Creeks and other Native peoples did not come to a

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<sup>16</sup> Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 91-6 and ch. 6; Lela J. McBride, *Opothleyaholo and the Loyal Muskogee: Their Flight to Kansas in the Civil War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2000), ch. 18; Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 39-40, 41-2.

vacant land devoid of human civilization. Just like the Anglo-Americans who had displaced them from their own lands, the removed Indians found their new homes already populated by Osage, Kiowa, Wichita, Comanche, and other Plains peoples who utilized the valley's rivers and their fertile lands for grazing and as a source of water. The removed Indians had to negotiate the terms their new existence with the peoples that called the Arkansas home. On top of that, they had to sort out among themselves how to share an increasingly crowded region. Peoples that had once ranged the entirety of the territory between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico now found themselves forced to cram into allotted spaces in a region comprising the eastern halves of the present-day states of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. The newcomers formed ties of exchange with each other, the Plains peoples who called the region home, and neighboring Texans, Americans, and Mexicans, securing supplies of trade goods and forming agreements designed to maintain a fragile peace in an increasingly complex and chaotic region.<sup>17</sup>

The U.S. Civil War reveals how both American and Creeks continued to engage in vigorous and often violent debates over the concepts of sovereignty and nationhood, and how Creeks continued to view their fate as interconnected with the broader world. As with previous generations of Creek leaders, various parties saw political advantages in cultivating ties with officials from both the Union and Confederacy. The slaveholding mēkko elite recognized a common socioeconomic interest with Confederate planters, but also hoped that a Confederacy desperate for allies would reward them by restoring elements of their political sovereignty. In the treaty some of the mēkklke signed with representatives of the Confederate Congress, the Creek Nation received representation in the Confederate House of Representatives. Similar to how Alexander McGillivray once

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<sup>17</sup> DuVal, *Native Ground*, 242-4; Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*, 152-6; 214-7.

attempted to create a state within the U.S. federal union, many of these leaders felt that some form of membership or representation in the Confederate government would best protect both Creek sovereignty and their personal interests. The support of the Confederate state would help them consolidate their leadership within Creek country, while their representation in Congress would protect them from further legal and political assaults upon their autonomy. As long as Creek laws remained “compatible” with the Confederate constitution and with Confederate regulations on Indian trade, the treaty promised the Creek Nation an “otherwise unrestricted right of self-government, and full jurisdiction...over persons and property within their limits.” The agreement united two groups of people still experimenting with various forms of sovereignty and nationhood. While the Confederate States sought to reclaim elements of their sovereignty previously ceded to the American union, some Creeks contemplated giving up elements of their sovereignty in exchange for greater security and promises of autonomy. Both groups privileged the retention of slavery, and rejected any arrangement that involved the cession of sovereignty or political authority to non-slaveholding interests, in exploring their options.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, Creeks who supported the Union did so not out of any real concern over the outcome of the war, but because of the advantages they could derive from the situation. Creeks of African descent and African Americans in Creek country, whether free or enslaved, hoped that a Union victory would lead to American intervention abolishing slavery in Creek country and granting peoples of African descent citizenship

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<sup>18</sup> “A Treaty of Friendship and Alliance,” North Fork Village, Creek Nation, July 10, 1861, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Civil War*, ser. IV, vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), 426-43; McBride, *Opothleyaholo*, 141-2; Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian*, 93, 96-7; Christine Shultz White and Benton R. White, *Now the Wolf Has Come: The Creek Nation in the Civil War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), esp. chs. 2.

rights. Other Creeks opposed members the mēkko elite for political or personal reasons, resonances of the bitter divides that fostered the Red Stick War, and saw the U.S. Civil War as an opportunity to use the Union to advance their own agendas. Members of the latter groups fled to Kansas during the conflict, waging a parallel and overlapping war against the slaveholding Creek elite.<sup>19</sup>

Like the Creeks to their north and west, Red Sticks, Alachua Seminoles, and Miccosukees continued to form and employ connections the best they could. Though these peoples ceased their efforts to negotiate with imperial officials, they still asserted their sovereignty and supported their communities through exchange with the Gulf of Mexico's most mobile populations. While Hopoyv Mēkko led the last Red Stick diplomatic delegation to the Bahamas in 1821, connections with Cuba and the island's fishermen definitely continued. Red Sticks and Seminoles most likely continued to trade and interact with turtlers and wreckers coming from the Bahamas as well. Americans' desire to cut off Red Stick and Seminole access to the outside world shaped subsequent negotiations and conflicts. With the 1823 Treaty of Moultrie Creek, the United States federal government tried to force the peninsula's Native communities into an isolated refuge in its central interior. The very first article of the treaty stipulated that Seminoles place themselves "under the protection of the United States and of no other nation, power, or sovereign" and the second insisted that the boundaries of Red Stick and Seminole territory never approach closer than twenty miles to the coast. To monitor coastal activities, the federal government placed a fort at Tampa Bay designed to guard against British or Spanish involvement. Yet Red Sticks, Seminoles, and Miccosukees

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<sup>19</sup> McBride, *Opothleyaholo*; White and White, *And Now the Wolf Has Come*, esp. ch. 2; Zellar, *African Creeks*, ch. 2.

defied the U.S.'s attempts to corral them onto the central Floridian reserve, continued to frequent the coasts south of Tampa Bay, and sustained their contacts with the circum-Caribbean.<sup>20</sup>

Continued clashes between American and Creek, Miccosukee, and Seminole visions of sovereignty resulted in violent disputes throughout the nineteenth century. In the aftermath of the War of 1812, Americans defended what they viewed as their sovereign prerogatives with an increased ferocity. More confident that Europeans would not contest American actions through war, Americans grew ever more insistent upon policing and ultimately occupying their territorial claims over Native lands. A second and equally vital conception of American sovereignty involved the defense of personal property. For slaveholders and their supporters, that primarily meant property in the form of enslaved persons. Red Stick, Miccosukee, and Seminole habits of harboring refugees slaves and forming connections that brought British and Spanish colonists onto the mainland triggered both of anxieties and led the nation to wage two more, mostly disastrous campaigns against them in the mid-nineteenth century. The Second and Third Seminole Wars have become renowned for their duration, expense, and loss of American life, but often lost in such evaluations is the amount of hardship, distress, and even disaster they brought among Seminoles themselves. According to anthropologist and historian Brent Weisman, by the end of 1842 only about 300 Seminoles remained in Florida, with 4,420 having been deported to the Creek Nation in Indian Territory, and

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis Grant to Bathurst, Nassau, April 19, 1821, NA-UK, CO 23/70, f. 5, in *A guide to Selected Sources for the History of the Seminole Settlements at Red Bays, Andros, 1817-1980*, ed. David E. Wood (Nassau, Bahamas: Department of Archives, n.d.), 6-7; "Treaty of Moultrie Creek," September 18, 1823, in ASP-IA, 2:429-30; Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, ch. 3; John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), chs. 3-4; Missall and Missall. *The Seminole Wars*, ch. 4.



hundreds more killed. By the late 1840s, the number of Seminoles remaining in Florida dwindled to 200, from which point the ancestors of the modern Florida Seminole population had to rebound.<sup>21</sup>

Documentary evidence suggests that during the wars Seminoles continued to have contact with wreckers, turtlers, fisherman, and merchants from the Bahamas and Cuba, from whom they obtained arms and supplies. Certainly, the long history of Creek and Seminole contacts with the Bahamas and Cuba supports the conclusion that these islands served as part of the Seminoles' supply networks during the Second and Third Seminole Wars. However, much sparser evidence exists for these contacts during this era, much of it based upon rumors and second-hand reports. Seminole received from these sources do not seem to have been considerable. The vast majority of Seminole arms and supplies came from caches they seized from American soldiers and supply trains, not external sources of aid. Moreover, whatever ties existed came without diplomatic dialogue or even a hint of support from British or Spanish imperial agents and officials. The Florida Seminoles defended their sovereignty with little support from outside communities, and suffered greatly for it.<sup>22</sup>

Only a few communities among the Red Sticks and Seminoles continued to look to the coast and the peoples beyond for assistance in the 1820s. They did so not because they held out hope for diplomatic aid from the British Empire, but because they felt they had little choice. Many African American refugees and Afro Seminoles living among these Native communities recognized that as long as they lay within reach of Anglo-

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<sup>21</sup> Covington, *Seminoles of Florida*, chs. 3-7; Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, esp. 59-61, 93, 115, 117; Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, esp. 64, 78, 111. For the statistics on the Seminole Wars, see Weisman, *Unconquered People*, 56-9.

<sup>22</sup> Carrier, "Trade and Plunder," 173-77; Silverman, *Thundersticks*, ch. 5.

American plantation societies, they would never be safe. Rather than diplomatic connections, they sought shelter and asylum in territories that Britain claimed to be under its sovereign protection. These groups built upon Creek practice, traveling in dugout canoes along the same routes to the Bahamas, or obtaining passage in wreckers and turtling vessels that visited the Florida coast. Instead of visiting and negotiating with the governor in Nassau, they chose to establish a new settlement on Andros Island. There, they formed the root of what would become the Black Seminole community there, to be added to by subsequent migrations. By 1828, when Bahamian officials discovered these migrations, there were already “upwards of seventy” Black Seminoles on Andros Island, with thirty-two others having been seized trying to join them.<sup>23</sup>

For these refugees, Andros Island represented a place that was safe from the continual danger of reenslavement. As traumatic as the events of the previous decade had been for Creeks for individuals with African ancestry they had been worse. Whether born slave or born free into a Native community, most Americans assumed that all Blacks among the Creeks, Miccosukees, and Seminoles were refugees from American plantations. This left them vulnerable to enslavement, and the continuous pursuit of and assault on the Creek, Miccosukee, and Seminole communities had convinced many of them that Florida was no longer safe. Thus, a decades-long tradition of Creek tradition became a way for many Afro-Seminoles and African Americans to find a new homeland.

Even in the midst of forced peregrinations and sustained assaults from Anglo-Americans, Muskogee- and Hitchiti-speaking peoples, the descendants of eighteenth

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<sup>23</sup> Grant to Bathurst, Nassau, June 30, 1828, NA-UK, CO 23/78, f. 58, in *Selected Sources*, 8. For more on the Black Seminoles and their ties to the Bahamas, see Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles: A History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996); Rosalyn Howard, *Black Seminoles in the Bahamas* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); Carrier, “Trade and Plunder,” esp. chs. 2 and 6.

century Creeks and those who made their homes among them, continued to seek out connections with the outside world to support and aid them. Long before contact, the antecedents of the Creek towns maintained diplomatic and exchange links with peoples and communities across the continent. The peoples that would become the Creeks refined and mastered the practice of diplomacy like few others, particularly when it came to the Europeans that arrived on the margins of their lands beginning in the late sixteenth century. Whether through the “triple-nation diplomacy” of Coweta or the close ties Okfuskees formed with British traders and officials, Creeks crafted and seized upon exchange networks that they converted into tangible markers of power. When these connections threatened to slip away from them in the decades after the Seven Years’ War, Creek towns worked assiduously to preserve, reconfigure, and maintain them. Taking up maritime travel, Cowetas, Flint River, and Apalachee communities followed Britons and Spaniards to Cuba, the Bahamas, and beyond. In other communities, crafty Creek leaders adapted to a changing geopolitical landscape by looking in all directions at potential allies and sources of power, preserving the powerful role they played in both their corner of the North American continent and across the Atlantic world.

Throughout all of this, Muskogeans and Hitchiti-speaking peoples engaged with Euro-American concepts of sovereignty and nationhood. At times, Creeks used nationhood as a means of marketing themselves to Britons, Spaniards, and Americans. Delegates and emissaries amplified their standing with European and Euro-American officials and diplomats by claiming to wield authority over a unified Creek nation. Decades of interaction with colonists and colonial officials had taught Creeks that their counterparts found negotiating with representatives of dozens of communities and clans

tedious. They realized that Europeans and Euro-Americans wanted figures that could make and enforce agreements for a large number of people, and many Creeks began to play the part, even though they had no such authority to claim.

By the end of the eighteenth century, some Creeks took their engagement with European and Euro-American political concepts even further, and often found themselves on a parallel trajectory with the United States, then in their infancy as a sovereign nation. Both Creeks and Americans recognized that the international diplomatic system constructed by Europeans offered greater protections to peoples that had organized themselves into some form of centralized government. Both groups took steps to represent themselves as such, claiming rights and sovereign privileges accorded by the law of nations. Like many Americans, most Creeks wanted the benefits offered by the law of nations without having to cede local forms of sovereignty and autonomy to a larger government. These efforts forced Americans, Britons, and Spaniards alike to recognize certain elements of Creek power and sovereignty, even if those admissions did not amount to a full recognition of Creeks' rights as equals in a community of nations.

Other Creeks, most notably men like Alexander McGillivray and William McIntosh, sought to blend Euro-American ideas of statehood with indigenous Creek political forms. Like the Americans that led the drive toward more centralized government under the federal Constitution, these men actually sought to create a unitary Creek authority in the form of a national council. Ironically, while they sought such a body as a means to defend Creek political and territorial sovereignty, it only began to take hold as a product of the erosion of Creek political autonomy. The influence of American officials and traders, culminating in an American invasion during the War of

1812, proved decisive in shaping the political future of Creek country, strengthening and simultaneously using their power over the Creek National Council to exert greater authority over Creeks as a whole

During the 1810s, Creeks' external connections and ability to maintain sovereignty in the form of localized, town-based autonomy began to fade. However, these circumstances did not stop Creeks or their Seminole counterparts from continuing to pursue and maintain useful relationships with outsiders and defend their sovereign rights wherever they could. Likewise, the lessons learned by these communities throughout the eighteenth century, that engagement with the legal and political ideologies of outsiders could bring further rewards, remained with them. Throughout Indian Removal and the U.S. Civil War, all the way down to the termination era and the Cold War, Muskogee- and Hitchiti-speaking peoples responded to challenges by seeking useful relationships with outsiders and asserting their sovereignty in terms recognized by increasingly hegemonic Euro-American legal systems.

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### **EDUCATION**

#### **The College of William & Mary**

Ph.D. (U.S. History) Expected May 2016  
Advisor: Brett Rushforth  
Dissertation Title: "Muskogee Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763-1818"

#### **University of North Florida**

M.A. Jacksonville, Florida  
April 2010  
Major: History GPA: 4.0/4.0  
B.A. May 2008  
Majors: History, Spanish GPA: 3.86/4.0

### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

#### **The College of William & Mary**

#### **National Institute of American History & Democracy**

Instructor Williamsburg, Virginia  
2012 – 2013

#### **History Department**

Instructor Williamsburg, Virginia  
2012  
Graduate Teaching Assistant 2010 – 2011

#### **University of North Florida**

#### **History Department**

Graduate Teaching Assistant Jacksonville, Florida  
2008 – 2010  
Research Assistant 2007

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Articles**

“New Systems, Established Traditions: Governor James Grant’s Indian Policy, 1760-1771,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 93, no. 2 (Fall 2014), 133-166 (15,292 words)

“Bring Them What they Lack’: Spanish-Creek Exchange and Alliance-Making in a Maritime Borderland, 1763-1784,” *Early American Studies* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 36-67 (13,872 words)

### **Book Reviews**

Review of *Adventurism and Empire: The Struggle for Mastery in the Louisiana-Florida Borderlands*, by David Narrett, *Journal of the Early Republic* (in press, 980 words)

Review of *Slavery in Indian Country*, by Christina Snyder, *Journal of American Ethnic History* 33, no. 1 (Fall 2013), 117-119 (800 words)

### **Web-Based Publications**

“The Indian Frontier in British East Florida: Letters to Governor James Grant from Soldiers and Indian Traders at Fort St. Marks of Apalache, 1763-1784,” transcribed documents, Florida History Online, <http://www.floridahistoryonline.com> (2010)

“Synopsis of Official Spanish Correspondence Pertaining to Relations with the Yuchis Indians, 1771-1783,” transcribed and translated documents, *Florida History Online*, <http://www.floridahistoryonline.com> (2008)

## **FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS**

George Washington Fellow of the General Society of Colonial Wars (2015-16)

Provost’s Dissertation Fellowship, The College of William & Mary (2015-16)

Barra Dissertation Fellow, McNeil Center for Early American Studies (2014-15)

Charles H. Watts Memorial Fellow, John Carter Brown Library (2014-15)

Short-term Fellow, Huntington Library (2014-15)

Short-term Fellow, Newberry Library (2014-15, declined)

Fellow, David Library of the American Revolution (2013-14).

Recipient of John E. Selby Teaching Award, The College of William & Mary (2013)

Recipient of grant from the *Granaderos y Damas de Gálvez* to conduct research in Seville, Spain (2007)

## **PRESENTATIONS**

“Las continuas Tropas de hombres, mugeres, y niños que baxavan’: Creek Families and Diplomatic Networks in Havana and the Florida Gulf Coast, 1763-1805,” Ethnohistory Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, Nevada (November 4-8, 2015)

“An Imagined Empire: U.S. Cartography and the Trans-Appalachian West in the Early Republic,” John Carter Brown Library (July 8, 2015)

“‘They can neither help themselves nor us’: The Bahamas as a Place of Refuge in the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1812-1820”, Association of Caribbean Historians Annual Meeting, Nassau, Bahamas (May 17-22, 2015)

“‘The Lying Captain’: William Augustus Bowles and Diplomatic Utility of an Indian Poser,” Ethnohistory Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana (September 11-15, 2013)

“‘Father, think no more about the Spaniards’: Escochabé, Spanish Cuba, and Creek Anti-Colonial Strategies After the Seven Years' War, 1763-1781,” North American and Indigenous Studies Association Annual Meeting, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (June 13-15, 2013)

“Apalachee and Anti-Colonialism: How the Creeks Used Western Florida to Obstruct U.S. Expansion, 1783-1805,” Ethnohistory Annual Meeting, Springfield, Missouri (November 7-10, 2012)

“Cowetas and Cubans: A Creek Town’s Diplomatic Ties to the Spanish, 1763-83,” Florida Historical Society Annual Meeting, Pensacola, Florida (May 20-23, 2009)

## **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

Proficiency in Reading Sixteenth-Century Paleography, Spanish and English

## **COURSES TAUGHT**

U.S. History to 1877 (survey-level)

The Founding of Jamestown through the American Revolution (lower-level)

The American Revolution through the Civil War (lower-level)

## **LANGUAGES**

Spanish

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND ASSOCIATIONS**

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