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UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

CREEK CORRIDORS OF COMMERCE: CONVERGING EMPIRES, CULTURAL
ARBITRATION, AND THE RECOURSE OF GULF COAST TRADE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to interpret how the Upper Creeks used geographic corridors (i.e. rivers and overland paths) to the Gulf of Mexico to offset economic and military dominance from Carolina and Georgia during the eighteenth century. Not only did access to these channels assure their commercial and territorial integrity through the colonial and postcolonial periods, but they also facilitated and empowered specific lineages and factions among the Creeks in general. These special interest groups presented a confusing array of political alignment and counter-alignment that permitted the Creeks avenues to challenge the coercive effects of outside markets. This is not meant to suggest that the Creeks operated on an equal playing field with colonizing powers (though they oftentimes held advantages), or were immune to entangling arrangements such as alluring debt-credit cycles, alcoholism, military conquest, resource scarcity, or political manipulation. Instead, the Creeks demonstrated an acute awareness to changing circumstances and adjusted while still operating within a traditional cultural framework.

Their willingness to engage outside markets in creatively fluid ways, frustrated colonizing powers eager to recruit their undivided loyalty. Conventionally termed the Creek “policy of neutrality” was actually an intrinsic cultural characteristic that involved competing factions, families, and towns—each eagerly seeking their own respective beneficial interaction zones with outsiders. Contrary to some interpretations, Creek “neutrality” was not a well-organized and executed inter-town policy initiative that sought commercial arrangements from

multiple directions and sources, while simultaneously curbing Euro-American trade and territorial ambitions. Contrary evidence suggests that Euro-American efforts to effectively consolidate and manipulate trade and military alliances with these heterogeneous Creek communities were instead complicated by the autonomy of town, faction, and lineal support structures that each vied for connections to advantageously located channels of commercial activity among the various competing nation-states that colonized their peripheries.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The frontiers of colonial America were oftentimes fraught with contests over the meanings of space. Over the last quarter century, ethnographers have been tasked with answering questions about what defined these places; what groups or individuals lived in these zones of interaction and how did they adjust and react to one another; how did cross-cutting commercial and communication networks operate; did these places have boundaries, and if so, were these borders porous or insular? Tracking material exchanges and charting the adaptations that occurred from the dynamic interplay between Euro-Americans and the continent's indigenous inhabitants provides a perfect medium for ethnographers seeking to answer ponderous questions about the nature and scale of shared spaces and how these landscapes impacted core and peripheral populations. The current progression of historiographic literature permits scholars to utilize cross-disciplinary approaches to analyzing these spaces and better understand the motivations behind the actors that sought to control and manipulate these unique frontier settings. Controlling access to and exerting influence over hybridized zones of interaction created regions of geography where profound cultural transformations facilitated various political and economic strategies of survival from both Euro-Americans and Indians.

In the case of the Creeks, this was most clearly observed politically in what has been termed the "policy of neutrality." This culturally intrinsic political and economic characteristic was not without precedent and was utilized to great effect by other groups such as the Iroquois. Much like their Iroquoian counterparts, the Creeks enjoyed the benefits of their being located

between three imperial rivals. With cultural antecedents dating back to a coalescent past, the concept of “neutrality” perfectly exemplifies how frontiers were fluid places of fluctuating and ambiguous power. Explaining how and why this ambiguity existed requires the *longue durée* approach to Creek history—revealing how they used physical and cultural geography, amended traditional arrangements, and exploited structural cleavages extant within colonial societies to their collective advantage. Colonial societies likewise profited from the decentralized nature of Creek communities, aligning themselves with headmen pliable to their influence and control.

While a willingness to accept trade from multiple sources favored the Creeks collectively, this was not an organized inter-town policy per se, but reflective of their coalescent past and aided by geopolitical competition in the region. Throughout most of the eighteenth century, the Creeks successfully parried territorial ambitions from Euro-Americans while securing favorable trade terms for their respective communities. This reality came through an effective manipulation of the multiple meanings of shared space. This dissertation seeks to complicate colonial Southeastern history by dispelling the notion that contests in these places and instances were between monolithic cultural entities. Instead, competing segmentary groups or factions determined the tenor of these zones of interaction. The Creeks were not a unified society connected through a common language and history and contrary to the opinion of earlier “tribal” studies were a collection of special interest groups defined by town, clan, matrilineage, and factional affiliation. The same was true for colonial populations. Euro-American societies were complicated by many internal and external divisions on both a macro and micro-scale of assessment. Not simply defined as “British,” “French,” or “Spanish,” a multitude of competing groups and individuals vied against one another for perceived advantages. These divisions might involve rival colonial administrators, class structures, contending joint-stock companies,

individual traders in the field, or the post-Revolutionary realities of state and federal governments. Regardless of the source, political and economic advantages came through alignments between and among these different segmentary groups, usually at the expense of another.

The first stage of competitive geopolitical relations in the Southeast began in 1699 when the French established the colony of Louisiane along the north-central Gulf coast and continued until their subsequent departure in 1763 after suffering defeat during the French and Indian War. The French initially attempted to restrict the growth of the English colonies on the eastern seaboard with a chain of forts and trading posts running the length of the Mississippi Valley, linking Louisiane and New France in the distant north. This policy worked in conjunction with the formation of political and economic alliances with indigenous nations of the interior. The English countered this measure with cheaper, better quality, and more abundant trade goods in an effort to attract these same nations away from the French. Meanwhile, corporate kinship, reciprocity, and gift exchange governed Indian economies. These overlapping systems of economic interaction created unique geographies that did not always conform to the visions of colonial administrators.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the English possessed a clear trade advantage over their European rivals. This forced the French to strictly adhere to indigenous cultural protocols so as to nurture friendship and trust among Indian groups, while exciting those same group's fears of aggressive English settlement and trade activities. While French frontier stockades (such as Fort Toulouse among the Alabamas) posed little or no direct military threat to English operations in the Southeastern interior, these distant forts and trading posts served the marginalized colony of Louisiane as diplomatic stations and commercial centers of market orientation where the

profoundly transformative processes of creolization created new individual and factional identities among indigenous populations. The English also established hinterland trade depots and forts, but it was the frontier town of Augusta that ultimately shaped a space to suit their needs. The Creeks welcomed colonial competition for their affections. This encouragement brought many types of interactions throughout their long history of being geographically situated between multiple imperial entities. The purposeful location of centers of market activity near Creek towns (which were already adjacent to important communication and trade arteries) created regions where people interacted and exchanged goods, quickly blurring stark cultural differences in the process. At Fort Toulouse, the factional and familial affiliations often aligned with foreigners producing more conspicuous displays of interplay between segmental groups aiding a variety of cultural transformations in the neighboring Creek communities.

Soldier-traders intermarried with Indian women at or near these posts, producing interethnic offspring capable of manipulating and negotiating traditionally defined boundaries and group identities. While the attention given these métis offspring from their European fathers varied, some children received Western educations and learned the value and profit motives of Atlantic commerce by being employed as company or imperial agents. But rather than simply acculturating, children of mixed parentage oftentimes actively negotiated their identities in unique ways, utilized indigenous trade and diplomatic strategies, and sought access to foreign markets without allowing those same markets a coercive influence over them or their respective communities.

After the French and Spanish were removed from Mobile and Pensacola, the British brought organized and assertive commercial opportunities to the Gulf coast through an eagerness to engross the Southeastern deerskin trade and maintain order across frontier spaces. Many of the

Upper Creek towns had benefitted from a close relationship with the French due to their proximity and control over the lower reaches of the Alabama-Tombigbee river basin. Operating from an entirely different colonial scheme, the British quickly abandoned Fort Toulouse. When it became evident that they geographically encircled the Creeks, seemingly eliminating their ability to embrace competitive commercial arrangements from multiple sources, factional competition among the Upper Creeks escalated as leaders sought to balance the forces of social and cultural change with their desire for continuity and control. Ambitious Upper Creek headmen such as Emistisiguo at Little Tallassee and The Mortar of Okchai complicated the designs of British policymakers as they vied for market access and personal empowerment.

Part of the effort to trace the state, direction, and nature of Creek coping strategies during the colonial and post-colonial periods examines interpersonal and inter-communal relationships that ranged from political and commercial to fictive kinship and inter-marital. Connections between individuals and places characterize the frontier during the eighteenth century and are a productive way to account for developments in the North American Southeast. The varied nature of Creek communities and their locations at or near important market access points (i.e. junctions along overland paths and river courses) helped contribute to factional leadership figures that proved influential in navigating regional and town policy throughout the eighteenth century. This course involved utilizing the geography of trade, memories of past economic arrangements, and an adroit diplomatic awareness by Creek leaders of the role their communities played in the broader Atlantic world. The scope and scale of this understanding, however, likely varied among Creek headmen and the times in which they operated. Emistisiguo's success in triangulating the commercial and diplomatic influence of his town (Little Tallassee) via the southern corridor to Mobile and Pensacola was a necessary step in securing that community's place as the site of

future leadership figures.

As métis leadership (exemplified in this project by Alexander McGillivray) reached prominence after midcentury, knowledge in Creek land and resource value became more sophisticated and useful when trying to secure territorial integrity. Therefore, this dissertation will additionally examine how McGillivray's métis leadership used western culture and ideology as a form of strategic engagement with Euro-American societies, successfully competing with these governments on their own terms. Although his lifestyle and mannerisms appeared radically different than Creek leaders from earlier decades, McGillivray's cultural frame of reference never separated him from his Creek identity. Through the utilization of specific geographic trade corridors to Mobile and Pensacola, the Creeks before, during, and after McGillivray, successfully adapted to changing circumstances in culturally intrinsic ways. By exploring colonial and postcolonial eras, one can outline long-term trends and understand how inherent factional leadership defined and redefined Creek relationships with Euro-Americans as a means to secure their communities and confound outsider territorial and commercial threats in the region for over a century.

McGillivray's establishment of a lineally connected *talofa* community on the extreme southwestern corner of Creek country, promised to bring wealth and influence not only to himself, but his family and maternal descendents. The métis settlements at Tensaw provided fertile ground for crops, abundant acreage for raising livestock, accommodation, acculturation and an easy access to Spanish markets in Pensacola and Mobile. Near the confluence of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers, Tensaw country was ideally suited as a natural commercial way station for trade moving to and from the Creek interior. The Spanish encouraged Creek settlement in Tensaw country as mounting concerns over growing American influence in the

region threatened their tenuous hold on West Florida. Virtually denying new American immigrants commercial access to the ports of Mobile and Pensacola, while granting those same rights and privileges to the Tensaw métis, angered both American outsiders in the nearby Tombigbee district and Upper Creek towns of the interior that claimed purview over the region. Spain hoped to regulate both the Tombigbee and Alabama waterways in an effort to not only strengthen their interests in Florida, but also in New Orleans and along the Mississippi River.

McGillivray's simultaneous dealings with the Spanish, the state of Georgia, the United States, and other rival Creek factional leaders assured the exclusiveness of his lucrative southerly trade in deerskins and beef. Though his influence waned considerably after the ratification of the Treaty of New York in 1790, McGillivray's community of interrelated métis farmers remained critically important factors in the reshaping of the social and political landscape of the postcolonial Southeast by playing an enormously important role in the ensuing Creek War (1813-1814). Not completely Creek or Euro-American, the Tensaw métis were a unique enclave where several distinct cultural traditions existed. Selective intermarriage between Creek women and commercially savvy French, Spanish, and Anglo-American traders also assured the region's continued prosperity. All of these different groups vied for a measure of control in Tensaw. Creek kinship ties decided the direction of the settlement's development. Those related to or closely allied with Alexander McGillivray benefited from his shrewd diplomatic strategies. Competition among non-Creeks for trade goods in the region only served to expand McGillivray's ambitions.

This heterogeneous community utilized its location and its international connections to mitigate changing economic times. Its efforts to counter waves of American settlers with economic development influenced future struggles over removal. By looking at the economy of the Tensaw, its inhabitant's relations with their Anglo-American neighbors in the Tombigbee

settlements, and its dealings with the Europeans in the nearby ports of Mobile and Pensacola, a new dimension to the incipient cotton economy of the nineteenth-century South is thus revealed.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Spanish *entrada* into the southeast during the sixteenth century actively engaged cultures belonging to what archaeologists have termed the Mississippian Period (900 CE – 1700 CE) through a series of military expeditions meant to exploit and collect human laborers and mineral wealth from the continent's interior. Chroniclers who both preceded and accompanied Hernando de Soto's infamous expedition from 1539-42, coupled with data collected from archaeological excavations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, allow contemporary scholars to envision and partially understand how these large, complex civilizations functioned before contact with Europeans. Their decline and the void they created in their collapse experienced periodic migrations, linguistic transformations, pandemic disease, and warfare.¹

At their height, however, these powerful agricultural chiefdoms contained plazas, temples atop earthen mounds and towns consisting of wattle-and-daub structures protected by large wooden palisades. Far-flung trade routes between inland towns and coastal peoples exchanged exotic goods like salt, premium cutting stone, and sea shells for decoration. Social rank governed the structure of their society. Semi-divine, hereditary chieftains or a local ruling elite administered groups of towns that ranged in size from hundreds to thousands of people. In the most centralized polities, rulers primarily performed a judiciary role and were exempt from the

¹ For the most complete and current analysis of the two centuries following sustained European contact see the assemblage of contributions in: Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall ed., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 2009).

manual labor that constructed, maintained, and fed Mississippian societies. A form of servitude governed commoners, and trade surpluses presented as tribute to the ruling elite. Archaeological evidence supports the claim that resource surpluses also supported artisan and craft specialists.² Chiefdoms varied in size from simple to complex, and while not a single culture or people, the Mississippian societies appear to have been relatively stable until the early sixteenth century.³

Spanish inroads among Mississippian cultures caused widespread disruption and dislocation, but the nature and scale of this foray remains in question among scholars. Military expeditions gave way to formal settlement in the late sixteenth century and access to European goods and weapons became the overarching motivation for southeastern peoples seeking to protect and enhance their way of life. European settlement in Florida, Virginia, and the Carolinas provoked wholesale adjustments to many conventional native practices. English slaving in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries coupled with the diffusion of disease among vulnerable populations characterize much of the disintegration in the immediate post-contact period. Scholars wrangle about the timing and impact of these calamities, but agree that they resulted in the gradual coalescence of the native South into the principle Indian societies European colonizers encountered in the coming centuries.⁴

² Richard W. Yerkes, "Microwear, Microdrills, and Mississippian Craft Specialization," *American Antiquity* 48 (July 1983): 499-518.

³ Debate about what caused the collapse of Mississippian chiefdoms rages within the scholarly community. For more in depth discussions on the character of these societies see: Patricia Galloway, ed., *The Southeast Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Jon Muller, *Mississippian Political Economy* (New York: Plenum Press, 1997); Marvin T. Smith, *Coosa: The Rise and Fall of a Southeastern Mississippian Chiefdom* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); Robin A. Beck, "Consolidation and Hierarchy: Chiefdom Variability in the Mississippian Southeast," *American Antiquity* 68 (Oct. 2003): 641-661; Timothy R. Pauketat, *The Ascent of Chiefs: Cahokia and Mississippian Politics in Native America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994). For information relating to De Soto's expedition: Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1997).

⁴ John E. Worth, "Late Spanish Military Expeditions in the Interior Southeast, 1597-1628," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, ed. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994) 104-124.

An ever-growing and maturing genre of historiography focuses on the aftermath of Native American contact with Europeans. The ecological and material change that caused population decline in what Alfred Crosby termed the “Columbian Exchange” fashioned the world where many historical Indian peoples emerged.⁵ Disease, commercial expansion, and settlement often worked in tandem. Newer scholarship, however, stresses Indian agency in the face of these antagonistic forces. Indians appear as major players and resisters—not merely pitiable victims—but active participants in making choices that impacted their collective destinies. Through migrations, an evolving commercial discourse, and the formation of alliances through fictive kinship relations, native groups learned to negotiate connections with a nascent capitalist world until the use of coercive measures (such as with warfare) overpowered their societies—annihilating some completely—while inducing others to amalgamate and adjust.⁶

Long recognized as consequences of contact, Southeastern native societies only recently attracted theories about the transformation processes from the Mississippian to the Historic period. Scholarship since the 1980s made the first serious efforts to examine their political and cultural genesis. While Europeans introduced numerous lifestyle changes to native North American communities, disease exchange arguably wreaked the most physical damage. In examining its effects on Florida’s Indians, Henry F. Dobyns in *Their Number Become Thinned* (1983) argues that contagious diseases obliterated southeastern indigenous populations and caused widespread societal collapse immediately after contact.⁷ A more recent survey of the

⁵ Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: the Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

⁶ For native groups enduring the immediate stages after contact, survival becomes an issue of grades and degrees. While Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Choctaws clearly had cultural, political, and economic antecedents that stretched back to the southeastern chiefdoms, not all societies survived the combination of violence and disease. The Apalachees, Calusas, Timucuans, Guales, and Powhatans had virtually vanished by the end of the eighteenth century. John F. Scarry, “The Late Prehistoric Southeast,” in *The Forgotten Centuries*, 31-32.

⁷ Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1983).

literature measuring the consequences and timing of foreign pathogens has evolved from simply examining the critical repercussions of illnesses to elucidating how outbreaks worked in conjunction with, and were aided by other destructive forces like the slave trade. Comparably annihilative was the traffic in human commodities. Alan Galloway's seminal, *The Indian Slave Trade* (2002), discusses the trade's many dimensions, and how it helped sustain a burgeoning British presence in North America. Just as new germs in the sixteenth and seventeenth century unleashed catastrophic damage on indigenous communities from the Middle Atlantic colonies to the Lower Mississippi Valley, Galloway's work emphasizes how the pervasive reality of violence sparked by the Indian slave trade reshaped the native South. To avoid becoming slaves themselves, many Indian communities collaborated with Europeans and engaged these types of markets and practices. Once the French were firmly established on the Gulf coast after 1700, many inland societies became proxies to competing European nation states—warring against one another to advance the imperial military and commercial agenda of their European allies.⁸

In an attempt to unite these two powerful post-contact themes, Paul Kelton masterfully illustrates how disease and slave raids worked in tandem in his *Epidemics and Enslavement* (2007). Kelton affirms the effect of disease on vulnerable populations, postulating that the catastrophic effects of pestilence came at the end of the seventeenth century, not earlier (immediately after contact) as argued by Dobyns. The timeline is important for Kelton's premise as he argues that disease was facilitated by the overland trade routes taken by European and Indian slavers. With this approach, and keeping timing a central feature in his work, Kelton challenges conventional wisdom concerning the spread of epidemics from being a general

⁸ Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

tendency on susceptible populations to periodic events with singular results in specific times and places.⁹

Applying these positions and conceptualizations concerning individual time periods and regional spaces (each with unique results) is a series of essays meant to provide a conduit for future explorations in the field. Robbie F. Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall's *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone* (2009) is an assemblage of contributions that move beyond simply chronicling the adverse effects of disease, enslavement, and warfare, and instead, outline how individual native communities coped with chaos and learned to thrive. The nature of the work is vast and encompasses many time periods, isolated events, and specific Southeastern indigenous groups. For the purposes of this essay, however, discussion will be primarily limited to the Creeks. As one of the most populous and influential of these "shattered" communities, the Creek Indians occupy two major chapters in Ethridge and Hall's book: Ned J. Jenkins' essay, "Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050 – 1700 CE" and Shuck-Hall's "Alabama and Couthatta Diaspora and Coalescence in the Mississippian Shatter Zone." Both Hall and Jenkins articulate cutting-edge theories regarding the many adaptive strategies adopted by the proto-Creeks. Jenkins, like Vernon Knight and Charles Fairbanks before him,¹⁰ employs archaeological evidence to determine how artifact distribution in southern river valleys reveals the sources,

⁹ Paul Kelton, "The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, 1696-1700: The Region's First Major Epidemic?" in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760* ed. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2002) 21-38; Paul Kelton, "Shattered and Infected: Epidemics and the Origins of the Yamasee, 1696-1715," in *Mapping the Mississippi Shatter Zone*, 312-332; Paul Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492-1715* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska press, 2007).

¹⁰ The early ethnohistorical contributions by Charles Fairbanks of the proto-Creeks are myriad. A sampling include: Charles Fairbanks, "Creek and Pre-Creek," in *The Archaeology of Eastern United States* ed. J.B. Griffin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953) 285-300; Fairbanks, "Some Problems in the Origin of Creek Pottery," *The Florida Anthropologist* 11 (1958): 53-64. For assessments by Vernon J. Knight Jr.: "The Formation of the Creeks," in Hudson and Tesser's, *The Forgotten Centuries*, 373-392; Knight, "Ocmulgee Fields Culture and the Development of Creek Ceramics," in David J. Hally ed. *Ocmulgee Archaeology, 1936-1986* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994) 181-189.

nature, and extent of Creek coalescence. Meanwhile, Shuck-Hall shows how coalescence and migration were intrinsic cultural traits that aided Creek communities in their centuries-long adaptive efforts.¹¹

The nuances that cemented the Creeks together are illusive and impossible to define without a command of archaeological, anthropological, and historical sources. A cross-pollination of disciplines often complicates terminologies. The name “Creeks” is often misleading and can refer to a language, people, nation, or confederacy. Oftentimes though, it defines all these traits, and while thinking of this diverse group as one “nation,” and as having a collective ethnicity might suffice for later developments in Creek history (post-eighteenth century), it is important to understand that when Europeans first encountered these groups, they were not a seamless community, but a collection of towns united through custom, language, and kinship. This reality complicates the narrative of most tribal histories seeking to classify the Creeks as one people. More appropriately, this reality diminishes the usefulness of tribal histories as an acceptable means to understanding coalescent societies. Additionally, scholarship measuring the Creeks’ multifaceted interactions with indigenous neighbors pursues broader themes, essential in discussions relating to cultural and environmental transformations and economic exchanges.

The Spanish first opened southern trade corridors with the interior native southeastern peoples, supplying them with goods like iron tools and glass beads in exchange for access to raw materials like deerskins and food meant to sustain a colonial presence in La Florida. Unlike the English and Dutch to the north, however, the Spanish limited or outright prohibited the trade in

¹¹ Ned Jenkins, “Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050 – 1700 CE,” and Sheri Marie Shuck-Hall “Alabama and Couthatta Diaspora and Coalescence in the Mississippian Shatter Zone” in Ethridge and Shuck-Hall ed. *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone* 188-249 and 250-271 respectively.

firearms to Indians living and trading near their missions, inviting better armed groups such as the Westos to prey on them. Captives from these smaller nations were transported to West Indian sugar plantations as slaves. Through much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the former Mississippian chiefdoms of several hundred years previous existed only in scattered remnants. The Westos migration into the Southeast (earlier victims themselves, escaping the torment suffered from Iroquois Mourning Wars) proved pivotal in the coalescence and formation of the Chickasaws, Choctaws, Cherokees, and Creeks. By the 1680s, these formerly broken and dispersed societies commenced to create a complex political dynamic that would present real challenges to Euro-Americans seeking to expand commercial and territorial control over the continent's hinterland.¹²

New river valley communities emerged from the “shatter zone” of the seventeenth century. Linguistically similar with a common Mississippian background and desperate to escape marauding Indian slavers from the north, Muskogean speaking peoples coalesced to form a confederation of autonomous towns in the Alabama, Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Chattahoochee river valleys. Carolinian traders established a post near the Ochese-hatchee River (present-day Ocmulgee River in central Georgia) in the 1670s and first referred to the native peoples, who migrated to this center of market activity from the Chattahoochee River Valley, as the “Ochese Creeks.” Colonial correspondence confirms that this name was shortened a few decades later to simply “Creeks,” a term that would soon encompass the numerous, decentralized Indian towns

¹² Eric E. Browne, “Caryinge Away Their Corne and Children,” *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, 104-114; Eric E. Browne, *The Westo Indians Slave Traders of the early Colonial South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005); John E. Worth, *The Struggle for the Georgia Coast: An Eighteenth Century Spanish Retrospective on Guale and Mocama* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1995; distributed by the University of Georgia Press).

on the Alabama, Coosa, Tallapoosa, Ocmulgee, and Chattahoochee rivers.¹³ In December 1789, William Bartram noted in a reply to a query that, “*Cricks* is a name given them by the English traders formerly, when they first began to trade amongst them...they observed that in their conversation, when they had occasion to mention the name of the Indian nation, if any of the Indians were present, they discovered evident signs of disgust, as supposing the traders were plotting some mischief against their nation, etc., so that they gave them this nickname, *Cricks*.”¹⁴

The Alabamas, Hitchitis, Coushattas, and Abeikas welcomed other related language groups of Tawasas, Yuchis and Siouan speaking Shawnees over the course of two centuries. By 1700, they formed dozens of autonomous towns near waterways and overland trade routes, and quickly proved themselves lethally efficient hunters, slavers, and voracious consumers of manufactured goods. Town placement along major trade paths ensured their role as the Southeast’s chief military brokers and suppliers of raw materials to burgeoning Atlantic world markets.

The processes of coalescence were gradual and concentrated in three core areas of the present-day states of Alabama and Georgia—the Tallapoosas located on the Tallapoosa River, the Apalachicolas on the southern Chattahoochee River, and the Abeikas on the Coosa River. The English divided the Creeks regionally—the branch that formed towns along the high, protective banks of the lower Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers were designated the Upper Creeks due to their position “up” the trade route from Charlestown, while those on the lower Chattahoochee, Ocmulgee, and Flint river systems were called the Lower Creeks. These regional distinctions

¹³ Verner Crane, “Origin of the Name of the Creek Indians,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 5 (December 1918) 339-342.

¹⁴ William Bartram, “Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians, 1789, with Prefatory and Supplementary Notes” E.G. Squier, *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*, vol. 3, part I (New York: American Ethnological Society, 1853) 11.

were important to Euro-American chroniclers, policy makers, agents, and traders, but would have been alien concepts to the sociopolitical ethos of the average eighteenth-century Creek Indian.

This is not to suggest that the Creeks did not adopt European phraseology though. The Lower and Upper Creek towns recognized a common identity in one another through shared origin myths, kinship ties, and persistent threats from outsiders. Paths (both water and land) between Creek towns helped maintain the tenuous bonds of kinship and clan governance that proved effective at maintaining their sovereignty throughout the colonial period. And while both the Lower and Upper Creek peoples acknowledged a common identity, they also recognized distinctions through independent policy directives. Neither party sought to directly control the other. One Okfuskee headman confessed: “they [Lower Creeks] do not belong to us, they are at a great distance from this land, and as it were another People....”¹⁵ Kinship and common purposes overlapped these divisions, however. Historian Sheri M. Shuck-Hall classified the alliance as “fleeting” and not a formatted or predictable relationship. It could and often did change according to the political winds, but despite this reality the unpredictable nature of Creek governance actually worked in their strategic favor when trying to pawn one Euro-American power off another.¹⁶ Communication, either through Indian runners or talks with colonial representatives, informed Upper and Lower towns of the other’s decisions, but there was no unified tribal council or governing structure to enforce a unified position on matters during the colonial period. As the eighteenth century progressed and European competition in North America intensified, Creek leadership transitioned from town autonomy characterizing

¹⁵ *BPRO-SC*, 13:71 “Enclosures to a Letter from President of the Council of South Carolina: For Major David Durham, Commander in Chief at Fort Moore by John Herbert,” June 13, 1728.

¹⁶ Sheri Marie Shuck-Hall, *Journey to the West: The Alabama and Couthatta Indians* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2008) 89.

governance and policy, to one where collections of appointed Lower and Upper headmen assembled at their respective towns to form regional councils for broad-ranging accords, especially regarding land encroachment and trade. Pressing concerns such as these or the arrival of a colonial emissary were usually what necessitated an assembly of this caliber.¹⁷

Before regional councils orchestrated collective responses to trade opportunities or outside threats, individual town headmen largely dealt directly with Europeans without consulting peers, or other clan leaders in neighboring towns. The actions of particular headman might have far-reaching ramifications on one or several groups of towns. The Lower Creek Town of Coweta was a prime example of this. “Emperor” Brims and a series of biological and handpicked successors orchestrated antagonistic policies against the English for years after the Yamasee War (1715). Either through overreach of his assumed political clout in the region, or poor judgment in his belief that the Spanish could meet the material demands of his people (male and female), Brims was forced to confront an English trade embargo on Coweta and its affiliate towns. The failure to secure valued necessities weakened Coweta’s influence and opened opportunities for trade with Creek peoples farther west (i.e. the Upper Creeks).¹⁸ A Creek raid or seemingly covert trade mission to a rival European power from one town might evoke curiosity or concern from a Euro-American perspective, and responses from neighboring town headmen could range from supportive to condemnatory.

The surviving generations of the collapsed Southeastern chiefdoms re-created their world within these new communities, salvaging a few fragments of Mississippian culture in the process. Mississippian concepts and values like blood revenge, matrilineal customs, reciprocity,

¹⁷ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels, the Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln and London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1993) 140-142.

¹⁸ For an in-depth look at Creek neutrality expressed through the behavior and policy directives of Emperor Brims see: Steven C. Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation: 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

and town councils proved versatile to an emerging capitalist order. For instance, the protocol relating to reciprocity with respect to gift giving proved adaptable and necessary for Europeans willing to engage in trade and diplomacy with Indian peoples. Gifts were then redistributed among the clans and choice individuals by tribal headmen. One's success in acquiring valuable trade goods assured one's position in Creek society. Gifts, and other exchange networks, had profound symbolism for southeastern indigenous peoples. While gifts might solidify a bond or interpersonal relationship, trade functioned within notions of redistribution and satisfied a particular resource or product deficiency. But formal trade was permissible only after the performance of the ceremonial rituals and the arrangement of an alliance. While groups like the French and Spanish initially operated within this framework to achieve the allegiance of one nation, the English simply used the threat of a trade embargo on groups like the Creeks to negotiate with factional leaders most agreeable to their overtures.¹⁹ Spanish and French regimes were much more inclusive of Indian polities than their English counterparts to the east. Except when force was absolutely necessary to exact retaliation such as with the Natchez Wars, or in the Spanish led counterattacks following the early slave raids into La Florida, Franco-Hispano administrators on the whole sought to incorporate native groups in grand imperial strategies rather than view them as ephemeral to their interests.

In the same spirit as the French, who awarded medals and commissions to native headmen whom they expected to advance their agendas, English commissioners instructed their agents "to ingage [sic] and induce them [the Creeks] to adhere to our Interest" In 1718, South Carolina officials appointed Colonel Theophilus Hastings to encourage Creek leaders in the

¹⁹ Christopher L. Miller and George R. Hamell, "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade," *Journal of American History* 73 (September 1986): 311-328; Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003) 25, 198-199.

pursuit of renegade Yamasees, who were still waging a relentless and costly guerilla campaign against many outlying plantations. Many Lower Creek towns claimed blood relations with the Yamasees, who had by 1718 taken refuge in Spanish Florida, further complicating matters. Nevertheless, Hastings was given “six blank Commissions” to be “granted and delivered only to such of the Head Men as shall be voluntarily chosen and recommended by the Indians themselves,” revealing useful insights into how the English extracted loyalty and how native leadership moieties functioned.²⁰

Creek family and clan structure, were and remain, a basic component of their sociopolitical organization. Eighteenth century Creeks were matrilineal. Children were blood relatives of their mother’s family with the father having little direct responsibility for his own child’s education or upbringing. Rather it was the uncle, or mother’s brother, who was responsible for the care of his sister’s children. Family lineage also was an essential societal component where related groups of women and children performed domestic tasks such as planting and harvesting crops. Meanwhile, men occupied the spheres of hunting, trade, war, and diplomacy.

Clans were collections of matrilineages and did not necessarily consist of blood related individuals. Clan members traced their connection not to a common human ancestor, but to a totemic entity or naturally occurring phenomenon like “wind” (i.e. the Wind clan). Sacred female animals, insects, or plants were associated with these particular clans and became symbols to be respected and protected. Clans were also ranked, meaning certain clans, like the Wind clan, enjoyed an almost aristocratic status and had members in nearly every Creek town. Clan members married outside their clans, creating broad ranging kinship bonds, which assisted in the

²⁰ William McDowell, *Journals of the Commissioners of the Indian Trade, September 20, 1710 – August 29, 1718*, 310-311.

assimilation of coalescent peoples. As an essential component of Creek society, clans also provided a stabilizing force through the enforcement of laws, codes of conduct, and the enforcement of punishments.²¹

Euro-Americans had a difficult time grappling with many features of Creek society. Contrasting notions of Creek kinship were no different. Euro-Americans came from a patriarchal-bilateral system. This made for some confusion. For example, the term “father” was a symbol of authority for Euro-Americans, but not for southeastern Indians. Creeks were equally confused about how to transact business with outsiders (unrelated people) on an equal plane. The adoption of outsiders as clan members helped Creeks better understand their mutual obligations. Apart from adoption (which rarely occurred between Euro-American males and Creeks), marriage acted as a means for Euro-American men to access privileged positions within Creek society. Euro-Americans seeking meaningful trade or diplomatic bonds within the Creek world wedded Creek women who still lived within the *talwa* (town) structure. In these types of arrangements, the Creeks established the conditions of trade and diplomacy through an adherence to matrilineal customs. Creek women may have permitted access to lucrative commercial opportunities for Euro-American husbands, but they still held rigidly tight to rights of divorce, property, and children.²²

Outsiders (specifically Euro-American traders) entering Creek communities violated this cultural framework to the possible detriment of their career or life. Due to their questionable trading practices and moral scruples, however, many backcountry men proved difficult to control for both colonial administrators and Creek town headmen alike, despite the inherent dangers in their work. The fact that many leading characters dominating this trade shared a common

²¹ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 109-111.

²² Ethridge, 74-75, 109-113.

Scottish ancestry garners considerable attention in numerous studies of the colonial Southeast. Some interpretations rationalize the prominent Scottish role in the trade as owing to shared cultural and historical traits between the Creeks and the Scots tradesmen, but this was unlikely the cause. The commanding Scottish presence in the southern deerskin trade likely stemmed from their marginalized status in the eighteenth-century South. Opportunities in the trade offered respite from economic discrimination and reduced political options in many of the coastal port towns of South Carolina and Georgia.²³

Children from unions between these traders and Creek mothers usually observed Creek customs, especially with respect to matrilineality. Today termed “métis” from the French Canadian for “mixed blood,” these offspring often straddled the cultural and social world of their parents and provided an important leadership axis in Creek politics at the end of the eighteenth century. These mixed households represented a marvelous hybridization of gender roles, labor practices, familial arrangements, and contrary conceptions of property ownership. By 1790, métis leaders like Alexander McGillivray dominated the political and economic landscape in many Creek communities.²⁴

The Creek town (*talwa*), like clan or family affiliation, was also a basic social unit of one’s communal identity. Creeks often identified themselves first by their clan affiliation and then by their town. Rivers often divided these communities with dwellings on one side and fields

²³ Edward J. Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray, Indian Trader: The Shaping of the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992) 16-17; David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607-1785* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994) 153-167; Harvey H. Jackson, *Lachlan McIntosh and the Politics of Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979) 1-4; William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola: The University of West Florida, 1986) 15-30.

²⁴ Kathleen DuVal, “Indian Intermarriage and Métissage in Colonial Louisiana,” *WMQ* 65, no. 2 (April, 2008): 267-304. For information relating to the formation of the Indian slave trade and the role native women played in forging cross-cultural bonds see: Brett Rushforth, “‘A Little Flesh We Offer You’: The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France,” *WMQ* 60, no. 4 (October, 2003): 777-808; Juliana Barr, “From Captives to Slaves: Commodifying Indian Women in the Borderlands,” *Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (June 2005): 19-46.

on the other. Domestic dwellings consisted of a compound of several structures. The size and number of buildings depended on the number of family members. Typically, a domestic compound included an open-air pavilion in one side (or a summer house), a cooking area on another (enclosed or open), a two-storied storage structure for skins and pantry items, and a lodging house for sleeping. The final building was a basic four sided wattle-and-daub structure where the occupants slept and stored miscellaneous personal items. By the nineteenth century (and certainly by removal), however, most Creeks were mimicking Euro-American-style log cabins.²⁵ Pressure from Europeans to raise livestock, develop western concepts of private property, and adopt individual farming techniques helped disperse many communities over a much wider area with some family compounds several miles from the town center in later years. Creek towns in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries exhibited this type of extended settlement pattern.

A rectangular public courtyard about 300 yards long was a common feature in Creek towns. Public buildings surrounded this distinctive plaza. A commanding wattle-and-daub rotunda (or “hot house”) stood opposite at one end. The plaza ground served as a location for variety of activities. It was a place for Creeks to socialize, barter, and politick. Additionally, this open ground served as a venue for ceremonial rites, rituals, and sports like the popular ancient Mississippian game of chunky, and another simply known as the ball game. Travelers and emissaries also recorded seeing trophy poles on the four corners of the town square, furnished with the skulls and scalps of slain enemies.²⁶ Creek towns varied in size and could number in the hundreds. Euro-American chroniclers often cataloged a particular town’s population based on the number of “gunmen” or “warriors” it could muster.

²⁵ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 74-75.

²⁶ Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976)408-426.

Distinguishing Creek communities by their diasporic origins is complicated. How Creek towns cooperated, communicated, shared common histories and oral traditions, and traded with one another and outsiders is what arguably confuses a narrative seeking to understand them as a collective body. As diasporic peoples, the Creeks experienced the push and pull that prompts large-scale migrations—voluntary movement towards more stable or resource wealthy environments, and involuntary pushes from external threats. In the process of coalescence, a fairly diverse collection of native peoples slowly assembled and negotiated terms of coexistence. Fictive kinship relations soon governed internal and external bonds. The Creeks' migration history is precisely the characteristic that aided the establishment of regional exchange networks, and assured their sovereignty through contravening policies from a diverse assortment of special interest groups, or factions.

Movement encompassed an integral feature of Creek cultural and political life and when other refugee groups sought to join them, they were accepted. As late as the 1730s, the Natchez, escaping wars of extermination with the French, flocked to Creek population centers eager for a more stable environment. They retained their identity as Natchez but became incorporated into the Creek community. Intermarriage oftentimes cemented alliances for these coalescent groups. If willing to accept the established customs and live peaceably and cooperatively among their neighbors, refugees could be assimilated, attain their distinct identity, and be allowed to intermarry and build towns of their own. Conversely, some groups chose to leave. Factions later known as the Seminoles famously removed themselves over a period of several decades in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a result, they forged new alliances with other

Indians and former slaves in the swamps of Florida.²⁷ Fusion and migration complicate the Creek story. Defining what constituted Creek political organization is difficult for scholars who might be eager to assign labels or make sense of a “Creek Nation” pre se. Groups joined and left at various times in Creek history, obscuring a recognizable political structure to colonizing Europeans as well. Termed a “confederacy” by the English, the loosely organized towns that met early traders in central Georgia in the 1670s were of an ambiguous nature, but soon captivated regional colonial interest and became a centerpiece in the international struggle to control southeastern North America.

Some of the first students of the Creeks emerged in the figures of early Euro-American travelers and historians such as James Adair, Benjamin Hawkins, Albert Pickett, and William Bartram. Of these, Hawkins understandably left the most extensive accounts. Benjamin Hawkins was appointed General Superintendent of Indian Affairs by George Washington in 1796. He was responsible for all Indian nations south of the Ohio River, making him the principal agent to the Creeks. Hawkins located the Creek Agency and his home in central Georgia. He studied Creek dialects, customs, and was adopted into a Creek clan. His informative *Sketch of Creek Country* (1799) and his *Letters, 1796-1806* demonstrates a concerned eye for detail unique for his time. Through his descriptions of the natural and cultural environment of the southeast, Hawkins

²⁷ Jenkins, “Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050 – 1700 CE,” in Ethridge and Shuck-Hall ed. *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*; Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 22-31, 74-75, 190-111, 113, 173-174; “Introduction,” in Gregory Waselkov’s *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006) 1-15; For an analysis of how these diasporic communities may have coalesced and perfected diplomacy to curb the strength of more powerful nations see Shuck-Hall’s, *Journey to the West*, and Robin A. Beck’s “Catawba Coalescence and the Shattering of the Carolina Piedmont, 1540 – 1645 CE,” in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*.

provides contemporaries a better understanding of American-Creek relations and the challenges both parties faced in the coming century.²⁸

The works of James Adair and William Bartram are also useful to ethnographers, historians, and anthropologists. While Adair's *History of the American Indians* (1775) is a flawed attempt to prove Native Americans were decedents of the lost tribes of Israel, the account still reveals a great deal about the perspective of Indian traders operating in the Southeast during the crucial years after 1750. His experience in the deerskin trade provides valuable information on many Southeastern nations, giving ethnohistorians a glimpse into the material culture and commercial activity of these peoples. Many scholars consider his fixation on linking Indians with the ancient Hebrews a serious liability, but as Charles Hudson aptly states, "theories that seem thoroughly discredited today may have in the past helped men understand what they would otherwise not have understood."²⁹

William Bartram periodically lived and traveled among the Creeks and Cherokees from 1765 to 1791. Foremost among American naturalists, Bartram was a gifted scientist of the time and observed Southeastern Indian culture and political institutions with the same keen insight he devoted to chronicling plant and animal life. William Bartram compiled his *Travels* from 1773 to 1776, but published the book a decade and a half later. While among the pantheon of great American literary works of the early national period, Bartram unfortunately neglected to portray the political turbulence of the coming Revolution in the places he visited. Readers are left to wonder how these events impacted the region's native occupants. His experience as a social

²⁸ Benjamin Hawkins, *Benjamin Hawkins: Letters, Journals and Writings*, Vol. 1-2. edited by C. L. Grant (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1980); Benjamin Hawkins, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins* edited by Thomas Foster II (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2003).

²⁹ James Adair, *Adair's History of the American Indians*, edited by Samuel Cole Williams (New York: Argonaut Press LTD., 1966); Charles Hudson, "James Adair as Anthropologist," *Ethnohistory* 24 (Fall 1977) 326.

activist and Quaker seems to have influenced his decision to depict the southeastern landscape and its inhabitants in the most positive light, obscuring what must have been fascinating details related to the Revolution's imprint on the Gulf South region.³⁰

Early nineteenth-century historian, Albert J. Pickett, in his *History of Alabama* (1851) examines (in part) the Creeks, their political institutions, and how they related to European and American governments. Pickett's success as a planter allowed him enough leisure time to pursue a research project of this scale. This inroad into Alabama's early cultural history was spurred by a popular interest in the Creek War of 1813-14. Arriving in central Alabama in 1818 at the age of eight, Pickett grew up around his father's trading post and in the process came into contact with many eastern Indian leaders and traders from among the last generation before removal. An amateur historian with a limited knowledge of many facets of Creek public life, Pickett nonetheless provides contemporary scholars with invaluable oral testimonies from Creeks and Americans who participated in the violent events preceding Indian removal in the 1830s.³¹

This sampling of early analyses relating to the Creeks is consistent with histories by scholars from the national and antebellum periods. Their treatment of native customs, observed events, and reliance on oral accounts proves an invaluable contribution to later scholarship.

Although gifted writers with a passion for their subjects, they held certain prejudices with respect

³⁰ William Bartram, *Travels* ed. Mark Van Doren, (New York: Dover, 1928); William Bartram, "Observations," In *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*. Bartram's various writings have spawned a series of works dedicated to his life and research. More recently, Kathryn E. Holland Braund and Gregory Waselkov's edited *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), Francis Harper's edited *The Travels of William Bartram: Naturalist Edition* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), and Edward Cashin's *William Bartram and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000) rely on Bartram's work as a supplement to modern analyses relating to southeastern Indians and their environs.

³¹ Albert James Pickett, *History of Alabama, and incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi, from the Earliest Period* (1851; reprint, Tuscaloosa: Willo Publishing Co., 1962). Information related to Pickett's life is found in his work dealing with some of the first American migrants to Alabama, 439-440; also Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 188-189.

to sex, race, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Indian perspectives during this time are virtually nonexistent. Historians in the years after the American Revolution struggled to reconcile the treatment of nonwhite groups with the young nation's supposed embrace of notion of freedom and equality. The undeveloped academic structures and methodologies aiding future explorations into native life were also many decades distant.³²

By the end of the nineteenth century, a few avant-garde scholars were employing cross-disciplinary methods to uncover the linguistic origins and cultural characteristics of many Southeastern Indian peoples. Chief among these was ethnographer Albert S. Gatschet. In his 1884 monograph, *A Migration Legend of the Creek Indians*, Gatschet utilized ethnographic and historical data to produce a cultural interpretation of the Creek people. Gatschet was one of the first Euro-Americans to recognize the complexity of the Creek town and clan structure. Rather than identifying his subjects as either Creeks or Muskogees, Gatschet argued that Creeks saw themselves as first belonging to autonomous towns occupied by strong families. He dismissed the notion of a Creek Nation and considered them an association of distinct groups. While capable of reacting in unison on matters of war, there was nothing to suggest that these towns sacrificed their independence for the sake of a unified Creek state.

The growing specialization of the American academies in the late nineteenth century prompted a surge of excitement across many fields. As these varied academic disciplines individualized, anthropology, distinguished itself from a biological approach to natural history, and other traditional historical fields like the classics. Anthropology's expansion in the United States was aided by the readily available subject matter on North American Indian societies. Leading twentieth century intellectuals in the field such as Alfred L. Kroeber, John Collier,

³² Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

Frank Speck, Franz Boaz, and John R. Swanton helped pioneer ethnography and ethnohistory, propelling new theories of race and culture into the mainstream. With renewed insights into native life and customs, young scholars such as John Collier, labored at the grass roots level (primarily through women's clubs in the 1920s and 1930s) to redirect Indian policy away from Progressive-era reforms that sought to enact assimilationist agendas with regard to education and land usage. Legislation like the Dawes Severalty Act (1887) wrought considerable damage to many Indian communities, especially those formerly located in the southeastern United States. Collier's eventual appointment as Commissioner of Indian Affairs by the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration helped reform reservation land policy, and began a process that permitted the reinstatement of tribal self-government.³³

John R. Swanton, more than others of his era, contributed to the cross-disciplinary approach to Native American studies through his utilization of ethnology, linguistics, folklore studies, and colonial history. Although Swanton was not a linguist by trade, he nonetheless made profound strides in categorizing and classifying many indigenous languages. Swanton's works on the Creek Indians remain classics in the annals of anthropology even today. As a prolific publisher, Swanton's thorough knowledge allowed for innovative techniques previously overlooked in other disciplines. Additionally, by utilizing French, Spanish, and English colonial records, he thereby laid much of the foundation for the field of ethnohistory. His specialized treatment of the Creeks in *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (1922) and the *Social Organization and Social Usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy* (1928) ranked him as an unrivaled expert on the region for decades. His most celebrated work, which condensed much of his earlier research into one volume, *The Indians of the Southeastern United*

³³ Karen L. Huebner, "An Unexpected Alliance: Stella Atwood the California Clubwomen, John Collier, and the Indians of the Southwest, 1917-1934," *Pacific Historical Review* 78 (August 2009): 337-366.

States (1946), is considered an early reference paradigm on the region's native inhabitants, even though it is problematic in its ethnographic presentism.³⁴

But Swanton's work failed to explain historical change. Until the early twentieth century, historians had traditionally glossed over Indian history. Indigenous communities existed as backdrops to American westward expansion and discussed only in how they related to the Euro-American historical narrative. When historians examined Indian subjects, they modeled their discussion as they had for Euro-American culture—using central political figures, analyzing diplomatic and economic relations, discussing boundary disputes, and detailing modes of warfare. Early historians of the frontier were heavily influenced by Fredrick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay, "The Significance of the American Frontier." Turner's thesis argued that through evolutionary stages Americans "civilized" the frontier and its native inhabitants. Turner's treatise was couched in culturally deterministic language about the inevitable clash between "civilization" and "savagery." The march of distinct American virtues across the continent was a testament to the new scientific history concerning the "progress of race."³⁵ Only in the last several decades though have historians framed questions from an Indian perspective, distancing themselves from Turner's exceptionalist views.

Verner Crane's, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (1928) was a progression from Turner's work, analyzing the evolution of Creek-Carolinian relations as operating on the more

³⁴ Julian H. Steward, *John Reed Swanton, 1873-1958*. Biographical Memoirs, National Academy of Sciences (1960) 34:329-349; John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Kessinger Publishing LLC, 1922); *Social Organization and Social Usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy*, Bureau of American Ethnology Annual Report 42 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office); *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* BAE 137 (1946) Thomas J. Pluckhahn, Robbie Ethridge, Jerald T. Milanich, and Marvin T. Smith, "Introduction," in *Light on the Path: Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006) 5-6.

³⁵ Turner presented his theories regarding American exceptionalism during his presidential address at the American Historical Association in 1893. His essay can be found in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920).

equal plane of contest instead of advance and retreat. While invaluable due to its usage of French, English, and Spanish sources, Crane's work ultimately fails to provide the needed Indian voice as a line of inquiry. Accounts gleaned from personal journals, correspondence, and official colonial records pervade literature on native groups until the 1970s.³⁶ This was a common shortcoming in works of the early to mid-twentieth century. The subjective experience of native peoples needed a fundamental category of analysis.

Assessing a cross-pollination of disciplines and methodologies was necessary to accurately indentify native perceptions and improve the collective understanding about what happened to groups such as the Creeks in their environment. The charter of *The Journal of Ethnohistory* in 1954 helped resolve this deficiency through the gradual propulsion of new ideas and methods from ethnographers, archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers, and historians into the mainstream. Over the next forty years, Native American studies experienced unprecedented growth—expanding our understanding of how Indian and Euro-American cultures were separate yet inexorably intertwined after contact.³⁷ Subsequent work on native cultural and political development, and social organization, invited an ever-expanding bank of literature on indigenous communities. For many years, however, anthropologist Charles Hudson almost single-handedly piloted forays into the field of Southeastern studies. More importantly, his tutelage inspired efforts from a new generation of scholarship eager to provide Indian perspectives, agency, and expand the borders of study beyond Britain's Atlantic colonies.

³⁶ For analysis on early twentieth century historiography relating to the Creeks and Indians in general: Michael D. Green, *The Creeks: A Critical Bibliography* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979); Francis G. Couvares, Martha Saxton, and Gerald N. Grob, and George Athan Billias, "American Indians: New Worlds in the Atlantic World," in *Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Perspectives*, Vol. 1. (New York: The Free Press, 2000) 61-99.

³⁷ Couvares, Saxton, Grob, and Billias, *Interpretations*, 72.

Post-Second World War historians viewed indigenous peoples with more sensitivity and attention after having witnessed the cultural corrosiveness of Nazi Germany. American involvement in Vietnam further ignited an atmosphere that challenged conventional treatments with indigenous groups. Native American history grew from this postwar period of cultural agitation. Social history matured with the development of other new fields such as women's and African-American history. Social activism as seen with the appearance of the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.) in the 1960s and 1970s brought widespread attention to the plight of Native Americans, whose struggles with centuries of exploitation and neglect resulted in high unemployment rates and widespread poverty. Historians such as Angie Debo devoted abundant efforts to recording the many failed experiments in United States Indian policy before and after removal, helping create the "new" Indian history apart from earlier attempts that portrayed native subjects as merely hapless victims. Her work among the Creeks brought a sense of social activism to historical writing not previously seen.³⁸

Much of the histories that discussed the Creeks (with a few exceptions), did so in the context of their role as contestants along the Spanish borderlands—much of that writing consigned to the canons of Florida and Carolina history. Borderlands history remains an attractive subject today due to the ambiguities of power, situational identity, and cultural and economic exchange—all of which create fertile terrain for ideas and unique perspectives on the history of the North American frontier. But the language and terminology used to define the Creeks as a group and the physical and abstract plane they shared with Euro-Americans is a source of contention among scholars. How and where the Creeks related to Euro-Americans is an

³⁸ Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance: A History of the Creek Indians*, Civilization of the American Indian Series, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979). For a look at the changing postwar mood with regard to writing Native American history visit: Couvares, Saxton, Grob, and Billias, *Interpretations*, 70-71.

important qualifier when discussing zones of interaction and identity and whether these concepts imply fluidity, cooperation, acculturation, adaptation, or permeability. Currently acceptable terms discussing this landscape of interaction include: “shatter zone,” “middle ground,” “frontier complex,” “colonial complex,” and “frontier zone” among others. Each in its own context attempts to explain a region in flux and frontiers as areas of hybridization where overlapping social units (not bounded monolithic cultures) created unique economic and cultural innovations.³⁹ Recent ethnohistoric contributions have labored to discern new possibilities with these insights and incorporate the physical and cultural landscape shared by these groups into their work.

Great strides in implementing regional and cultural geography have also contributed to our understanding of how and why the Creeks established diplomatic connections, legitimized their authority, exercised reciprocity, made war and peace, and exchanged goods. Determining what constituted shared space and place in the colonial Southeast are questions that have increasingly occupied ethnohistorians in recent years, adding another dimension to the economic, political, and gendered relationships shared between native and Euro-American societies. Deciphering individual identities, however (as in this case with the Creeks), is more challenging. While the appellation of “confederacy,” “nation,” or even the more dated “tribe” have traditionally sufficed for an understanding of the political relationship they shared between their communities and outsiders, these terms fail to adequately satisfy current needs that require a better fix on groups that left no written records and could only rely on what was recorded of and about them. Broad applicability remains illusive, but these newer methods pose interesting

³⁹ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003) 24, 263; Ethridge and Shuck-Hall ed., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*; Steven J. Oatis, *A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Frontier in the Ear of the Yamasee War, 1680-1730* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska, 2004).

questions that intend to abandon notions of bounded cultures coming into contact situations. The Southeast's colonial inhabitants (native, Euro-American, and black slaves) were intertwined and connected. Incorporating an ethnogeographic perspective not only serves to explain illusive human behavior, but also reconceptualizes regional borders in a way that allows scholars to see networks and connections across larger spaces. In other words, it is no longer necessary to confine the Creeks to the annals of either Florida or Carolina history. As once products of the Indian slave trade that stretched across much of eastern North America and as active participants in the colonial Atlantic and Gulf coast economies, the Creeks were geographically situated to engage the market economy from many vantage points.⁴⁰

Work on the Southeast's native inhabitants lagged behind regions like New England, the Middle Atlantic, and most especially, the Great Lakes. For many years, work on the Iroquois alone grossly outdistanced studies of the native South as a whole.⁴¹ In many respects, the Iroquois easily juxtapose with the Creeks. The Iroquois were geographically situated to control all the major trade networks of the northeast, temporarily balanced multiple European power interests, remained far enough inland to avoid many of the more destructive effects of contact, and adopted outside ethnic groups to replenish population loss from war and disease. Paragon among those historians wishing to provide "voice" to his Iroquoian subjects is historian Daniel Richter and his ethnohistoric, *Ordeal of the Longhouse* (1992), which charts the origins of the Iroquois League and its martial and economic relations with the French and English during the seventeenth century. Richter utilizes a cross-disciplinary approach to his subject matter that

⁴⁰ For a look at the cross-disciplinary attempts and challenges of incorporating geography into the narrative of Indian studies see: James Taylor Carson, "Ethnogeography and the Native American Past," *Ethnohistory* 49, (2002): 769-788; Tracy Neal Leavelle, "Geographies of Encounter: religion and Contested Space in Colonial North America," *American Quarterly* 56, (December, 2004): 913-943.

⁴¹ Claudio Saunt, "The Native South: An Account of Recent Historiography," *Native South* 1, (2008): 45-60.

serves as a useful example for future regional studies of other groups. Near the same publication time as Richter's study and equally impactful was Richard White's *The Middle Ground, 1615-1815* (1991). White also looks at the *pays d'en haut* and illustrates how the policies of metropolitan governments in Europe inadvertently created new cultural mediums in North America. White views these developments as shared cultural history within a physical space. His subjects react to forces of change and exist as byproducts of a larger world economic system. White additionally argues in his other notable work *Roots and Dependency* (1983) that this system fostered a native vulnerability to economic forces they could not control.⁴² Historians of the colonial Southeast continue to profit from these perspectives.

Daniel Usner's magnum opus, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves* (1992), also discusses White's space in "the middle," but as a place of coexistence and balance. Usner coins the term "frontier exchange economy" for what existed between Indians, French colonists, and African slaves in the neglected colony of French Louisiane. He aptly applies the phrase to encompass a wide range of social and culture activities in the Lower Mississippi Valley during the eighteenth century. Usner's revelation is a departure from Richard White in that landscapes were not only places where people traded and fought, but also interacted in complicated personal exchange networks that proved mutually beneficial to all involved. The establishment of regional trade and cultural arrangements helped sustain French Louisiane in spite of metropolitan neglect. He pushes previously marginalized characters to the forefront of colonial studies, paving the way for

⁴² Richard White, *Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1983).

specialized approaches to Gulf South history in the process.⁴³ Despite these groundbreaking probes, however, the subjective experience of native peoples remained largely overlooked.

The first serious attempt to successfully incorporate cultural landscapes, gender, mythology, politics, economics, and regional geography from the Creek's perspective was Kathryn H. Braund's *Deerskins and Duffels* (1993). Much like Usner, Braund illustrates how certain indigenous cultural paradigms functioned and changed through economic interaction with colonial societies. The Creeks were central players in the colonial Southeast's economy through their participation in the deerskin trade, but their motivations, identity, and the complexities of their internal social components remain difficult to ascertain. Braund's treatment is economically deterministic and virtually ignores Creek relations with the French and Spanish to the south. While invaluable as a needed resource on a subject devoid of a truly integrated analysis, hers is a birds-eye view of the Creeks and fails to illustrate the precedence of the community in Creek life or how factions operated and competed against one another. Efforts seeking to amend these deficiencies on the Creeks caused an explosion of literature over the next two decades. Historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists joined to produce more complete interpretations of Creek life.⁴⁴

⁴³ Daniel Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse: the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1615-1815* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); James Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Daniel Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: the Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Although countless students of the colonial Southeast owe a great deal to Usner and have since expounded upon his unique insights, Kathleen A. DuVal might arguably be his rightful heir on the subject of cross-cultural relations in French Louisiana. See: DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); DuVal, "Indian Intermarriage and Métissage in Colonial Louisiana," *William and Mary Quarterly* 65, (April 2008), 267-304.

⁴⁴ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

A key component in Creek social structure was their political organization and policy. Coalescent societies such as the Creeks proved remarkably dynamic and adaptable to the shock of contact. They eventually accommodated themselves between the three competing European powers in the region as each nation labored against the other hoping to court Creek favor for strategic imperial advantages. The Creeks thrived in this competitive environment. Explaining why required attention to their subjective experiences though. A landmark contribution to answering this question came with historian Steven Hahn's ethnopolitical *The Invention of the Creek Nation: 1670-1763* (2004). Hahn argues that Creek leaders (specifically the Coweta headman Emperor Brims and his maternal heir Malatchi) helped organize collective community-level responses to European neighbors through a play-off strategy known as the "policy of neutrality." Scholars have long debated the origins of this response and whether or not it was a unified reaction to the events of the Yamasee War or just indicative of the decentralized nature of Creek town societies. Hahn, however, asserts that "neutrality" was indeed a conscious response and affirms the policy's specific origin date and location at a 1718 meeting in the Lower Creek town of Coweta. He terms the culminating policy that emerged from this gathering as the "Coweta Resolution" and contends the arrangement was consistent with a natural progression from post-contact era efforts to cultivate communal balance. What specifically transpired at the Coweta meeting remains uncertain. As does the degree to which the other independent towns followed the dictums of this supposed resolution. It is also clear that other indigenous nations on the continent practiced nearly identical play-off strategies against the competing European regimes.

Hahn's book is a response to questions about the origins and nature of Creek political organization and motives. Was "neutrality" a policy initiative or the product of town and

factional divisions? Hahn seeks to form his own resolution to this quandary by asserting the former. He de-emphasizes the importance the Creeks placed on town independence and instead tries to instill a sense of national unity for his subjects as they confronted land hungry English settlers from the east. Also like Braund, Hahn's work centers on Creek relations with Carolina and Georgia, minimizing (though not entirely ignoring) the French and Spanish on the Gulf coast and the role these colonizers played in assuring a neutral position. The political motives of a few headmen overshadow how the Creeks utilized regional geography and the environment to safeguard their sovereignty. Hahn also provides the Creeks a "national consciousness" by the early date of 1720—long before most scholars acknowledge the existence of a "Creek Nation" per se. But his thoughtful attention to unifying the processes of coalescence with individual political motivations and community alliances during the eighteenth century helps explain the origins of a distinct Creek identity. This fact alone makes his work an essential pillar in our understanding of how the Creeks politically related to one another and outsiders before 1800.⁴⁵

Others downplay the idea of grand regional alliances, arguing that Creek history is local history. The leader among those promoting the importance of the town in Creek life is historian Joshua A. Piker. Creek community studies have gained considerable notoriety through his book *Okfuskee* (2006) where Piker celebrates the primacy of the town over broad-ranging national studies or syntheses. Scholars have long understated the importance of the town in comparison to the broader "confederacy," but Piker's combination of ethnohistory and communal studies reinterprets Creek identity by positing how town affiliation held precedent over regional considerations, clan or familial ties.

⁴⁵ Steven Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation: 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

The Upper Creek town of Okfuskee enjoyed a special diplomatic relationship with Charlestown and Augusta, illustrating how the integration of the market economy magnified the importance of specific communities at different times. When the British defeated and replaced the French and Spanish on the Gulf coast in 1765, Okfuskee's geographic location near a series of trade paths connecting them to eastern entrepôt cost the town previously enjoyed prestige as more advantageous trading opportunities emerged closer to other Creek towns nearer the Gulf coast. As a result of this, Okfuskee was gradually subsumed by the southern Upper Creek town of Little Tallassee and the relationship this community held with Mobile and Pensacola. Little Tallassee's more convenient position in relation to British-occupied Mobile and Pensacola excited factional competition for trade access between principal headmen from those towns.⁴⁶ While close relations with the British benefitted these Creek communities, the ultimate collapse of the frontier exchange economy, mounting personal and communal debts from extended credit with merchants in the east, along with the waning deerskin trade all compromised the security and influence of the town leaving it vulnerable to pressures that would eventually dissolve its place in the Creek world.⁴⁷

Creek community studies are not exclusively the purview of historians. Archaeologist Gregory Waselkov has written extensively on the empirical evidence of Creek factionalism extant in grave and trash middens, métis plantations of the Mobile-Tensaw delta, and French and Creek settlement patterns (especially near Fort Toulouse). In Waselkov's *A Conquering Spirit* (2006), the Creek métis community known as the Tensaw district (geographically located immediately north of Mobile and Pensacola) functioned as a locus for coexistence and market

⁴⁶ Joshua Piker, "White & Clean" & Contested: Creek Towns and Trading Paths in the Aftermath of the Seven Years' War," *Ethnohistory* 50 (2003): 315-347.

⁴⁷ Joshua A. Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

activity between Euro-Americans, Creeks, and African slaves. Not a Creek town in the traditional sense, the Tensaw Creeks resembled something more akin to a *talofa* due to their familial connections with older towns of the interior. Waselkov argues that the métis community maintained an ambiguous status and represented a divisive force in the years leading up to the Creek War (1813-1814). Tensaw's existence exacerbated factional tensions and symbolized acculturation and inequity. Individual choices complicate the story of why certain Creek leaders chose to side with specific groups on the eve of their calamitous civil war. Waselkov describes how economic change after the collapse of the deerskin trade and implementation of Benjamin Hawkins's "civilization plan" combined to cause confusion and anxiety, further undermining traditional cultural norms.⁴⁸

Continuing the trend towards Creek community studies and benefiting from work by Waselkov, Usner, and Braund was Karl Davis's thought provoking dissertation "Much of the Indian Appears: Adaptation and Persistence in a Creek Community, 1783-1854" (2003). Davis looks at the Tensaw district during the turbulent decades following the American Revolution, and while recognizing the community was a center for market orientation, Davis maintains that the Tensaw métis operated within a traditional social and cultural framework despite adopting non-traditional agricultural methods. The Tensaw district presented an ordered blend of innovation, tradition, and adaptation where matrilineages and other kinship ties continued to prove pivotal for the community's survival and economic influence in the region. Similar to Waselkov in his early chapters leading up to the destruction of Fort Mims, Davis utilizes genealogical data to buttress his points concerning the community's matrilocality—especially

⁴⁸ Gregory Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006).

important considering that Tensaw's primary residents were descendants of métis matriarch Sehoj II and her son, Alexander McGillivray.⁴⁹

The role individuals such as Alexander McGillivray and other acquisitive métis Creeks played in creating the social fissures that caused the Creek War is not entirely certain. According to historian Claudio Saunt, influential leader-agents such as McGillivray were precisely what undermined traditional Creek cultural arrangements and inaugurated societal divisiveness through their jealous concentration of propertied wealth. Saunt's, *A New Order of Things, 1733-1816* (1999), recognizes the importance of the deerskin trade in Creek life and how this commercial activity was initially beneficial. Saunt later proposes that this trade ultimately created material imbalance—an inequity of wealth between the richer métis and their poorer, non-métis Creek counterparts. This “new order” consisted of new attitudes and opportunities that threatened Creek cultural norms, especially the gendered division of labor. By the 1780s, Euro-Americans aggressively pressed against the eastern borders of Creek country, famine imperiled indebted families, and decades of overhunting depleted deer herds in an already collapsing international leather market. Tecumseh's sudden appearance in Creek country triggered a nativist response bent on targeting symbols of the “new order” (cattle, farms, houses, fences, tools, etc.). Latent tensions erupted into the bloody events of the Creek War when essentially two opposing factions indiscriminately slaughtered one another in what Saunt sees as the culmination of thirty years of cataclysmic change.⁵⁰

Saunt's position naturally contrasts with Davis's and assumes that Creek métis leaders such as McGillivray identified more with a Euro-American mentality and disposition than those

⁴⁹ Karl Davis, “*Much of the Indian Appears*”: *Adaptation and Persistence in a Creek Community* (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2003).

⁵⁰ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

rivaling him. But Saunt fails to adequately explain why so many nativist leaders two decades following McGillivray's death were successful métis property owners themselves. If the Creek War was the result of internal tensions caused by the concentration of power and wealth among an elite few, who were essentially betraying cultural norms at the expense of their more "traditionalist" neighbors, how does one then reconcile the existence of Redstick leaders such as Menawa, Josiah Francis, Peter McQueen, and William Weatherford? Frontiers were zones of interethnic interaction where groups facilitated a variety of cultural innovations. As White and Usner carefully noted, these shared spaces became zones of creolization where adaptations occurred that were not necessarily divisive or hostile to traditional cultural arrangements. More appropriately, frontier zones existed as places where native group's maintained interethnic ties with colonial populations through factional affiliation—oftentimes adjusting internal and external identities to suit their needs. Places where these interactions were more common such as Tensaw could naturally expect more extremes cultural innovations and hybridized results.⁵¹

This is not meant to suggest that factions were not at times destructive or that there were not unprecedented divisions among the Creeks near the end of the eighteenth century. Examining these divisions from the Creek perspective is exactly what interests Joel Martin in *Sacred Revolt* (1991). Delving into the ritualism and visionary experiences of native life, Martin attempts to explain the Creek perspective of the transformative events in the post-colonial Southeast. Native revitalization offered purging rituals meant to restore the Creek society of earlier generations through a rejection of western concepts and values. Martin analyzes internal tensions from within, examining Creek mythology and how the nativist revolt emerged as a response to increased American settlement, trade shortfalls, and inescapable debt cycles. Nativism among the

⁵¹ Kent G. Lightfoot and Antoinette Martinez, "Frontier and Boundaries in Archaeological Perspective," 24, (1995): 471-492.

Creeks likely sprang from a broader movement for pan-Indian unity that stretched from the Ohio country to the Gulf coast. By focusing on the changes wrought by the deerskin trade, Martin examines new attitudes of métis headmen and what caused seismic shifts in Creek leadership patterns. For Martin, the nativist cult achieved a philosophical “middle ground” with outside cultures, climaxing in the massacre of the Fort Mims inhabitants in 1813 and culminating at Horseshoe Bend the following year.⁵²

Martin’s was the first of its kind for the Creeks, but he grossly generalizes the nativist movement and its participants. His Redstick subjects appear as willing disciples with no other motivation aside spiritual purity. While certainly valiant in its portrayal of how the Creek spiritual experience motivated political action, nothing gives the reader a sense of how the region’s changing geography and environment so severely altered the Creek world in the decades after the American Revolution.

Ethnohistorians had yet to fully integrate all the aforementioned concepts into something worthy of a synthesis. Glaringly absent from the historiography was a sketch of the Creeks’ environment (physical and cultural) and how this factored into mythology, aided efforts to resist Euro-American encroachment, maintain communal autonomy, satisfy resource needs, or simply account for coalescence and other cultural signifiers. None such contributions to the field had successfully discussed these themes together in a single work. Anthropologist Robbie Ethridge sought to correct this deficiency in her *Creek Country* (2003). Ethridge parses environmental, social, cultural, economic, religious, and political characteristics of Creek life—updating historiographic and methodological trends with an attention to resurrecting the Creek

⁵² Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for A New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991); For a thorough analysis of this political climate and the issue regarding Creek removal see: Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln and London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

perspective. Readers learn what a tremendously diverse world the Creeks inhabited. Ethridge applies a balanced, interdisciplinary approach to analyzing Creek life through centuries after contact as they coped with increasing exposure to Euro-American markets and values. Her discourse demonstrates how contemporary ethnohistorians will have to engage a wide variety of sources to render more accurate representations of Creek origins, socioeconomics, and political structures to remain relevant. Much like Usner, Ethridge depicts a region and its population existing in a balance met through mutual needs. The outcome of the American Revolution, however, changed geopolitical circumstances and altered the Creeks' physical and cultural environment in such a dramatic way as to presage the violent events of 1813-14 and their subsequent removal.⁵³

But what did it mean for those traveling through this Creek world? What did it mean to share space in a frontier context, but still have and maintain boundaries? What role did these issues play in the political, economic, and cultural beginnings of the American South? The nature of these questions occupies historian Angela Pulley Hudson's *Creek Paths and Federal Roads* (2010). Hudson masterfully illustrates how simple frontier paths helped transform the identities of Americans, Africans, and Creeks through a variety of cultural exchanges. Hudson charts an environmental history of the Old Southwest as told through treaties, topography, and the personalities that inhabited the frontier of the early Republic. But more than a just history of transportation and national expansion, Hudson's work sensitively portrays Creek efforts to adapt in the face of an encroaching western world. While mobility and roads are central themes to her narrative—playing a symbolic role in Creek mythology and explaining the development of a regional culture and economy—her ability to integrate human perspective is what makes an

⁵³ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

otherwise tedious chronicle of internal improvement initiatives vital to understanding the Southern landscape.

Physical and symbolic paths played an important part in relationships with outside groups. This would be especially important for Creek leaders after the American Revolution as whites increasingly coveted Indian lands, using the Creek alliance with Britain and the language of the Treaty of Paris (1783) as a pretext for seizing large tracts. Boundaries assured peace while trade depended on peace to continue. The changing geopolitical atmosphere of the post-revolutionary era presented new challenges for American and Creek alike.

Hudson explains how a new generation of Creek leadership surfaced in the early national years, eager to strike unsanctioned deals with federal officials for profit at the expense of the talwa structure. Métis tribal headmen like Alexander McGillivray signed controversial treaties forfeiting enormous swaths of Creek territory in Georgia permitting the extension of roads for communication and eventual settlement. We learn that sectional politics characterized much of the tenor surrounding former Indian lands. Hudson provides detailed descriptions of how Creeks and Americans marked these fluctuating boundaries and why that mattered.

Boundaries and roads became mediums for interaction where overlapping geographies were articulated through a commercial discourse. Determinable authority in frontier settings like the colonial Southeast was oftentimes uncertain. How did various groups negotiate power on the microcosmic level? Did local economic activities elude traditional colonial power structures, and if so, how did these groups and individuals redefine the region for themselves? Usner discusses this for colonial Louisiane, but what about in other places such as South Carolina and Georgia? These questions interest historian Robert Paulett in his *An Empire of Small Places* (2012). Mapping the colonial Southeast for Paulett and his subjects was more than simply charting

geographic features. The varied structures of interpersonal and inter-communal relationships characterized a colonial reality that oftentimes confounded the region's economic participants. Paulett's framework celebrates the agency of the individual (Euro-American, African slave, Creek Indian) that sought to shape, imagine, and conceptualize shared places. The maturity of environmental history allows Paulett to discern many definitions of cultural landscapes and how different spatial concepts caused conflict and resolution. For Paulett, the cultural disconnect between Euro-Americans and the Creeks was mutual, but much like his predecessors on the historiographic tree, the interpretation centers on places where source material is richest—South Carolina and Georgia. He ably blueprints a region in transition, using the trading town of Augusta as his model for the alterable meanings of geography. New Georgians after the American Revolution abandoned the old geography of the deerskin traders, re-imagining a frontier populated with farms and towns, not Indians and trading posts.⁵⁴

An effective history of the Creeks requires straddling the disciplines of history, archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, environmental history, geography, and oral traditions. Tackling issues surrounding Creek coalescence and evolution from their Mississippian past, how they arranged their social and political structures, employed innovations to counter encircling threats from colonizing Euro-Americans, profited from a decentralized power structure, and utilized their geographic position in the Southeast to provide balance are testaments to understanding an inestimably important chapter in Southern history. The outlined strengths and weaknesses of previous works demonstrate a need to incorporate and synchronize the neglected Gulf South with the more complete Carolina and Georgia history. Focusing on individual communities and people can still expose these macro-scale connections. Communication and

⁵⁴ Robert Paulett, *An Empire of Small Places: Mapping the Southeastern Anglo-Indian Trade, 1732-1795* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

trade networks cross-cut broad ranges of space and time. Trade provides a perfect medium to view these changes, motivating actors in ways that elicited the most creative responses. Political arrangements with colonizers were often complicated by factional affiliation, rendering collective neutrality. A French and Spanish presence on the Gulf coast certainly made this possible. Understanding how the shattering events of the seventeenth century and subsequent coalescence of indigenous groups shaped the Creeks' political worldview reveals insights into miscues from colonial regimes as they sought to control the region and its inhabitants. The diplomatic perspective of Euro-American outsiders plays a crucial role in our understanding of Creek history, but grasping the internal dynamics of their families, communities, surrounding environment, how they used geography to attain political and commercial advantages, and intrinsically adapted to changing circumstances with culturally innovative responses are all inescapable steps necessary for recognizing the Creek people then and now, rendering their likeness an inseparable part of our national heritage.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Although focusing on the Chickasaws, Robbie Ethridge's, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010) represents an appropriate, thorough, and cogently precise example of this new trend.

CHAPTER 3

ESTABLISHING A COUNTERWEIGHT: A HISTORY OF THE EARLY IMPERIAL CONTEST ON THE GULF COAST

European military and commercial contests in the Southeast shaped the character of the region's inhabitants in ways both destructive and creative. Colonial beachheads ringed the Southeast by the second decade of the eighteenth century, radically altering indigenous lifestyles through slave raids, military conquest, epidemics, and trade. Control over the natural geographic contours of the region served as a primary means to this end. But transformative determinants from colonizing powers meant to subdue and harness the productive capacity of indigenous populations also elicited adaptive responses from native groups, especially among the Creeks, who confounded the extension of European power through their space by remaining a loosely confederated collection of communities with independent, sometimes competing interests.

The arrival of the French along the north-central Gulf coast in 1699 initiated a contest with the English and Spanish over the interpretation and manipulation of space in the Southeast that transformed the region's cultural and human geography. The French conveniently located their colony of Mobile immediately below the confluence of the Alabama-Tombigbee rivers in an effort to control these vital waterways and maintain a watchful presence near the Spanish in Pensacola. Additionally, the emergence of the French and their determination to counter Carolinian mercantile influence east of the Mississippi River and south of the Appalachian Mountains created unique diplomatic and trade opportunities for Creek communities that were exploited by them with great success. This chapter charts the early French and Spanish efforts to

establish a meaningful, yet marginalized presence on the Gulf coast, the significance of the region's geographic features and those features relation to imperial objectives, a brief description of the transformative processes of European colonization on indigenous populations in the Southeast and the beginnings of their adaptive responses to them.

Governor Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville in a May 1740 letter to Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, comte de Maurepas reported the Indian reaction to Governor James Oglethorpe's request to drive the Spanish from Florida. Calling a general assembly of the Abeikas, Tallapoosas, and Alabamas the previous autumn, Oglethorpe had hoped the commercial might and influence of Britain would induce the Creeks to assist in an assault on St. Augustine and St. Marks. Lieutenant François Hazeur, commander at Fort Toulouse near the Alabamas and situated on the eastern boundary of territory claimed by French Louisiane, informed Bienville that the Creeks refused to comply with Ogelthorpe's appeal, despite the economic advantages he promised. The Creeks replied to Hazeur that "they had long held as a maxim not to meddle at all in the quarrels that the Europeans had among themselves; that they had profited by it, since by means of this policy they were well received benefits from all sides."¹

Much of the literature on the eighteenth century Creeks fails to underscore the importance they placed on maintaining a counterbalance to Carolinian trade influences. Correspondingly, much of the early French and Spanish colonizing efforts along the Gulf coast were meant to curb Anglo ambitions on the continent. The physical location of Creek towns (*talwas*) near the major rivers and overland trade routes of the present-day states of Georgia and

¹ Dunbar Rowland and Albert G. Sanders, eds., *Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion*, (hereafter cited as *MPAFD*). Vol. III (1932) "Bienville to Maurepas," May 8, 1740, 732.

Alabama allowed for the utilization of what scholars term the play-off system.² Despite consolidation efforts from headmen like Alexander McGillivray towards the end of the eighteenth century, Creek towns frequently negotiated diplomatic and trade accords with outsiders, independent of one another. Positioned between the three principal colonizing powers, Creek towns and their affiliates were often able to strengthen their bargaining position through competitive negotiations. Understanding the strategic importance to future access to the hinterland, European powers made every effort to appease Creek sensibilities so as to gain an upper hand on access to lucrative trade items and the position of military outposts. The play-off system was not unique to the Creeks. Indians of the eastern Woodlands widely used the policy to great success. The Choctaws and Chickasaws implemented similar tactics much to the consternation of colonizers.³ This strategy not only impacted Europeans, but other Indian groups as well. It is also important to note that there was no unified political policy among the Creeks for dealing with outsiders that can be traced to a specific date or event. Their decentralized structure and experience as a coalescent society contributed to a confusing array of contravening policy maneuvers. Despite previous emphasis on “great red men,” assemblages, treaties, or resolutions—“neutrality” was most likely a millennia-old behavioral pattern.⁴

What the English first termed a confederation, consisted of a conglomeration of many disparate groups looking for protection in times of war, famine, disease, and ecological change.

² Some more recent interpretations and descriptions of the Creek play-off system include, but are not limited to: Steven C. Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation; 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Sheri Marie Shuck-Hall, *Journey to the West: the Alabama and Coushatta Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); John T. Juricek, *Colonial Georgia and the Creeks: Anglo-Indian Diplomacy on the Southern Frontier, 1733-1763* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010); Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: the Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

³ Patricia Galloway, “‘So Many Little Republics’”: British Negotiations with the Choctaw Confederacy, 1765,” 41, no. 4 (Autumn, 1994) 513-537; Richard White, *Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) 34-68.

⁴ Conversation with Robbie Ethridge June 8, 2011. Neutrality was an integrated precept in many other non-stratified societies.

James Adair noted in 1775, “The nation [the Creeks] consists of a mixture of several broken tribes, whom the Muskohge [sic] artfully decoyed to incorporate with them, in order to strengthen themselves against hostile attempts.... [these various nations] who usually conversed with each other in their own different dialects, though they understood the Muskohge language; but being naturalized, they were bound to observe the laws and customs of the main original body. These reduced, broken tribes ... have helped to multiply the Muskohge to a dangerous degree....”⁵ The challenge for historians of the Creeks is to understand not only their coalescent origins and how they adopted new groups, but also how they thrived for so long with a seemingly unstable structural foundation. While internal factions posed obvious challenges for both the Creeks and outsiders, they also proved to be a valuable asset to maintaining their autonomy.

The river basins that empty into Mobile Bay provided limitless opportunities for commercial and cultural interaction between the preeminent Indian nations of the region and Europeans. In this regional economy, goods and individuals were traded to satisfy basic resource levels and cement alliances between natives and Europeans. Relationships of this nature provided sustenance for colonists, exports for Atlantic markets, and military security. Exchanges contributed significantly to the development of a social and cultural identity for both natives and Europeans and linked the Gulf coast with the emerging Atlantic world.

Anglo-centric scholarship tends to emphasize British trade dominance in the Southeast during the eighteenth century. The play-off system exercised by the various Creek towns and their affiliates, however, demonstrates sophisticated political maneuvering meant to counter these types of influences. By utilizing imperial competition and the historic enmity among the

⁵ James Adair, *History of the American Indians*, edited by Samuel Cole Williams (New York: Argonaut Press LTD., 1966) 274, 285.

French, Spanish, and British, the Creeks were able to leverage beneficial trade concessions which they could then turn against their chief rivals—Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws—as well as check European territorial transgressions.

Groups like the Alabamas (southern Upper Creeks) became intimately acquainted with the French and Spanish, perhaps more so than their other Creek neighbors. Access to rivers carried commerce and diplomacy to the port towns of Mobile and Pensacola. A well-established overland southern trade route also gave particular advantages to the Alabamas. Their establishment of two trading posts—English and French—within the vicinity of their towns by the 1730s, helped provide the commercial and diplomatic acumen for future leaders.

Spain pioneered the earliest European surveys of the Lower Mississippi Valley. Pánfilo de Narváez most likely traveled through the Mobile Bay-Tensaw delta area as early as 1528. While Hernando de Soto's army of invading Conquistadores tragically generated widespread disorder and chaos among native societies in the Southeast from 1539 to 1543, the expedition did not reach the Mobile Bay-Tensaw delta, although its effects would be felt and seen there for generations. The subsequent expedition of Tristán de Luna (between 1559 and 1561) sought to establish a permanent Spanish colony on the Gulf coast. A subordinate of Luna's, Guido de las Bazaes, explored "Filipina Bay" (Mobile Bay) and its surroundings for Luna in 1558. He described the waters as teeming with fish and oysters. He recorded descriptions of the high red hills of eastern Mobile Bay, the mouth of a major river, thick forests of pines, laurel, cedar, cypress, oak, ash, and palmetto. The area was also populated with Indians who were growing maize, beans, and pumpkins.

The Mobile-Tensaw delta observed by Bazaes is roughly three hundred square miles of wetlands lying directly north of present-day Mobile Bay. Abundant with diverse wildlife, a

morass of wandering streams curve throughout a landscape filled with creeping bayous, cypress swamps, and soggy marshes, creating tens of thousands of acres of bottomland forest. The winding of these slow-moving bodies of water gradually erode the widening delta valley revealing the archaeological remnants of previous occupants along the river banks.

Archaeological evidence of human habitation in the delta dates back to the prehistoric period. Late twentieth century archaeological investigation indicates that peoples have lived in the Mobile-Tensaw delta region from the Late Archaic to Historic periods (2139-250 BC). The presence of shell heaps along with the discovery of a dugout canoe near the lower Tombigbee River indicate that these early inhabitants most likely possessed an extensive knowledge of water travel. The people living in the Mobile Bay area during late prehistoric times belonged to what archaeologists term the “Pensacola culture.” A large mound-building chiefdom situated on the Mobile River controlled much of the north-central Gulf coast until around 1200 AD. Evidence of this highly developed culture remains at the Bottle Creek site located on Mound Island in the Mobile-Tensaw delta.⁶ Village sites were located on small flood plains for agricultural purposes. Fertile land and a proximity to fresh water accompanied a diet rich in vertebrate, invertebrate, and plant food resources. Various sites have revealed both domestic and wild plant varieties including peach seed, hickory nuts, acorns, corn, and mulberry seeds.⁷

Tristán de Luna’s interest in the region was to locate a suitable place to establish a colony that could protect Spanish shipping interests in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. His expedition initially built a small encampment near modern-day Pensacola. Luna hoped that an

⁶ Ian W. Brown and Richard S. Fuller, “Bottle Creek Research Working Papers on the Bottle Creek Site (1Ba2), Baldwin County, Alabama,” *Journal of Alabama Archaeology* 39, (1993).

⁷ Cailup B. Curren Jr., “Prehistoric and Early Historic Occupation of the Mobile Bay and Mobile Delta Area of Alabama with an Emphasis on Subsistence,” *Journal of Alabama Archaeology* 22: 61-84; Vernon J. Knight and Sherée Adams, “A Voyage to the Mobile and Tomeh in 1700, with Notes on the Interior of Alabama,” *Ethnohistory* 28: 179-194.

overland route to the colony Punta de Santa Elena (present-day Parris Island, South Carolina) could also be established from his site on the Gulf coast. Colonial beachheads of this nature were meant as staging points for more comprehensive military missions to the continent's interior. But Luna's small colony was plagued with mutiny, desertions, privations, and a hurricane that forced an inland trek up the Alabama River to the Indian town of Nanipacana. Archaeological excavations at sites on Perdido Bay, Bon Secour Bay, and the Alabama River have revealed Spanish artifacts dating to the time of the expedition with findings ranging from coins and beads to pieces of iron and brass. The settlement Luna established at Pensacola Bay eventually failed, leaving the Gulf coast virtually uninhabited by Europeans for another one hundred and twenty years.⁸

Early colonization efforts after the Spanish *entradas* of the sixteenth century were preceded by a strategy meant to supply and maintain the port of St. Augustine and the missions in modern-day northern Florida and the Georgian coast. Spanish missionaries circulated among the Apalachees, Timucuan, and Guales. Additionally, far-reaching overland trade routes connected other groups eventually known by outsiders as "the Creeks," who supplied animal skins in exchange for iron tools, glass beads, and brass ornaments.⁹

⁸ *The Luna Papers. Documents relating to the Expedition of Don Tristán de Luna y Arellano for the Conquest of La Florida in 1559-1561.* trans. by Herbert Ingram Priestly (DeLand: The Florida State Historical Society, 1928). In Priestly's other work, *Tristán de Luna, Conquistador of the Old South: a Study of Spanish Imperial Strategy* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1936) he argues that a chief cause in the failure of Luna's expedition was that the native societies of the Gulf coast region were not as "civilized" as those in Mexico, Central America, and Peru. Because these gulf societies did not possess the viable socio-economic structure (at least comparable to those found among the Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas) they were unable to support the Spanish colonists and soldiers with basic sustenance. This failure of support led to dissent and the eventual collapse of the colony; also Paul Hoffman, *New Andalucía and a Way to the Orient: the American Southeast during the Sixteenth Century* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

⁹ Gregory Waselkov, "Seventeenth-Century Trade in the Colonial Southeast," *Southeastern Archaeology* 8 (Winter 1989) 117-133.

The thrust of colonial exploration and commercialism in the Lower Mississippi Valley began in earnest under the French. Réne-Robert Cavelier, sieur de La Salle traveled the Great Lakes to the Ohio River in 1670 and as far south as the present site of Louisville, Kentucky. Through negotiations with Indian nations such as the Tensaws, Quapaws, and Natchez along the Mississippi River, La Salle was able to open valuable diplomatic channels for trade among the Indians. A few years later (1673) Louis Joillet and the Jesuit priest Pere Marquette along with several métis companions traveled down the Illinois River to the Mississippi. After encountering Indians with European goods along the banks a few hundred miles from the Gulf, they retreated north to the Arkansas River, fearing an encounter with Spanish colonists or Indians allied to them.¹⁰ Joillet and Marquette were surprised to find European goods such as axes and glass beads among the Quapaws.¹¹

In 1682, La Salle left Fort Crevecoeur on the Illinois River with thirty-three Frenchmen and some thirty-one Indian men and women to explore the Mississippi river basin in greater detail. In addition to enlarging French commercial prowess, La Salle hoped to use diplomatic protocol to establish valuable contacts with Indian nations along the river.¹² It is unclear if Spanish officials in New Spain knew of La Salle's previous four expeditions, his long-range intentions to build a permanent base on the Gulf coast, or of his continued efforts to develop

¹⁰ Pere Marquette and Sieur Jolliet's account of their voyage down the Mississippi River is translated in Benjamin French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana* (Philadelphia: Daniels and Smith, 1850) 280-297. They recorded that the decision to abandon their mission was made because they feared falling "into the hands of the Spaniards, from whom we could expect no other treatment than death or slavery." 296.

¹¹ Dan F. Morse, "The Seventeenth Century Michigamea Village Location in Arkansas," in *Calumet and Fleur-de-Lys: Archaeology of Indian and French Contact in the Mid-continent*, edited by John A. Walthall and Thomas E. Emerson (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992) 55-74. European goods often preceded formal colonization. This was reported in the notes of Joillet and Marquette among others. Contact with the *coureurs de bois*, who first appeared in the Mississippi River Valley during the 1680s, would have certainly helped circulate European goods among these Indian nations. Archaeological evidence suggests that southeastern Indians had indirect contact with the French from these sources.

¹² Patricia Galloway, ed., *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982); Peter Wood, "La Salle: Discovery of a Lost Explorer," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 2 (April, 1984) 294-323.

French commerce in the Lower Mississippi Valley. With the success of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 against the settlers in Nuevo México, Spanish officials were understandably distracted from any possible French machinations. But when rumors of a French colony somewhere on the north-central Gulf coast reached Veracruz in October 1685, the Spanish court was alarmed.

Four different Spanish expeditions searched for the rumored French colony between 1685 and 1687. Using friendly Indians they sought to “thwart the evil intention of these pirates, by which they would settle as far as Nuevo México and make themselves Lords of many Kingdoms and Provinces.”¹³ Three of the attempts found no sign of a settlement while the fourth discovered wrecked French ships in Matagorda Bay. Failing to locate any French survivors, the Spanish party reported the colony lost. Officials in Mexico City were skeptical and sent several missions by land under Alonso de León between 1686 and 1689. León eventually captured several Frenchmen living peaceably among several Indian towns. Through their testimonies, León pieced together the fate of La Salle’s mission and informed Mexico City that the small, exhausted settlement of Fort Saint Louis (Texas) near Matagorda Bay lasted until 1688 when Karankawa warriors massacred all of the settlement’s inhabitants, excluding five children who were taken captive. French mutineers assassinated La Salle the previous year near the Brazos River. The few deserters of the expedition who did not return to Canada scattered among various Indian nations of the Texas Gulf coast and were gradually collected by León’s scouts, each confirming the outcome of the French attempt to colonize the Gulf coast. Other Spanish missions into the interior found no credible evidence of French activity. After La Salle’s failure, French exploration of the Lower Mississippi Valley waned until the 1690s.

¹³ Sebastián de Guzmán y Córdoba, “Ynforme,” A.G.I., México, 1678-1686 (61-6-20), 164. Also found in Robert S. Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt: The Spanish Search for La Salle* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press). The text reads: Dadá la obediencia para que por estos medios se pueda embaír la mala intención de estos piratas por que es cosa de irse Poblando a esta el nuevo México y hacerse Señores de muchos Reynos y Provincias.

Contests on the European continent slowed early French ambitions in North America. King William's War (1689-1697) notably occupied the attention of the French crown, siphoning valuable resources away from potential colonial ventures in North America. Additionally, nearing the end of seventeenth century, a glut in the market coupled with the capriciousness of European fashion, depressed the profitable western fur trade, which had captivated the attention of policymakers for a century. Controller-General of Finances and Minister of Marine, Louis Phélypeaux, comte de Pontchartrain attempted to close the trade in animal skins all together. Despite its economic unfeasibility, French policymakers understood that the fur trade was necessary to maintain good relations with the Indians. Realizing this, Antoine Laumet de La Mothe, sieur de Cadillac petitioned Pontchartrain and his son-advisor Jérôme Phélypeaux, for permission to build a strategic outpost at Detroit. Cadillac hoped to encourage the Huron and Algonquin nations (traditional enemies of the English-allied Iroquois) to relocate within vicinity of the fort. He reasoned that a post at Detroit would serve multiple functions—an epicenter for French trade activity west of the Appalachians, a deterrent to the continued western encroachments of the English and a check to their powerful Iroquois allies.¹⁴ But to assure the success of this plan the French needed to anchor a base near the mouth of the Mississippi River. The Italian-born fur trader and explorer Henry de Tonti (an associate of La Salle's) was equally concerned about the English presence west of the Appalachians. Tonti understood that to control the Mississippi Valley, France needed to command the mouth of the Mississippi River.¹⁵ Placing

¹⁴ W. J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth Century Imperialism," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (July 1983), pp. 341-362; In a letter to the Board of Trade on January 16, 1701, the Earl of Bellomont, Governor of New York writes, "I wish our Parliament would take such a course to help the consumption of beaver, which at present is grown almost out of use in England, Carolina hatts have been so much, and beaver hatts so little, in fashion." *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies*.

¹⁵ Henri de Tonti's published *Memoir* is translated in Benjamin French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846) 52-78. He records his commission and his accompaniment of La Salle down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico.

a colony there would augment the French presence in Canada. This development would simultaneously impede Spanish influence in Florida and ward-off English attempts to influence the fur trade with France's indigenous allies—the Miamis, Ottawas, and Illinois.

Both father and son Pontchartrain were motivated to support prompt and aggressive measures to counter a foreign presence in the vast interior of North America. Compelled by the outcome of King Williams' War, the restoration of prewar territorial boundaries, an English interest in the Mississippi Valley, the publicity generated by La Salle's expedition, and a religious zeal to convert the Indian nations to the Catholic faith, the Pontchartrains convinced King Louis XIV to send a fleet to the Gulf of Mexico and permanently secure the Mississippi River for France. In their view, a failure to do so would result in the loss of a vital link between Canada and the French Caribbean.¹⁶

Financial constraints restricted Spanish mission and settlement activity to regaining Nuevo México from the Pueblos after their successful revolt. After 1693, Spain's policy toward Louisiane and the North American Gulf coast was relaxed but watchful. However, this policy quickly gave way to concern as it became clear the French had not lost interest in the Gulf coast and were making preparations to settle in a bay somewhere near the Mississippi River. Spain's emphasis shifted from Texas to the northeastern Gulf coast, specifically the Mobile and Pensacola bays, where a possible garrison could be established to counter a French threat. Spanish intelligence in 1698 revealed that the French were planning to follow up La Salle's efforts with another colony somewhere near the mouth of the Mississippi River. Andrés de

¹⁶ John C. Rule, "Jérôme Phélypeaux, comte de Pontchartrain and the Establishment of Louisiana, 1696-1715," in John Francis McDermott, ed. *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley* (Urbana, Ill., 1969) 179-197.

Arriola was immediately dispatched to Pensacola Bay with several hundred men to build Fort San Carlos de Austria in November that year.¹⁷

The English were not inactive during this time either and remained France and Spain's greatest threat to colonial expansion in the Lower Mississippi Valley. La Salle's expedition received considerable publicity in Europe and the North American colonies. The publication of Henri de Tonti's *Memoir* (1693) and the forged (falsely credited to Tonti) *Dernières découvertes* (1697), along with Father Louis Hennepin's *Description de la Louisiane* (1683) and his subsequent *Nouvelle découverte* (1697)¹⁸—which he dedicated to William III in the hopes of encouraging English colonization of the Gulf region¹⁹—inspired English fervor to make claims in the territory as well. Chief among these was the English physician and colonial proprietor Dr. Daniel Coxe. Selling nearly one million acres of personal property in North America (mostly in the Jerseys) to a group of London merchants in the mid-1690s, Coxe hoped to acquire the title to what he termed “Carolana” from Charles II. And while Coxe never traveled to North America, his son, Daniel Coxe the younger, spearheaded a colonial venture meant to lay claim to the Gulf coast and trans-Appalachia for England.

¹⁷ William Edward Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry in the Gulf Region of the United States, 1678-1702: The Beginnings of Texas and Pensacola* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1917).

¹⁸ Louis Hennepin's earlier *Description* was a transparent effort to ingratiate himself to Louis XIV. Hennepin hoped the king would permit the Recollects to settle Louisiane so as to escape the authority of the Jesuits in Quebec. A new colony would permit the Recollects to place members of their religious sect in various positions of authority in Louisiane. This is found in Grace Lee Nute's “Introduction” of *Father Louis Hennepin's Description of Louisiana: Newly Discovered to the Southwest of New France by Order of the King* (University of Minnesota Press, 1938) translated by Marion E. Cross.

¹⁹ Hennepin's *Nouvelle découverte* was written in the wake of his having lost favor with Louis XIV. Hennepin was an exile living in Holland where he wrote this controversial account of his having descended the Mississippi River two years before La Salle. In his preface he writes that the purpose of his latest work is to “prove advantageous to Europe and especially to the English Nation, to whose Service I entirely devote my life.” In his preface Hennepin also acknowledges his duty to William Blathwayt, colonial administrator and secretary of the Privy Council's committee on trade and foreign plantations. It was Blathwayt who introduced Hennepin to William III, while also supporting the priest financially. It is, therefore, not unlikely that Blathwayt may have encouraged the authorship of this tract to somehow defame La Salle and the French government. Verner Crane also asserts this in *The Southern Frontier* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1929) 52.

In the spring of 1698, Coxe the younger hoped to ignite public interest and investors by publishing the pamphlet, *Proposals for Settling a Colony in Florida*. This treatise promoted an Anglo-Huguenot effort to build a company-governed colony consisting of French, Dutch, and German protestants. Two ships set out in October 1698 with several hundred Huguenot under the command of Captain William Bond. Coxe made it clear that this effort to institute English authority over the Lower Mississippi Valley was to prevent the French from enclosing the colonies along the Atlantic coast from access to lands and Indian nations farther inland. French control over valuable allies such as the Iroquois would have disastrous consequences for England's future in North America. Coxe understood that "should the French be permitted to establish Cape Breton, the Gulf and River of St. Lawrence, as far as the Meschacebe [Mississippi], and so downwards to the Bay of Mexico.... It is to be fear'd, They'l carry their Point one Time or another, and thereby distress and Subject these our Allies, the Consequence of which will not only be very shocking, but of the utmost Concern to the Safety to our Northern Plantations....." Failure to subsidize a colonial project in the region would guarantee the loss of valuable Indian allies, which the "large, naked, and open" frontier depended on for security and trade.²⁰ The race for the Mississippi was under way, but by November 1698 the Spanish were fully entrenched at Pensacola, and by the following spring the French built Fort Maurepas near present-day Biloxi, Mississippi dooming any chance that "Carolana" would exist.

Rumors of Anglo-Huguenot aspirations in the Gulf motivated a committed French effort to colonize the region. In 1697, Canadian naval hero, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville was

²⁰ William Coker, "Introduction," to Daniel Coxe, *A Description of the English Province of Carolana, by the Spaniards Called Florida, and by the French La Louisiane* (1722; facsimile reprint ed., Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1976) xiii-ix. Also from Coxe's "Preface" without a page number. Bertrand Van Ruymbeke, "A Dominion of True Believers Not a Republic for Heretics:" French Colonial Religious Policy and the Settlement of Early Louisiana, 1699-1730," in Bradley G. Bond's *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005) 83-94.

commissioned to lead an expedition to Louisiane and investigate rumors of English attempts to colonize the region. Pontchartrain instructed Iberville to rediscover “the mouth of [the Mississippi River,] select a good site that can be defended with a few men, and block entry to the river by other nations,”²¹ essentially continuing the earlier explorations of La Salle with the intent to build a permanent post. While Iberville was preparing for his expedition at Rochefort, he received news that the English were also organizing their much publicized colonial venture to the Mississippi River. French spies reported that the English expedition only needed Parliamentary approval before it could launch.

In late 1698, English Captain William Bond wintered immigrants in Charlestown in preparation for a journey to the Mississippi River. There Bond learned the extent of the South Carolinian Indian trade and of English commercial activities among the distant Chickasaws.²² He planned to rendezvous with these traders somewhere on the Mississippi River the next year. But Iberville reached Mobile Bay on February 1, 1698, and by April 8 began constructing Fort Maurepas. Iberville located the post on Biloxi Bay after having successfully identified the mouth of the Mississippi. He garrisoned the base with eighty men, including his younger brother Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, and placed them under the command of the ensign de Sauvole before returning to France in July.²³

²¹ Gaillard Richebourg McWilliams, *Iberville's Gulf Journals* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1981) 4.

²² South Carolina's nascent agricultural economy was too weak to sustain the colony alone. The Indian trade became its main source of economic activity. Converse D. Clowse, *Economic Beginnings in Colonial South Carolina, 1670-1730* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1971); Crane *Southern Frontier*, Chapter V, “The Charles Town Indian Trade,” Phillip M. Brown, “Early Indian Trade in the Development of South Carolina: Politics, Economics, and Social Mobility during the Proprietary Era,” *SCHM* 76 (July 1977): 118-128; William Ramsey, *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

²³ Jay Higginbotham, ed. and trans., *The Journal of Sauvole* (Mobile: Griffice Printing Co., 1969).

Captain Bond left Charlestown for the Mississippi River in May 1699 aboard the *Carolina Galley*. Sailing unseen by the Spanish at Pensacola and the French at Biloxi, Bond's ship traveled some one hundred miles up the Mississippi River before being turned back by Bienville. Iberville recorded that Bienville "with five men in two bark canoes" ordered the English corvette to "immediately leave the country, which was in the possession of the [French] king, and that, if he did not leave, he would force him to."²⁴ Bond left peaceably but threatened to return the next year with a larger force, intent on colonizing one side of the river for England.

Meanwhile, Iberville's return to France delivered more accurate maps and topography charts of the north-central Gulf coast to French officials. His explorations rekindled interest in the establishment of a viable colony in Louisiane. Iberville returned to North America the next year and saw to the construction of Fort De La Boulaye (Fort Mississippi) near the mouth of the river in 1700 as a response to Bond's foray the previous year.

The failure of the English to establish themselves on the Gulf coast guaranteed that a struggle over the Lower Mississippi Valley would be waged between Indian proxies and southern traders.²⁵ Iberville's success coupled with Hennepin and Coxe's publications ignited English policymakers to formulate a trade scheme designed to counter French projects in the region. The fear of becoming encircled by the French provoked colonial assemblies along the Atlantic coast to pursue more aggressive trade policies with the Indians of the interior. Indian alliances though trade agreements was a means to appropriate the Mississippi Valley for England.

²⁴ *Iberville's Gulf Journals*, 107.

²⁵ For a detailed discussion of the competition between European powers for control of the Mississippi Valley see Verner Crane's *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* "Chapter III: The Mississippi Question," 47-70.

Colonial assemblies implored action from metropolitan officials in London. Colonial governor of New York, Richard Coote, 1st Earl of Bellomont, wrote to the Board of Trade on October 20, 1699, concerning the necessity of bolstering relations with the western Indian nations as a means to counter perceived French commercial and territorial threats. Prompted by the scalping of five loyal Senecas by Indians allied to the French, Bellomont asked the members of the Board of Trade to contact the colonial governors of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina and encourage them to initiate strong trading relationships with the western Indian nations so as to curb French influence among them.²⁶ While the committee consented, the meeting proved abortive in the end. Regardless, conversations among colonial officials at this time demonstrate they clearly understood the danger of allowing the French to control the Indian nations of the Lower Mississippi Valley. Efforts by Governor Alexander Spotswood of Virginia proved that even a decade later, the Atlantic coast colonies still wanted to pursue a policy of severing the continent from the French. He supported the utilization of overland routes through the Appalachian Mountains believed unknown to the French that might better secure access to powerful Indian nations of the interior. Pressing to extend Virginia's boundaries westward, Spotswood hoped skin traders (through the added assistance from the capital generated by the establishment of the Ohio Company in 1716) might disjoin the tendons that connected Canada and Louisiane.²⁷

²⁶ *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1854) 632.

²⁷ Up to this time international tension relating to the fur trade came from traders from New York. After the establishment of the Ohio Company, however, Virginians and Pennsylvanians became increasingly active in the Mississippi Valley. The Board of Trade feared angering the French and possibly inaugurating a world war so avoided assisting the American colonists in settling the Valley until 1748. Nancy Miller Maria Surrey, "Col. Vetch to the Council of Trade and Plantations," *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Regime, 1699-1763* (Kessinger Publishing, 1916) 321; *Calendar of State Papers*, 25-26.

As early as 1695, Governor of Maryland, Francis Nicholson had been acutely aware of the inherent dangers of the La Salle expedition.²⁸ He became an outspoken advocate for an aggressive Indian trade policy similar to the Carolina model but operating in the Ohio and Great Lakes region. He encouraged official sanction from the Board of Trade in August 1698 for commercial relations with the western Indian nations suggesting that if “they [the French] cannot be prevented from settling in the Mississippi” then the Indians needed to be plied “with goods in such quantity and so cheap that they take the trade from the French.” Nicholson reasoned that this prevented the English from increasing their settlements and influence among those Indians in the territories between the Gulf coast and Canada.²⁹ The Board of Trade, however, felt an assertive trade policy conflicted with the imperial vision for Virginia and Maryland as commodity crop producers and rejected his proposal. Arguably unfamiliar with the potential of such a plan, the Board of Trade felt Nicholson failed to provide sufficient details for his scheme for the promotion of the venture to investors in England. The Board members feared western traders might “interfere with or discourage the planting of Tobacco, which is the main thing to be pursued.”³⁰

Concern over Iberville’s Gulf coast and Mississippi activity was strongest in the Carolinas. Fear that a potential Franco-Hispano alliance might uproot the tenuous English position in the southern colonies was palpable in many of the official communications of the day.³¹ But while the French and Spanish entrenched themselves with permanent military outposts at Pensacola and Biloxi, Carolina traders advanced across the southern hinterlands delivering

²⁸ “Memoir of Sir Thomas Lawrence,” June 25, 1625, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies* (London: Mackie and Co., 1903) 518-520.

²⁹ “Governor Nicholson to Council of Trade and Plantations,” August 20, 1698, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies*, 385-393.

³⁰ *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* vol. XXII (Richmond: House of the Society, 1914) 40-41.

³¹ “Edward Randolph to Council of Trade,” *Calendar of State Papers*. 104-107; “Governor Francis Nicholson to Governor Joseph Blake,” *Calendar of State Papers*, 326.

weapons and cheap goods, extending English commercial control over the Indian nations of the Ohio, Tennessee, and Mississippi rivers. Groups like the Chickasaws were armed and encouraged to conduct raids against their “Bow and Arrow Neighbours,” giving them “the reputation of the most military people of any about the great river [Mississippi].”³² Colonial administrators knew that mutually beneficial relationships with the powerful Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek peoples would determine who controlled the region.

French ambitions along the Gulf coast were an alarming prospect for the Carolinians eager to monopolize control over the interior nations. Deputy-Governor of South Carolina, Joseph Blake, was anxious about Iberville’s successful plant on the Gulf coast at Fort Maurepas and wasted no time sending investigating-agents west to the Mississippi River.³³ Bypassing the usual overland routes, Blake sent a troupe of traders to the Tennessee River to supply the Creeks and Chickasaws with weapons and merchandise. In addition to goods, the adventurers traveled with official papers from Blake that claimed the Lower Mississippi Valley for England. Helping divert trade from Canada to South Carolina was a former associate of Henri de Tonti’s, the French renegade and *coureurs de bois*, Jean Couture. Mountains prevented easy access to the continental interior for Carolina traders. This forced them to use overland paths through various Creek towns on the Oconee, Ocmulgee, and Chattahoochee rivers. And while evidence suggests that the Carolina traders had been established among the Cherokees as early as 1690, none had made significant inroads among the Chickasaws and Choctaws until they obtained the assistance of the *coureurs de bois*.³⁴

³² Thomas Nairne, *Nairne’s Muskhogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River*, ed. Alexander Moore (Jackson and London: University of Mississippi Press, 1988), 37-38.

³³ Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 64-65.

³⁴ *Iberville’s Gulf Journal*, 144-145. The *coureurs de bois* or *voyageurs* (trans. “runners of the woods”) were French backwoodsmen who plied their trade in furs beyond the control of the French government or company authorities.

With the Bourbon King Philip of Anjou on the throne in Spain, Pontchartrain used Iberville's detailed maps and journals to orchestrate a plan meant to impede the English advance across the Southeast. Through diplomatic channels, Pontchartrain articulated a plan for a Franco-Hispano alliance. Appealing to the Spanish government, French officials argued that the English would eventually turn their sights on the wealthy mineral mines of New Spain if they were allowed to continue pressing westward. Pontchartrain suggested defending against these future incursions required the abandonment of Pensacola to the French and an end to Spanish opposition to settlement efforts in Louisiane. Spain respectfully declined. There was a mutually beneficial boon to the Catholic powers in having the grandson of Louis XIV in power though. Spain eventually conceded the settlement of Louisiane to the French, recognizing the advantageous string of French frontier fortifications that would protect their vast mineral interests in Mexico from the western progression of the English.³⁵

Iberville championed a stronger commitment to colonizing Louisiane. He adeptly expressed this desire in various communications with Versailles where he couched his campaign for a permanent, viable colony in strategic terms. The French had long hoped to exploit La Salle's discoveries. A well-placed settlement might serve as a base to maraud Spanish shipping channels and other sources of wealth from Mexico.³⁶ In letters to the King he also emphasized the need to evangelize the Gulf coast's native inhabitants and stressed how its moderate climate was ideal for the production of cash crops, silk and mulberry worms. Iberville also hoped to

Unregulated trade in furs had a tendency to glut the market. Punishment from French officials was often severe, prompting many of these independent traders to market their services to the English. For a discussion of this trade see Verner Crane, "The Tennessee River as the Road to Carolina: The Beginnings of Exploitation and Trade," *MVHR* 3, (June 1916) 3-18. Crane in *The Southern Frontier* 43, 66, 70, and 90; and Charles Upson Clark, ed. *Voyageurs, robes noires, et coureurs de bois* (New York: Columbia University Institute of French Studies, 1934).

³⁵ Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry*, 206-215; Mathé Allain, "Not Worth a Straw": *French Colonial Policy and the Early Years of Louisiana* (Lafayette, La.: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1988) 50.

³⁶ Allain, "Not Worth a Straw," 59.

convert the *coureurs de bois* into farmers by ending the illicit fur trade with a string of forts and outposts preventing continued access to the English colonies along the Atlantic. Selling what furs they possessed to the Company of Canada, the traders would adopt a sedentary life as peaceful farmers.³⁷ The trade could then exclusively belong to licensed authorities. Iberville's proposal would end the illegal trafficking of furs (which was both a threat to Louisiane's security and to the profits of the Company of Canada) and provide the stable colonists he understood to be necessary for Louisiane's survival.³⁸ All these points were meant to sell a particular colonial vision. However, the French ministry was indifferent, and content with keeping Iberville's Gulf coast outposts at Maurepas and Fort De La Boulaye strictly military ventures.

Despite the oftentimes intense and violent rivalry exhibited in the Lower Mississippi Valley between the two emerging super powers, the Lower Mississippi Valley in the early eighteenth century was actually peripheral to both France and England. Louisiane's competition with England's Atlantic coast colonies was focused on Canada where France's success in the fur trade traditionally rivaled that of New England and the mid-Atlantic colonies. Early French colonization projects were modest and improvisational. But this was common with most early colonization ventures whether English, French, Spanish, or Dutch. In correspondence with Iberville and Bienville, French officials repeatedly indicated that their main interest in the Gulf coast was primarily directed at keeping the English away from the Mississippi River. West Indian colonies like St. Dominique remained far more important to France than Louisiane. Metropolitan officials instructed Iberville to avoid distressing the Spanish and to pursue a variety of schemes to estimate the value of the colony, but the official government attitude towards

³⁷ *MPAFD*, III, "Pontchartrain to D'artaguette," July 11, 1709, 131; "*Ibid.*," 155, "Minutes of the Council," 217.

³⁸ Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana, volume 1, The Reign of Louis XIV, 1698-1715*, Translated by Joseph C. Lambert (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974) 92-93.

Louisiane was understandably cool considering the other more valuable commitments of Louis XIV.³⁹

Upon returning from France in December 1701, Iberville stopped briefly at Fort San Carlos in Spanish Pensacola to recuperate from an abscess on his side.⁴⁰ There he learned from the acting-governor, Sergeant-Major Francisco de Córcoles y Martinez that the commander of Fort Maurepas, Sauvole, had died earlier that summer from fever and that Iberville's younger brother, Bienville, was in charge of the post. Iberville sent a dispatch the following morning to Bienville ordering him to move operations from Biloxi Bay to Massacre Island (modern-day Dauphine Island) and establish a new base. Iberville would join them once he recovered.

Near the west side of the opening of Mobile Bay, Dauphine Island had an adequate harbor, ample timber, and fresh water, making it a more suitable choice for a colony than the previous site at Fort Maurepas. More importantly, its strategic location near the Alabama-Tombigbee river system provided an avenue for the French to communicate with the principle Indian nations of the southern frontier and to monitor English expansionism as well as checking the nearby Spanish garrison at Pensacola.⁴¹

Iberville reconnoitered the Mobile Bay-Tensaw delta two years earlier on February 3, 1699, believing the Mobile River was an eastern fork of the Mississippi. He checked the water current and color, past flood levels, and the types of trees to confirm what he understood to be consistent with the conditions near the mouth of the Mississippi. Bienville abandoned Fort Maurepas on January 5, 1702, and began constructing a warehouse on Dauphine Island. Iberville brought four families from France to help in the construction of the colony. He joined the

³⁹ Maithé Allain's *Not Worth a Straw* provides a richly detailed analysis of French colonial policy in Louisiane.

⁴⁰ Jay Higginbotham, *Old Mobile Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711* (Mobile: Museum of the City of Mobile, 1977) 25. *Iberville's Gulf Journals*, 163.

⁴¹ Pénicaut's, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 246.

undertaking two months later, having recuperated in Pensacola. After inspecting the fort's progress, he traveled to the mouth of the Rivière-aux-Chiens (modern-day Dog River) and established another way station at Twenty Seven Mile Bluff (located twenty seven miles north of the head of Mobile Bay). In lieu of seizing Pensacola, the French built Fort Louis de la Louisiane and the nearby town of La Mobile in 1702 (Vieux Mobile, or Old Mobile). Dubbed the imperial capital of Louisiane, Mobile was located near its namesake people—the Mobilian Indians, linguistic and cultural relatives of the Choctaws. Positioned on an important north-south canoe route, the new post offered valuable trade opportunities for the French who were keen on providing military and economic support to friendly Indians.⁴²

Early French interaction among the southeastern Indian nations was heavily influenced by the military and commercial prowess of the older Atlantic coast colonies of the English. As European nations competed in North America, warfare among native groups became linked to market interests and international commerce. Capturing members from neighboring Indian towns necessitated the use of force on a grand scale—far beyond what was necessary to maintain the fur and skin trade. As the dependency on European goods increased, native societies became more militaristic. Debt and the need for more European goods pushed many Indians to pursue captives from weaker, less organized groups as a means of supplementing the regular traffic in pelts and feeding a growing demand for labor in the West Indies.

A combination of diseases, warfare and slave raids drastically diminished the communities Hernando de Soto encountered in the sixteenth century. The Alabama, Miculosa,

⁴² Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana, volume 1, The Reign of Louis XIV, 1698-1715*, 45-47; Higginbotham, *Old Mobile* 40-52; Patricia Galloway, "Henri de Tonti de village des Chacta, 1702: The Beginning of the French Alliance," in Patricia Galloway ed. *La Salle and His Legacy* 146-175; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Land and Water Communication Systems of the Southeastern Indians," in Gregory Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley ed. *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) 29, 33, 34, 35, 38. Constant flooding forced French officials to move Mobile south to its present location in 1711. Old Mobile was initially situated some fifty miles inland for defensive purposes.

Taliepacana, and Moclixa had fragmented by the seventeenth century due to relentless outside pressures, only to reorganize as refugee communities. Pressure became more pronounced as European involvement in North America evolved from the military expeditions under leaders like Hernando de Soto and the fledging coastal beachheads like Jamestown into the thriving port towns like Charlestown. Diaspora peoples in places like present-day central Alabama met new challenges as competing European colonizers fought for alliances with larger native societies like the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Cherokees. Alliances became a necessary survival strategy, especially for native groups that coalesced along the Tallapoosa, Alabama, and Coosa rivers. Over time, these groups became slavers themselves.

Indians of the Mobile-Tensaw delta were certainly not immune to slave raids. French narratives record numerous challenges in dealing with the practitioners and victims of this trade. The Apalachees in north-central Florida suffered the brunt of several slave raids from the Carolinians and their Creek allies under James Moore in early 1704. These campaigns caused a mass exodus of the Indian populations to the security of St. Augustine and French lands to the west. Bienville recorded in 1704 that some 400 Apalachee refugees (along with several hundred members of other nations—in all, totaling about 800 people and livestock) fled to the French at Mobile. Bienville supplied these groups with priests, food, and land for settlement, helping them establish two towns upriver from the Tomés. The Viceroy of New Spain asked Bienville to send back the Indians that he claimed Bienville “purposefully” lured to Mobile. The Spanish valued these Indians and considered them loyal Catholic allies, laborers, and suppliers of food. Bienville replied that he had no interest or motive in having these Indians settle near his garrison and that the decision to move there was theirs alone. When he asked the Apalachee refugees why they chose to settle among the French, they replied that the Spanish “did not give them any guns at

all, but that the French gave them to all their allies.”⁴³ Having avoided the fate of some 2,000 prisoners taken during the Creek-Moore raids, many Apalachees chose to remain on French lands permanently.

Another mass exodus of Spanish mission Indians occurred when several hundred Alabama and Tallapoosa warriors led by Thomas Nairne besieged Pensacola for two months in 1708. Many Indian women and children were captured and removed to Charlestown as slaves. Bienville along with a contingent of French soldiers arrived to assist the Spanish fort only to discover the siege abandoned. Before returning to Mobile, however, Indians living within the vicinity of Pensacola—Apalachees, a few Choctatos, and Pensacolas—followed the French back expressing their desire to move to French territory and build towns there.⁴⁴

Competing European powers created an unsettled, chaotic atmosphere on the southern frontier. The quest for slaves and deerskins often pitted one native group against another in an endless cycle of violence. The spread of disease often followed in the wake of these raids. French explorers encountered numerous smaller Indian groups in a state of constant flux. The Tensaw Indians (namesake to the Tensaw region), which were originally located in modern-day northeastern Louisiana, were subjected to slave raids from their neighbors the Houmas. As with previous groups, the French encouraged troubled societies to relocate near Mobile. The Tensaws moved within the vicinity of Mobile in 1713 where they could be protected and serve as useful allies.⁴⁵ These *petites nations*, as they became to be known by the French, functioned as laborers, protectors of colonial settlements along the coast, conscripts to far away missions, and suppliers

⁴³ Gaillard Richebourg McWilliams, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1953) 102-103; *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to Pontchartrain,” September 6, 1704, 26-27.

⁴⁴ *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to Pontchartrain,” February 25, 1708, 113-115; Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) 19-22.

⁴⁵ Pénicaud’s, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 161-162; Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana, Volume 1*, 79; *MPAFD*, III, “Memoir on Louisiana,” 1726, 536.

of food and other trade goods. During the early years, the French relied almost exclusively on Indian agricultural expertise to feed the colony.⁴⁶ Maize consumption was undoubtedly quite an adjustment for a European palate used to consuming wheat-based flour. This dependence on trade with the local Indians stifled the emergence of a plantation economy. When a series of floods in 1709-1710 hindered Indian corn production, Bienville was forced to have his men collect fish and oysters in order to survive.⁴⁷

Close proximity to the French had a profoundly negative effect on native populations. The slaving and Old World diseases quickly reduced their numbers. Bienville observed in the 1720s that the Apalachee refugees from two decades earlier had been ravaged by disease and ultimately cut to one hundred men. The Mobilians, among the first to encounter Iberville in 1700, were reduced to but one town by 1726.⁴⁸ Larger nations like the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks, who frequented the river courses that ran through Tensaw country, were less susceptible to extinction from the immediate dangers of slave raids and disease that had decimated the smaller nations along the coasts. They instead became the focal point for much of the European rivalry extant across the Mississippi Basin.

When the French arrived in 1699 they encountered a region enmeshed in a chaotic vortex of bloodshed. The Indian slave trade was the dominant feature on the southern landscape during the seventeenth and much of the early eighteenth centuries. The French were not interested in competing with the English for slaves. They preferred trade in skins and furs over that of

⁴⁶ For a discussion of how the French depended on local Indians for food, protection, and trade see: Daniel Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) 145-218. Usner's analysis focuses on the social complexity of the colonial South, beyond Carolina. His is an essential companion to understanding how Indian, settlers, and slaves created interdependent links to fulfill their needs.

⁴⁷ *MPAFD*, III, "Bienville to Pontchartrain," June 21, 1710, 152; Gregory Waselkov and Bonnie L. Gums, "Plantation Archaeology at Rivière aux Chiens, ca. 1725-1848," (University of South Alabama, Center for Archaeological Studies, Archaeological Monograph 7) 9.

⁴⁸ *MPAFD*, "Memoir," III, 536.

humans. This is not to suggest that the French did not have or seek Indian slaves. Indian slaves were a common feature of French colonial life, but they were not routinely captured in large-scale military expeditions as seen with the English and their Creek and Chickasaw allies. The French did not possess the capabilities to lead such extravagant missions. Slaves were merely an added bonus to wars that would have occurred anyway. Still, captives taken in war made up a significant part of the early French labor force before the importation of African slaves.⁴⁹ While French correspondence reflects a negative attitude towards the predatory practices of the Carolinians against nations like the Apalachees, this is not to confuse their positions on Indian slavery as operating on a moral principle. English-led slave raids caused sufficient insecurity to threaten the future of French ambitions in the region and this reason alone accounts for their hostility to the practice.

Iberville interpreted the presence of Carolina traders in the backcountry as portents of the English settlement surely to follow. But rather than continuing Coxe's approach to colonization, the English waged a war of terror through commerce. Traveling overland using Indian paths, Carolina traders had for several decades brought sudden, violent market forces to the western native peoples in their search for deerskins and Indian slaves. As French explorers ventured inland from the Gulf they confronted the results of this new economic reality in both the victims of the slave raiding expeditions—desperate for protection—and those already allied to the English, actively seeking out captives to exchange for weapons and merchandise. The French initially struggled to adopt a meaningful strategy to combat this challenge. Groups like the

⁴⁹ *MPAFD*, III, Bienville to Pontchartrain," February 20, 1707, 38-39; La Harpe, 75; Higginbotham, *Old Mobile*, 93-94, 288-293. The murder of Father Jean-François Buisson de Saint-Cosme in 1706 brought the earliest core of Louisiane's slave population. Father Cosme and three companions were killed as they canoed down the Mississippi River from a mission trip among the Natchez. A band of Chitimachas identified the missionaries and retaliated from abuses they had incurred from the French-allied Tensas. This brought severe retribution from the French in nearby Fort De La Boulaye and a decade long war where villages of Chitimachas were slaughtered and enslaved. Surviving populations were sold in Mobile and, in later decades, New Orleans.

Creeks were enticed by the goods they had received from Carolinian traders for the last two decades. Bienville pointed out, “They [the Carolinians] have armed almost all of them with guns, a thing that we have not yet done for our allies for want of guns. As the Indians attach themselves to whomsoever gives them most they attach themselves much more easily to the English.”⁵⁰

Iberville sought to remove the Carolina traders forcibly in early 1700. He instructed Henri de Tonti to intercept two English traders among the Chickasaws who were leading slave-raids against neighboring nations. Luring the English to a nearby Tunica Indian town under the pretext of trading for beaver pelts, Tonti was to seize the traders and send them down river to Biloxi. Unfortunately for the French, the Tensaw Indians reported the English were more numerous than previously thought so the plan was aborted. Iberville soon moderated this policy of outright confrontation and removal of the English from the backcountry to one of nurturing friendly relations with the Indians through gift exchange and a strict adherence to diplomatic protocol. His efforts henceforth would be focused on forming an association with the nearby Choctaws and Chickasaws based on a mutually beneficial trade and protection strategy.⁵¹

As bitter rivals for English affection, the Choctaws and Chickasaws had raided and killed one another for over a decade. Initial French policy was to end the conflict between the two groups and initiate a commercial relationship with the numerous Choctaws above all else. The Choctaws wanted to include the French in a gift-alliance system. The fascinating cultural exchange that took place between the two did not result in the triumph of one over the other so much as it exposed how modes of colonial commerce were interpreted differently. Goods and weapons that passed between the French and Choctaws symbolized different things, but

⁵⁰ *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to Pontchartrain,” September 6, 1704, 22.

⁵¹ Crane, *The Southern Frontier* 68; McWilliams, *Iberville's Gulf Journals*, 117-118.

eventually the French learned how to utilize the few tools at their disposal to impart significant shifts in policy that would give them a competitive edge against the better supplied English. French ingenuity proved especially adept at accessing trade items and meeting Indian needs in spite of all that was closed to them.

On February 8, 1702, Iberville sent Henri de Tonti and a small party of men north in the upper Tombigbee country to bring the headmen of the two nations to Fort Louis at Mobile. Tonti returned to Mobile on March 26 with three headmen and four prominent elders. They were welcomed with ceremonies and gifts that included guns, ammunition, axes, knives, kettles, glass beads, flints, bradawls and other hardware. Using Bienville as an interpreter, Iberville implored the native leaders to live in peace with one another and with the French. He explained how the English were deceiving them into an endless cycle of war. The Carolinians supplied arms to both sides, pitting one against the other. After detailing the dangerous inner workings of the Indian slave trade, Iberville proceeded to provide an ultimatum to his listeners. If the Chickasaws and Choctaws failed to drive the Carolina traders away from their towns, the French would consider them hostile to peace and would arm the neighboring Tomés, Apalaches, Mobilians, and Natchez warriors against them. If they severed ties with the English, the French promised to construct a factory in a mutually agreed upon location (somewhere between the two nations) where they could trade the usual animal skins (deer, bear, beaver, otter), vermillion, woolen goods, powder, guns, lead balls, blankets, razors, needles, knives, ribbons, and brandy in lieu of captives. Additionally, the French asked the Chickasaws to council the Alabamas and Apalachicolas to make peace with the Mobilians, Tomés, and Choctaws. Moving these societies away from the destructive slave trade was an important step in bringing order to the frontier. The Indian and European participants then sat down and smoked the calumet of peace.

Iberville asked the Chickasaw and Choctaw chiefs for an accurate census of their towns. The Chickasaws listed 580 households, totaling some 2,000 men (700-800 warriors). The Choctaws described three main towns with 1,090 households, in all some 3,800-4,000 men. Recent hostilities between the two peoples inflicted considerable damage. The French estimated that upwards of 1,800 Choctaw warriors had been killed with some 500 captured and taken back to Charlestown. The Chickasaws had lost over eight hundred people to combat. The two nations representatives agreed to live in peace with one another provided the French continue to supply them with goods at fair prices.⁵²

The Chickasaws at Mobile communicated their concerns to Iberville over the future of such an alliance. If they were no longer to receive the English traders the French had to provide equivalent commercial advantages. The Chickasaw delegation did not wish to lose the lucrative commerce it enjoyed with the English and if the French were unwilling or unable to supply their towns with goods they would abandon the alliance. Iberville promised to meet these demands, despite his knowing the French were at a distinct economic disadvantage to the English. His strategy to maintain peace also meant sending missionaries north to live among the Chickasaws and Natchez Indians. These Christian emissaries would teach the Indians to live in harmony, he reasoned. Peace was short lived, however, and the two implacable foes resumed hostilities in a series of bitter conflicts that would last another five decades.⁵³ Despite French efforts to unite them in a common cause against the English, the commercial prowess of the Carolinian traders prevented a lasting peace. Distance and poor supplies prevented the French from meeting Chickasaw trade demands. Most Choctaws were more determined to maintain an alliance with

⁵² *Ibid*, 171-173; Higginbotham *Old Mobile*, 69-81; Jay Higginbotham, "Henri de Tonti's Mission to the Chickasaw, 1702," *Louisiana History* 19 (Summer 1978) 285-296; Patricia Galloway, "Henri de Tonti de village des Chacta, 1702: The Beginning of the French Alliance," in Patricia Galloway ed., *La Salle and His Legacy*, 146-175.

⁵³ Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana, volume 1*, 83-86.

the French, however. This decision would cost the Choctaw people dearly in both lives and resources.

Slavery was not a concept introduced by Europeans and had been practiced by native groups in North America for millennia. Captives were often enslaved in pre-contact societies. While the concept of captive-taking was not new, the commercial scale designed and encouraged by Europeans was unique. Male victims were usually killed in battle, while captured women and children were marketed as domestic laborers in the Atlantic world's growing commodity crop economies.⁵⁴

During the 1660s many southern Indians allied with the Spanish were susceptible to attack from their northern neighbors, chief among these being the Westos. The Westos were Eries who migrated from the Northeast to the Virginia and Carolina settlements respectively.⁵⁵ Westos raided for slaves to counter population loss due to Iroquois mourning wars and to control the market opportunities available in slave raiding.⁵⁶ A relatively small but martial society, the Westos seem to have relied almost exclusively on the capture and exchange of Indian slaves. Their range of operations stretched from Florida to Virginia and possibly as far west as middle Alabama where they would have preyed on proto-Creeks peoples. With limited access to European weaponry, the scattered mission Indians lying within Spanish controlled Florida were

⁵⁴ David H. Dye, "Warfare in the Protohistoric Southeast, 1500-1700," in *Between Contacts and Colonies: Archaeological Perspectives on the Protohistoric Southeast* ed. Cameron B. Wesson and Mark A. Rees (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2002), 126-141.

⁵⁵ Marvin T. Smith, *Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change in the Interior Southeast: depopulation during the historic period* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1987). Smith argues that the Westo were Eries that migrated south during the Beaver Wars. Eric E. Browne also argues this in his *The Westo Indians: Slave Traders of the Early Colonial South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press: 2005) 37-44.

⁵⁶ Ned Blackhawk, *Violence of the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Blackhawk discusses how the Utes persevered through colonization by transferring violence onto their non-equestrian neighbors. Westo usage of violence was arguably a survival technique. After the Westo were defeated, other Indian groups replaced them in slaving operations and competed against one another for captives.

constantly marauded by slaving parties of Westo Indians. The Spanish were unable to offer anything more than token assistance, forcing natives along their territorial periphery to seek shelter closer to mission garrisons. Indian polities nearest the English settlements (especially after Charlestown's establishment in 1670) sought similar protection. Groupings of these Indians that established themselves nearest the South Carolina capital come to be known as the settlement Indians, and quickly allied themselves with the English, supplying the colonists with labor and trade goods.⁵⁷

While practices of adoption and hostage taking existed in pre-contact Indian societies, slaving to satisfy a growing labor demand in Spanish, English, French, and Dutch colonies disrupted traditional cycles of native warfare on a massive scale. English, French and Dutch commercial interests drove the embryonic world economy of the seventeenth century.⁵⁸ A growing trade network, groundbreaking commercial policies, growing religious toleration, booming New England shipping industry, and the consolidated economic web tying the West Indies to North America all helped produce a bustling Atlantic economic world. Indian slavery acted as one of the many fibers that sustained this growing global system. The institution was a necessary aspect of colonial life and guaranteed the viability and survival of Europe's presence in the Americas. Europeans considered these peoples war captives, rationalizing both their station and sale to other colonies. Viewing captured Indians (along with Africans) as a consequence of a military victory legitimized the enslaving process and paralleled developing racial attitudes.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Eric E. Bowne, "Carrying away their Corn and Children: the Effects of the Westo Slave Raids on the Indians of the Lower South," in Ethridge and Hall ed. *Mapping the Mississippi Shatter Zone*, 104-108.

⁵⁸ Robbie Ethridge, "Introduction: Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone," in *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁵⁹ Alan Galloway, "Introduction: Indian Slavery in Historical Context," in Alan Galloway ed. *Indian Slave Trade in Colonial America* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) 15.

The range of slaving expeditions was considerable and attacks by groups like the Westos not only precipitated the breaking apart of chiefdoms, but also forced disparate southeastern Indians, who did not seek the protection of European fortifications, to amalgamate for protection. In addition to the dangers brought from slaving expeditions, the threat of disease was also constant for Indians. Epidemics like small pox seem to have traveled along the same routes as the slavers, inflicting comparable damage to native societies.⁶⁰ The Yamasees, Creeks, Catawbas and Choctaws are perhaps the best examples of these “confederations,” owing much of their existence to Westo aggression.⁶¹ Accepting refugees seems to have been nothing new for some of these fallen chiefdoms. Archaeological evidence indicates some of these societies in the distant past dealt with chaotic circumstances in similar ways, especially the forbearers of the Creeks.⁶²

The Westo terror ended after only two decades. An alliance of Shawnee refugees and Carolina traders known as the Goose Creek men fought a war of extermination to break the Westo slave cartel and seize control of the trade. The campaign was so successful that the few surviving Westos either merged into the polities they had previously raided or, ironically enough, were captured and sold into West Indian slavery themselves. Their efforts created a widespread desire for arms and munitions among native groups. The weakening and eventual removal of the Westo threat encouraged native societies to draw closer to Charlestown interests in the east.⁶³

⁶⁰ Paul Kelton, *Epidemic and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492-1715* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). Kelton traces the outbreak of new pathogens among Native Americans, arguing that the region experienced its first real smallpox epidemic in places heavily impacted by the Indian slave trade.

⁶¹ For more information on the formation of the Choctaws see Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis: 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

⁶² Ned J. Jenkins, “Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050-1700,” in Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Shuck Hall ed. *Mapping the Mississippi Shatter Zone* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press) 188-249.

⁶³ Browne, *The Westo Indians*, 106-114.

The first generation of slaving was replaced by a second. The Shawnee refugees who assisted the Carolinians in dispatching the Westo temporarily dominated the slave trade only to be replaced by returning Yamasees from the mission settlements of Florida. Slaving spread among southeastern Indian communities in the wake of Westo dominance. The English continued to entice groups like the Lower Creeks to target Indians allied with the Spanish and French, both for slaves and to advance their own imperial agenda in the region. Debt also prompted many Indian communities to act in an uncharacteristically aggressive manner. Extending credit to Indians was a common practice for unscrupulous traders, much to the chagrin of South Carolina's Lords Proprietors. War with neighboring communities for captives and hunting for deerskins were the quickest way out of debt. This created a dangerous spiral, especially as options for indebted Indians diminished. Vulnerable Indian towns migrated beyond the reach of slaving expeditions. Disease and years of raiding depopulated large areas of the Southeast. Cultivating old hunting grounds for plantation agriculture and devious trading practices continued to take their toll. In many cases traders enslaved a debtor's family to settle an account.

Fear of losing their lands and their families to enslavement due to mounting debts eventually sparked retaliation when Yamasee warriors preemptively massacred a peace delegation led by Indian agent Thomas Nairne in April 1715. English traders across the frontier Southeast were killed following news of the massacre. The Yamasees, along with their Lower Creek allies, launched a series of attacks on South Carolinian settlements, forcing the panicked abandonment of plantations and the eventual retreat of the colonists to Charlestown where starvation and disease hindered colonial resolve.

Events like the Tuscarora and Yamasee wars called into question the practice of Indian slaving on an economic level. Slaving did not end with the defeat of the Yamasees, but it did slow considerably and it changed in purpose and meaning. And while the dangers of slaving for trade were all the more apparent with recent hostilities destabilizing the frontier, enslaving Indians continued in the Southeast well beyond the Removal period of the early nineteenth century, albeit on a much more limited scale. For political purposes, postwar English slaving policy punished uncooperative native groups and exacted retribution from renegade Yamasees in southern Georgia and northern Florida.⁶⁴ The Yamasee War proved that old slaving practices were too costly and dangerous. As the Atlantic slave trade grew, the influx of Africans into places like South Carolina became more profitable and, in many ways, safer. Years after the Yamasee War, the English continued to encourage their Indian allies like the Creeks and Cherokees to enslave enemy groups, effectively turning much of the frontier into a perpetual proxy war between European empires.⁶⁵

The Yamasee War was certainly not confined to the plantations of Carolina. English traders throughout the Southeast fell victim to retributive acts of violence by the Creeks, Apalachees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Catawbias, and Cherokees, among others. The French often tried to prevent the indiscriminant slaughter of their European counterparts by arresting traders upon discovery. English trader Price Hughes was arrested at the behest of Cadillac after he visited the Natchez, Choctaws, and Tunicas where he established warehouses for deerskins to be

⁶⁴ Denise Bossy, "Indian Slavery in Southeastern Indian and British Societies," in Alan Galloway ed. *Indian Slave Trade in Colonial America* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) 217-227.

⁶⁵ Proxy wars are generally defined as conflicts where two opposing sides use third parties as substitutes rather than fighting each other directly.

traded in Charlestown.⁶⁶ The French along with their Indian allies surprised Price and an interpreter on the St. Louis River and took the men safely to Mobile. When he arrived, Bienville asked him why he was supplying their allied Indians with presents, to which Price responded that “all this country belonged to them [the English] and that they had more claim to it than we did; that if we wished to dispute with them they would know what they would have to do.” Bienville confiscated Price’s official documents from the Governor of South Carolina, Charles Craven, which detailed plans for a colonial enterprise west of the Appalachians.⁶⁷

Price stayed in Mobile for three days before being released. After a short visit to Pensacola he traveled north towards the Upper Creek towns but was ambushed and killed near the mouth of the Alabama River by a hunting party of Tomé. Price was a well-known Carolinian Indian agent and English instigated slave raids had taken a toll on Tomé towns in the Mobile delta, indicating his death was not simply an accident or case of mistaken identity. The general revolt across the frontier against the Carolina traders greatly benefitted the French. Bienville sent emissaries to negotiate peace between former native adversaries and revitalize their support in the hopes of strengthening the coalition of allies in the vicinity of Mobile. French envoys were also to work with Indian leaders for the freedom of captured English civilians, which they did to some success. Mobile became a brief sanctuary for the English awaiting repatriation to the Carolinas.⁶⁸

The French took advantage of the void left by the English traders during the Yamasee War. This advantage, however, soon gave way to infighting when Cadillac returned from his

⁶⁶ Price Hughes was a trading partner of Thomas Nairne’s. Price planned to construct a settlement called Annarea (in honor of Queen Anne) somewhere on either the Mississippi or Tennessee rivers.

⁶⁷ McWilliams, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 160-163; *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to Pontchartrain,” June 15, 1715, 181-182.

⁶⁸ McWilliams, *Fleur de Lys.*, 163.

mission among the Illinois and retracted many of Bienville's efforts. In addition to sending emissaries to the nations of the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, Bienville proposed to establish Louisiane's eastern boundary and create a buffer to future English incursions. An outpost would also serve as a trading post for the Upper Creeks. As early as 1714, Bienville sought the construction of an inland fort among the Alabamas at the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers.

Despite having only a few thousand residents (black and white) scattered from the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiane was by 1730 able to sustain itself through a reliance on a unified policy of diplomacy through mutual respect and gift giving.⁶⁹ This allowed the French a competitive advantage over their better established and supplied, more populous English counterparts in Carolina and Virginia. A unified gift-giving policy helped offset France's numerical and commercial disadvantage in North America. While the English aggressively pursued Indian allies with greater quantities of merchandise, the oftentimes intense commercial rivalry among the Atlantic colonies weakened a committed Indian policy. Meanwhile, the French guaranteed necessary alliances with powerful nations like the Choctaws through a keen understanding of what gifts meant to these peoples and how in the absence of significant numbers of soldiers and colonists, Louisiane could be sustained through a reciprocal system of gift giving and attention to native diplomatic protocol. This realization came about gradually though. Awkward confusion gave way to a celebrated cultural middle ground where the language of commercial interaction afforded a reasonably successful trade policy. Indian cooperation would therefore remained essential to maintaining French presence along the Gulf coast. Local

⁶⁹ *The Census Tables for the French Colony of Louisiana from 1699 through 1732*, Translated and compiled by Charles R. Maduett, Jr. (New Orleans: Clearfield Company, 1972) viii, 50, 81, 113.

Indians provided both militarily and commercially to the fledgling colony at Mobile and greater Louisiane.

The French established settlements near Indian towns. As with the Tensaws and the Apalachees at Mobile, the French also frequently encouraged Indians to move within close proximity to their settlements. Settlement locations needed to offer strategic and commercial benefits along with having agricultural potential. Second generation settlements such as Fort Rosalie (1716) near the Natchez, Fort Toulouse (1717) among the Alabamas, New Orleans (1718) within the vicinity of the Bayogoulas and others, and Fort St. Pierre (1719) close to the Yazoos were purposefully positioned near Indian towns. The decision concerning where to locate French settlements is a subject for debate among anthropologists. Historian Joseph Zitomersky argues that the location of native populations “came to function as basic components of the total French settlement effort...” Not only as territorial supporters but also defenders, and providers of basic food stuffs.⁷⁰ Pragmatism demanded close relations with territorial respect from the French, who were unable to dominate all their Indian neighbors militarily. Their experience in Canada meant brothers Iberville and Bienville were undoubtedly acquainted with the diplomatic procedures necessary to conduct business with the local Indians near Mobile. The universal language of gift giving and the significance offered in the calumet ceremony were means to secure military and commercial alliances and assure a peaceful coexistence.

Iberville clearly understood the significance of the calumet in Indian cultures. Upon seeing signs of Indians when he first travelled up the Mobile-Tensaw delta in 1699, he fired several shots with a musket and carved images on trees in the area depicting a man holding a

⁷⁰ Joseph Zitomersky, *French Americans-Native Americans in the Eighteenth-Century French Colonial Louisiana: The Population Geography of the Illinois Indians, 1670s-1760s* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1994) 359-387.

calumet of peace and three ships.⁷¹ Smoking the calumet (Fr. “hollow reed”) was an important ceremony that greeted early French explorers to the Eastern Woodlands. Father Jacques Marquette among the Illinois recorded as early as 1673 “they presented to us, according to custom, their calumet, which one must accept, or he would be looked upon as an enemy.” Upon further reflection Marquette mused, “It now only remains for me to speak of the calumet, the most mysterious thing in the world. The scepters of our kings are not so much respected; for the Indians have such a deference for it, that one may call it ‘The God of Peace and War, and the arbiter of life and death.’”⁷²

Understood as a ritual involving the smoking of tobacco in a sacred pipe, the calumet ceremony had the potential to establish covenants between different clans, individuals, and ethnicities. Failure to take such customs seriously could have disastrous results. Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac refused to receive the calumet from the Natchez in late 1715 as his party ascended and descended the St. Louis River on a mission to the Illinois. His actions effectively inaugurated the First Natchez war. The *Commissaire-ordonnateur*, Jean-Baptiste Duclos, reported to Pontchartrain that “calumets are a sign of peace and it is the custom among the Indians not to refuse them from any nation except from those upon which they absolutely wish to make war.” Cadillac’s unwillingness to follow proper etiquette provoked a Natchez war party to murder four French traders and destroy goods valued at between eight and ten thousand livres.⁷³ Archaeological excavations throughout the site at Old Mobile reveal numerous catlinite

⁷¹ Iberville’s *Gulf Journals*, 39.

⁷² French’s *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, 288-289; For a discussion of how the calumet ceremony may have originated, its significance, and how it may have spread to the southeastern Indians see Donald J. Blakeslee’s “The Origin and Spread of the Calumet Ceremony,” *American Antiquity* 46 (October, 1981) 759-768; Ian W. Brown’s “The Calumet Ceremony in the Southeast as Observed Archaeologically,” in Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood and Tom Hatley ed. *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, 371-419.

⁷³ *MPAFD* III, “Bienville to Pontchartrain,” January 2, 1716, 193-194; “Bienville to Raudot,” January 20, 1716, 198; “Duclos to Pontchartrain,” June 7, 1716, 208-209.

(brownish-red clay) pipestones, demonstrating a major proliferation of their use among the colonists. Calumet pipes were found in such high volume that it is believed the colonists may have actually fatigued the ceremony, making it routine. Despite its popularity, however, the calumet retained much of its sacred meaning to French-Indian diplomacy throughout France's tenure in North America.⁷⁴

Gift exchange was another custom that had significance in French-Indian relations. Indians believed gifts had special meaning beyond the simple exchanges of necessities. Gifts had political and social importance. In Indian societies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries leaders were not determined by birth, but rather through persuasion in the form of military prowess and the adherence to communal obligations. Dedication to the latter responsibility assured a continuity of the social order in these cultures.

The headman's responsibility for the community's needs took precedent over his personal ambitions. The transmission of wealth assured a continuance of respect and power from those he meant to rule. His power was conditional upon the generosity he expressed to those he governed. Lavish dances and feasts at the expense of the headman marked Indian ceremonies. The needy and neighboring towns received shared surplus fish and meat. Plunder from raids was disseminated to the headman's warriors and the families of those killed in the endeavor. Generosity was an inseparable concept from the power a headman held.⁷⁵ Importing exotic trade items and distributing them was an essential means to maintaining respect and power within

⁷⁴ James N. Gunderson, Gregory Waselkov, and Lillian J. K. Pollack, "Pipestone Argillite Artifacts from Old Mobile and Environs," *Historical Archaeology* 36 (2002): 105-116; James N. Gunderson in "'Catlinite' and the Spread of the Calumet Ceremony," *American Antiquity* 58 No. 3 (July 1993): 160-162. Gunderson argues that "catlinite" is a term too liberally applied by archaeologists to the material used to make ceremonial pipes. The location of the various types of clay used reveals not only who made the pipes but also how widespread the ceremony might have been.

⁷⁵ Charles Hudson, *Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976) 297; John Bernard Bossu, *Travels Through That Part of North America Formerly Called Louisiana*, translated by John Reinhold Forster (Kessinger Publishing, 2009) 165.

Indian societies. According to Patricia Galloway, many aspects of trade with Europeans supplanted earlier forms of trade in pre-contact Indian societies. Where Indians once relied on goods fashioned from stone, wood, and pottery, access to superior European wares revolutionized how these societies managed time that had been traditionally devoted to carrying out basic subsistence tasks. European demand for raw materials and enslaved individuals severely altered the economic control earlier chieftains enjoyed as tribal leaders—no longer able to function as the sole possessors and managers of lucrative trade items. This new economic reality, Galloway argues, secured Indians the peripheral status as suppliers of raw materials to European markets, which, in effect, prevented them from becoming traditional chiefdoms or states as they had been in the pre-contact past. They would remain in a state of “underdevelopment,” dependent upon their new European relationships.⁷⁶

Gift giving within Indian societies carried many responsibilities for the both the giver and receiver. The giver presented gifts which, if accepted, obligated the receiver to reciprocate. This aspect of Indian life also worked to bridge language barriers between European and Indian peoples. Iberville understood how gifts could function as diplomatic gestures and sustain French colonial endeavors along the Gulf coast. Exchange customs among Indians in North America dictated that gifts were necessary when agreements were struck. Trade in this fashion not only satisfied specific needs of Indian nations, but also cemented important political alliances with European powers. Gifts and smoking the calumet of peace were crucial for French-Indian relations. Attention to this protocol was essential to maintaining a natural order along the frontier.

⁷⁶ Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) 37, 200.

Colonial experience in Canada taught the importance of gift giving in Indian cultures, but French officials along the Gulf coast encountered new challenges and benefits in the application of this policy. Louisiane's peripheral status demanded an adherence to these procedures in order to guarantee its survival. French Canadians governed colonial Louisiane and brought certain diplomatic experiences to the Gulf South with respect to Indians. Where Louisiane seems to have altered an accepted Canadian concept in gift giving was in the nature of how this practice could operate as a means of survival for the nascent colony. Originating as a means to attain food for the soldiers and settlers, exchange customs evolved into powerful military alliances and commercial development.

Measures of hospitality governed French-Indian relations. Visiting delegations of Indians had arrived at French outposts almost daily since the time of Sauvole's command at Fort Maurepas and they expected gestures of hospitality involving food and goods.⁷⁷ French skill at diplomacy, according to British trader James Adair, permitted them to offset their numerical disadvantage in potentially hostile country.⁷⁸ But in French installations along the Gulf coast, budgeted food was often difficult to muster for the nearly constant string of Indian visitors. Bienville complained in a letter to Pontchartrain that visitations were straining the royal mission.⁷⁹ His communications detail the difficulty in finding enough food to feed the native groups that came to Mobile. One warehouse official in Mobile feared that continued visits would deplete the French ability to continue providing gifts for official delegations of Indians and might "undo the nations' alliances with the French."⁸⁰ Failing to have enough food and gifts would be interpreted as disrespectful. Colonial officials understood that "it is the greatest indication of

⁷⁷ Higginbotham, *The Journal of Sauvole*, 22-25, 45.

⁷⁸ Adair., *History*, 309-311.

⁷⁹ *MPAFD* III, "Bienville to Pontchartrain," October 27, 1711, 169.

⁸⁰ *MPAFD* II, "Memoir on Louisiana by Mandeville," April 27, 1709, 48.

enmity among them not to give food to those who make a visit.”⁸¹ The alliances were taking their toll on the colony’s resources. One colonial official was embarrassed at the ragged dress of the soldiers within the colony (“clad in skins”) and the lack of adequate food. It “gives the Indians,” he wrote, “a miserable idea of us.”⁸²

The allotment of gifts allowed Iberville to enjoy diplomatic successes with Indian tribes both east and west of the Mississippi River. So much so, that gift giving became a regular yearly expense for the colony. Always forced to compete with the superior quality and quantity of English goods,⁸³ the French found it necessary to steadily increase the amount spent on presents to the Indians. Gift giving totaled 6,515 livres from 1706 to 1707, consuming one-fifth the colony’s total expenditures. Gift merchandise continued to increase on average throughout France’s tenure in Louisiane. By 1732, some 20,000 livres were spent on gifts to the Indians.⁸⁴ The appearance of the Crozat Company (Company of Louisiane) in June 1712 did not diminish this policy, and merchandise to the Indians increased some 200 percent. Between Crozat’s abandonment of the monopoly he held over Louisiane in 1717 to Bienville’s reinstatement as governor in 1743, the amount spent on presents neared 200,000 livres. But this was never a popular policy with French officials, who did not wish to encourage the Indians to expect regular deliveries of merchandise. While the annual amount allocated for gifts climbed on average, funds earmarked for this purpose fluctuated drastically due to prolonged periods of conflict. The War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) impacted the amount of money available to give to the

⁸¹ *MPAFD*, II, “Duclos to Pontchartrain,” October 25, 1713, 132.

⁸² *MPAFD*, II, “D’Artaquette to Pontchartrain,” June 20, 1710, 56.

⁸³ *MPAFD*, II, “Abstract of Letters from Bienville to Pontchartrain,” July 28, 1706, 23-24.

⁸⁴ *MPAFD*, III, “King Louis XIV to De Muy,” June 30, 1707, 52; “King to Bienville and Salmon,” February 2, 1732, 575-576.

Indian nations and virtually isolated the colony from its metropolitan connections.⁸⁵ The War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and the French and Indian War (1754-1763) also restricted the colony from maintaining consistent contributions to the local nations.⁸⁶ During these conflicts Louisiane's remoteness and marginal status in France's empire became glaringly apparent as supply shipments came to a halt. Colonists and soldiers alike were forced to live off Indian corn.⁸⁷ Pontchartrain failed to appreciate the cultural significance of gift giving and how this practice sustained marginal settlements like Mobile. He discouraged gift giving as a policy. "It is very extraordinary that in a country like this that the soldiers and inhabitants do not themselves produce provisions in quantities sufficiently large for their subsistence," he complained.⁸⁸

French officials in general disliked the context of gift giving and how political obligations to native headmen determined the tenor of the alliance. Larger nations like the Choctaws and Chickasaws viewed the French as tributary allies.⁸⁹ Bienville was frustrated at the way the Indians interpreted French gestures of friendship. Indignantly he protested the "insolence with which they pretended to consider as tribute the presents that the king is so kind to grant them." Indian leaders often manipulated French traders and military officials to

⁸⁵ Giraud tells us that the crisis was so intense that the French government was unable to equip a single supply ship to assist the colony for several years.

⁸⁶ For an insightful analysis of the percentages of gift giving in the early years of colonial Louisiane see Khalil Saadani, "Gift Exchange between the French and Native Americans in Louisiana," in Bradley Bond's *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press) 48; Cornelius J. Jaenen, "The Role of Presents in French-Amerindian Trade," in Duncan Cameron, ed., *Explorations in Canadian Economic History: Essays in Honor of Irene M. Spry* (Ottawa, 1985), 231-250; and W. J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade in Eighteenth Century Imperialism," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Jul. 1983), pp. 341-362.

⁸⁷ *MPAFD*, III, "Bienville to Pontchartrain," 151.

⁸⁸ *MPAFD*, III, "Pontchartrain to D'Artaguette," July 11, 1709, 130.

⁸⁹ French colonialism was dependent upon native cooperation through assistance in providing basic subsistence and military alliances. Their power in the region grew, however, as native populations were gradually diminished due to disease and constant warfare. By the 1720s, the principle Indian nations that met Iberville (the Bayogoulas, Mougoulaches, Chitimachas, Oumas, Tensaws, and Colapissas) were virtually extinct, either having died off or incorporated into larger nations like the Creeks. Numbers collapsed within a generation. Estimates project 104,000 in 1700 to 77,000 in 1715. Figures on these *petites nations* are noted by Peter H. Wood in "The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790," in Gregory Waselkov's *Powhatan's Mantel: Indian in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989) 102.

strengthen their positions among their own people. Realizing the tenuous position of the settlements that hugged the Gulf coast, headmen learned to broker for goods in ways that guaranteed their unchallenged role as redistributors.

The French also tried to use this custom to their advantage. From the very beginning, governors of Louisiane recognized the fractious nature of the coalescent societies of the Southeast and labored to reward loyal or manageable chiefs with special presents. “Medal chiefs” (named for the silver medals they were given) received a disproportionate amount of presents to assure their continued cooperation.⁹⁰ These chiefs could then distribute gifts among their favorites, thus increasing their own influence through a dependency on French good graces. The French sought to aid efforts that concentrated leadership in one or several men as potential mouthpieces to their own agenda. Gifts in this system buttressed French influence among their Indian allies. Larger more lucrative gifts were given to headmen with more potential influence. Other lesser headmen received smaller donations, as did those who had shown unusual acts of loyalty or military prowess. In this sense, the French, perhaps unintentionally, deepened factionalism. But while these men served French purposes, they were not always universally recognized as legitimate figures of authority.⁹¹

Gift giving could also translate into acts of reciprocal justice. Cadillac’s heedless action that led to the assassination of four traders in the fall of 1715 was swiftly redressed the following spring. Bienville led a party of some thirty-five soldiers from Mobile to the Natchez to discuss retribution for the deaths of the slain traders. Petite Soleil, the brother of the grand chief of the Natchez, brought the heads of three of the perpetrators to Bienville, arguing that he was unable to

⁹⁰ It should be noted that this was not a practice exclusive to the French and was a common feature to English, and later American, Indian policy.

⁹¹ Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 104; *MPAFD*, II, “Duclos to Pontchartrain,” October 25, 1713, 125-129.

exact further justice. Unwilling to accept this flagrant act of disrespect, Bienville publically executed six hostages, one with apparent ties to the previous year's incident. This show of force was necessary because the French were out numbered nearly 10 to 1. Following the protocol of reciprocity with respect to revenge killing was an essential element to assuring mutual respect between cultures. Colonial administrators understood the harsh but fair *lex talionis* that lay at the heart of Indian justice.⁹² Balance was restored when the Natchez permitted the establishment of Fort Rosalie later that year. The practice of blood revenge had its root in the distant Mississippian past. The French tried to use this tradition to instill loyalty among their allies, but they did not require only Indian nations to adhere to this custom. To demonstrate a lasting commitment to the French-Choctaw relationship, Bienville acquiesced to the justice of having two Frenchmen executed for the murder of two Choctaws in 1739—after gifts failed to appease the aggrieved parties.⁹³

The French encouraged war between the Indians when they felt it served a broader purpose. This was certainly the case after the Natchez revolt. The Natchez virtually annihilated the small French settlement of Fort Rosalie on November 28, 1729 in retaliation for the thoughtless and aggressive land seizures by tobacco cultivators of the region. The French urged the Choctaws to join the French in attacks against the Natchez and their Chickasaw allies to the north. By this time, Iberville's older policy that supported a Choctaw-Chickasaw peace had been long abandoned and proved virtually unsustainable.⁹⁴ It became pragmatically clear that the French would never fully incorporate all the Chickasaw factions under their aegis of influence

⁹² *MPAFD*, III, "Bienville to Cadillac," June 23, 1716, 213; La Harpe, *Journal*, 93-98.

⁹³ *MPAFD*, IV, "Noyan to Maurepas," January 4, 1739, 161, 166-167.

⁹⁴ Alfred Wade Reynolds, "The Alabama-Tombigbee in International Relations," (PhD Dissertation., University of California, Berkley, 1928) 55-56. While the French coaxed the Choctaws to fight, they rarely took the field themselves. They preferred to give rewards for prisoners, scalps, and heads brought back to Mobile.

due to distance and a deep-rooted dependency on the English trade. A perpetual war would both weaken a key English ally in the region and check the potential power of the Choctaws, whom the French feared might desert the alliance and turn on them at any moment. Additionally, the destruction of the Chickasaws (whom the French had reason to believe incited the Natchez) would more completely unite their Gulf coast operations with the Illinois country and New France beyond.⁹⁵ French officials in Mobile argued in favor of “leaving the Choctaws free to continue this war which can only be advantageous to us because it may destroy or reduce nations whose movements we have reason to fear.... It is even hoped that it will continue to the extent of the entire destruction of both nations if it were possible because the Choctaws are numerous and may cause us uneasiness on account of their numbers and because the more of them who are killed...the greater will be our safety.”⁹⁶

This policy served the English well, too. It had, in fact, served as a strategy to offset the numerically superior Creeks and Cherokees near the end of the Yamasee War. Recognizing both nations as mortal enemies created a priority for policymakers interested in holding “both as our friends, for some time, and assist them in cutting one another’s throats without offending either ... for if we cannot destroy one nation of Indians by another, our country must be lost.”⁹⁷ Pitting one Indian nation against another would serve the undermanned British forces at Mobile and West Florida well after the departure of the French in 1763.

⁹⁵ The Chickasaws occasionally attacked French river vessels as they descended and ascended the Mississippi River. This proved very disruptive to commercial and communicative efforts. *MPAFD*, V, “Vaudreuil to Rouillé,” September 22, 1749, 34; “Kerlérec to Rouillé,” August 20, 1753, 131; The French insisted that all English traders must be removed as a condition of peace. This was something that the Chickasaws were unwilling to do. The Chickasaws were not exclusively allied to the English though. They effected a successful French-English balance from 1702-1729, in methods similar to their Creek and Choctaw neighbors.

⁹⁶ *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to the Council,” February 1, 1723, 343; “Minutes of the Superior Council of Louisiana,” May 16, 1723, 357-358; “*Ibid.*,” September 18, 1723, 378-380.

⁹⁷ “Extract from a letter from South Carolina [?] to Joseph Boone,” *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies*, 290.

That the French and English continually encouraged their native allies into perpetual war against one another reveals how little they understood or cared about ancient indigenous customs with respect to open conflict. Seasonal wars were common in pre-contact times. Blood revenge, the act of avenging the murder of a slain kinsman by killing either the perpetrator or a member of his or her clan to assuage the grief of the victim's family, constituted a sizeable portion of pre-contact warfare. European notions of conflict revolved around a concept of total war and they had difficulty understanding how the execution of an individual other than the culprit could satisfy the aggrieved party. Misunderstandings like this persisted as Europeans sought to prosecute proxy wars across the Southeast. Indians often felt they had met the requirements necessary for retribution by killing members of opposing factions or clans only to discover Western conceptions of warfare did not dovetail with their own. This was a common feature of the Choctaw civil war (1746-1750), when pro and anti-French elements butchered one another at an alarming rate and scale. The heads and scalps of pro-English factions that were brought to the French at Mobile and Fort Tombecbé during the conflict were thought by the Choctaws to be sufficient retribution for crimes against themselves and allies. But these gestures frequently fell short of Louisiane's administrative expectations forcing prolonged military endeavors that exhausted Choctaw resources and lives.⁹⁸

Louisiane's position on the margins of Louis XIV's empire left it vulnerable to these types of uncomfortable arrangements. Isolated with an inconsistent flow of supplies and an inadequately reinforced, unmotivated group of men, colonial officials struggled to maintain order and discipline. Bienville confessed, "the King seemed to be maintaining a small garrison there only to preserve for himself the possession of such a vast extent of country." In 1708, the colony

⁹⁸ Patricia Galloway, "Choctaw Factionalism and Civil War, 1746-1750," in Greg O'Brien ed. *Pre-removal Choctaw History: Exploring New Paths* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008) 70-102.

had 122 soldiers and sailors, 80 Indian slaves, 77 colonists (24 men, 28 women, and 25 children) along with some 60 Canadian *coureurs du bois*. Suffering countless privations from hunger and disease, Bienville records that the colony would have surely perished were it not for the “assistance of the Indians.” Despite shortages and news of an impending overland attack on Mobile by the English and their Indian allies, French colonists and soldiers frequently traded powder and ball to the local Indians for food.⁹⁹ Trade with friendly Indians would only go so far in sustaining French efforts along the Gulf coast though. Overtures from colonists to administrators professed a strong desire for African slaves to be imported from the Caribbean islands to cultivate fields and establish a plantation economy similar to Carolina’s.¹⁰⁰

Intercolonial cooperation was also crucial. Historical accounts along with archaeological field work near Dauphin Island and Mobile and Pensacola bays confirm the existence of a Franco-Hispano trade network on the Gulf coast during Mobile’s first decade. During the War of Spanish Succession the two colonial powers stationed at Mobile and Pensacola enjoyed a time of measured cooperation. The Spanish ports of Veracruz, Havana, and Pensacola welcomed a limited French trade of sorts, excepting only a few commodities. Regardless of the restrictions French colonists of every stripe enthusiastically pursued trade with the Spanish. This commercial relationship was prompted by the inattentiveness of metropolitan officials in France and a desire for hard currency. Only six large supply ships arrived from France between 1701 and 1711 carrying 300 to 600 tons of supplies. Ships infrequently left Mobile for France loaded with furs and skins and naval stores in amounts that hardly validated the existence of a colonial economy.

⁹⁹ *MPAFD*, II, “D’Artaguetto to Pontchartrain,” August 18, 1708, 32-33; III, “Bienville’s Memoir on Louisiana,” 1726, 523.

¹⁰⁰ African slavery became the logical solution to the high mortality and truancy of Indian slaves. The disruption to the deerskin trade on the frontier caused by “mourning wars” also contributed to the decline in Indian slavery as a solution to labor demands. This development coincided with the foundation of the *Code Noir* in the French Antilles in the 1680s. *MPAFD*, II, “Abstract of Letters from Bienville to Pontchartrain,” July 28, 1706, 23, 28; “Bienville to Pontchartrain,” October 12, 1708, 37; Higginbotham, 302,541.

While French posts were well stocked with native goods and foods like venison, maize, and ceramics they were insufficiently provisioned with European foodstuffs such as wheat grain, beef, pork, and wine. The French crafted small supply ships to carry goods from Spanish ports. Reports record 38 supply ship arrivals at Dauphin Island during the first decade of settlement—Veracruz (11), Pensacola, (8) Havana, (7) France, (5) St. Dominique, (4) and Martinique (3). Despite being marginalized members of the French empire, Louisiane inhabitants were well informed through communication channels from Cuba, Mexico, and the Caribbean islands. Smuggling thrived in this network as well with Indian supplied skins and furs being popular items for transport. Louisiane’s financial minister Nicholas de La Salle accused Bienville, among other Canadian officers, of illegally profiting from the trade network and misusing the King’s ships for personal gain. This traded ended in 1712 with the advent of the Crozat monopoly.¹⁰¹

Metropolitan concern over finances pushed on an already strained French treasury to entertain other options for Louisiane’s future. As early as 1707, Pontchartrain explored the possibility of handing Louisiane over to a private company. Antoine Crozat, Pontchartrain’s financial minister, possessed considerable maritime experience as a merchant. Convinced by Cadillac that the region was rich in mineral wealth, Crozat took possession of Louisiane in 1712 and inaugurated an atmosphere of disharmony within the colony through his efforts to reap profits at all costs. Pontchartrain supported Crozat’s involvement because it freed the monarchy of financial responsibility to Louisiane. He was given a fifteen year trade monopoly over the colony.

This brief episode of chartered proprietary rule would prove disastrous for the colony and its inhabitants. Crozat’s determination to see financial returns slashed a wide range of annual

¹⁰¹ *MPAFD*, III, “King Louis XIV to Bienville,” June 30, 1707, 64; “Pontchartrain to De La Salle,” June 30, 1707, 69-70; Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana*, 102-107.

expenses ranging from defense to trade goods. Trade with Pensacola and other Spanish ports was closed. Manufactured goods were restricted to those of French origin. The company raised prices on these French imports while lowering them on the exported agricultural produce and Indian supplied skins and furs. Rivalries between company officials escalated tensions in the colony creating dramatic exchanges between colonial bureaucrats that further weakened the colony's ability to effectively administer itself.¹⁰² Discipline broke down as soldiers and civilians rebelled against company policies through mutinies and smuggling. Despite fines, threats, and corporal punishment, the illegal trade in contraband goods with the nearby Spanish continued unabated. These exchanges included valuables such as deer, bear, and raccoon pelts, as well as fresh hewn lumber. The Spanish reciprocated these exchanges with luxury items such as wine and sugar.¹⁰³ Crozat's administrators labored to eliminate these types of unsanctioned transactions so as to control all commercial activity in the region.

Crozat's Louisiane did little to change French dependency on local Indians. In many ways soldiers and settlers were still heavily reliant on native goodwill for basic sustenance, labor, and military protection. Company price gouging on basic subsistence items drove hungry colonists and soldiers into Indian camps where countless transactions in an underground exchange system continued to feed and clothe the colony. In Duclos's lengthy 1713 report to Pontchartrain he cites a number of grievances against the company, namely in the interruption of "commerce that afforded subsistence to the inhabitants of Louisiane." Duclos was pessimistic

¹⁰² Carl A. Brasseaux, "The Cadillac-Duclos Affair: Private Enterprise versus Mercantilism in Colonial Mobile," *Alabama Review*, 27 (1984), 257-270; for an in depth, point-by-point breakdown of the colony's supposed grievances against the company see: *MPAFD*, III, 70-143.

¹⁰³ Giraud, *History of Louisiana*, V, 158. Usner, 28.

about the colony's future under Crozat.¹⁰⁴ By 1717 this fruitless proprietorship ended when Crozat surrendered the colony back to France.

The conclusion of Crozat's tenure seemed to herald a change in French policy. From 1716 to 1722 French officials concentrated on the construction of inland forts to focus on a renewed and aggressive diplomatic strategy towards Indians like the Creeks. Due to increased immigration that included both enslaved African and indentured French laborers, newfound military resources, and the increase of private investment, the French were able to broaden their role in Louisiane. The establishment of New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi River, growth in plantation agriculture, and the construction of garrisons meant to counter the influences of Carolina traders all changed the dynamics of frontier politics.

One such post was built in 1714 and located some 250 miles up the Mississippi River. Situated among the Natchez, this storehouse sought to negate English influences that threatened to reach the river. The second of the new military posts was situated near the nexus of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers, among the Alabamas. The Alabamas were part of a closely allied consolidation of Indian nations gradually forming into what the Carolinians would classify as the Creek Confederacy. Smaller refugee nations coalesced into core groups like the Abekas, Tallapoosas, and Alabamas. English traders claimed to have first encountered these proto-Creeks and established a trading post among them in the late seventeenth century.

Hostility characterized the relationship between the French and the Alabamas throughout much of the first decade after settlement. The English provoked their Alabama allies to attack French and Spanish interests in two separate wars—the first in 1702 and the second in 1708. Bienville sent two failed missions against the Alabamas as well. When these proved unsuccessful

¹⁰⁴ *MPAFD*, II, "Duclos to Pontchartrain," October 25, 1713, 79-143.

he offered bounties of muskets and powder for Alabama scalps and heads.¹⁰⁵ Even as late as 1713, Canadian *voyageurs* reported that the English were preparing the Alabamas for a strike against Mobile. Allegedly, English shipbuilders and soldiers were stationed among the Alabamas, laboring on flat-bottomed vessels to sail downriver to move against French installations along the Gulf coast.¹⁰⁶

Anger at English trade policies and land encroachment eventually prompted swift retaliation against the Carolinians during the Yamasee War. After killing or driving off all the English traders living in the region, the Alabamas sought a new commercial direction for the guns, ammunition, and manufactured goods they needed. While scholars disagree about the motivations of the Indian parties involved, what is clear from the records is that after the expulsion English traders from the Southeast, a Creek delegation under the famed “Emperor” Brims and the Grand Chief of the Alabamas traveled to Mobile and met with Cadillac to discuss peace and the establishment of a French trading post in their country. “They sang their calumet of peace to him,” hoping to assuage the enmity between themselves and the French.¹⁰⁷ The French took the initiative to provide a reasonable alternative to Charlestown and made preparations to erect a fort among the Alabamas, a strategy long supported by Bienville, but one that had been largely ignored by his superiors. Continued feuding between Cadillac and Bienville, coupled with the former’s fear that such an action might be a violation of the 1686

¹⁰⁵ *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to Pontchartrain,” September 6, 1704, 19-22; “Pontchartrain to Bienville,” November 4, 1705, 30; “King Louis XIV to De Muy,” June 30, 1707, 55; “King Louis XIV to D’Artaguette,” June 30, 1707, 64; “Bienville to Hubert,” September 19, 1717, 222-223; “Bienville to Maurepas,” July 15, 1738, 719; Reynolds, *The Alabama-Tombigbee in International Relations, 1703-1763* diss., 39-74.

¹⁰⁶ *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to Pontchartrain,” June 15, 1715, 183.

¹⁰⁷ McWilliams, ed. *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 164-165; Daniel H. Thomas, *Fort Toulouse: The French Outpost at the Alabamas on the Coosa*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989) 6-7. Steven Hahn in *Invention of the Creek Nation* (2004) disputes Brims direct involvement in these negotiations, but rather his “voice” was present at the deliberations with the French, 86-87.

Treaty of Neutrality, caused delays and it was not until July 1717 that the project began to take shape.¹⁰⁸

The Creeks simultaneously opened lines of communication with the English and Spanish as well. When relations with their Catholic neighbors were deemed acceptable, Creek leaders under Brims set a Machiavellian tone by haggling over the location and terms for future dealings with the Carolinians. There would be no status ante bellum and the Creeks collectively sought to create a competitive economic and political environment for themselves. They refused to meet the English any further east than the Savannah River and deliberately filibustered peace proceedings. When terms for a peace congress were finally struck, the 200 Creek warriors expected to attend failed to show. Instead, a sole Indian envoy by the name of Bocatie came with a message claiming that his people wanted peace but could not come “to make a peace before their corn is ripe,” a clear indication that the Creeks wanted to delay peace proceedings for a few months, much to the consternation of the English. Bocatie also underscored the Creeks’ decision to continue to prosecute a war with the Cherokees and Catawbas (allies of the English) despite what terms they might reach with the English. “But as for the Charachees and Cuttabas,” he stressed, “they will have no peace with them.”¹⁰⁹

When relations between the Creeks and the Carolinians improved, the English sought to challenge French efforts among the Alabamas by erecting a post of their own. Indian traders like John Musgrove approached the Cherokees and Creeks as part of a peace delegation sent to all

¹⁰⁸ Cadillac feared that the building of a fort in Creek country so soon after the attacks against the Carolinians might have implicated a perceived culpability. He did not want the English to blame the French or Spanish for the massacres. His views on a fort north of Mobile can be found in Duclos’s official correspondence in *MPAFD*, III, “Duclos to Pontchartrain,” June 7, 1716, 204-205. This opinion was already held by the English, however. For information relating the forts construction and physical appearance see: Gregory Waselkov’s “Introduction” in Daniel H. Thomas, *Fort Toulouse: The French Outpost at the Alabamas on the Coosa* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press) vii-xxx and Thomas’s own description, 10-14.

¹⁰⁹ “Extract of a letter from South Carolina to Joseph Boone,” *Calendar of State Papers*, 324-325.

corners of the Southeast to patch relations with their former foes. An appointed commission would now regulate English traders and the posts that housed them to prevent the wonton abuses that caused the recent troubles. Traders would not be required to be licensed.¹¹⁰

Because the French were not prone to haste or expediency, a rival expedition under South Carolinian, Colonel Theophilus Hastings, set out to build a post among the Alabamas first. They took overland trails (as was common with the traditional mode of English travel in Indian country) with extensive pack trains. Meanwhile, the French came by boat under the command of Lieutenant de La Tour Vitral. The water route actually proved quicker and despite having started later, the French reached the headwaters of the Alabama River ahead of the English. They located an ideal spot on the east bank of the Coosa River that commanded the nearby Tallapoosa. It was situated on a slightly elevated bank that held back seasonal flooding. An Alabama town lay a few hundred yards away. More importantly, the site was below the fall line, which permitted boat traffic to and from the garrison.¹¹¹

Named Fort Toulouse after Louis Alexandre de Bourbon, Comte de Toulouse, it was more popularly known in official correspondences as the “Post aux Alibamons,” “Fort des Alibamons,” or simply “aux Alibamons.” The English referred to it as the “dangerous Alabama fort.”¹¹² It was not constructed as a defense against the nearby Creeks, but against the English and their Indian allies. There were no significant recorded instances of the local Indian populations expressing any malice towards the French at Toulouse. The nearby Alabamas were not pro or anti-French or English. They were neutral. The adjacent Abekas and Tallapoosas were

¹¹⁰ Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 153, 166, 200, 202.

¹¹¹ Crane, 36, 133, 135-136; AC., C13, 5:27-31.

¹¹² James Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 424. Adair says, “...till he arrived opposite to the great, and old beloved town of refuge, Koosah, which stands high on the eastern side of a bold river, about 250 yards broad, that runs by the late dangerous Alebahma fort, down to the black poisoning Mobbille, and so into the gulph of Mexico.”

more openly friendly to the English, but were not anti French either. They too traded skins at Toulouse. Neighboring Creeks assisted in the post's construction and were occasionally permitted to enter its confines. But French security in this isolated country was tenuous. They understood they had usufruct rights to the land and their continued presence and success in region was contingent upon their ability to provide a readily accessible supply of goods and support.

When the English arrived in the late summer of 1717 they brought numerous gifts.¹¹³ La Tour, fearing his labors would be in vain if the Alabamas were seduced by these presents, quickly assembled what goods he could from the voyage up river and dispensed them as a good will gesture to his hosts.¹¹⁴ Control over this borderland was crucial for a mastery of the southern interior. Georgia's founding in 1733 is attributable to concern over this borderland uncertainty.¹¹⁵ Europe was at peace, but this did not stop colonizing powers from encouraging hostilities between native proxies. Handsome bounties to Indians offset perceived strategic advantages.

European colonial garrisons were notoriously inefficient places staffed with insubordinate men. Soldiers assigned to the French colonies were usually criminals in a previous life. Commanders at these installations were oftentimes more occupied with their own profits in illicit trade than with exercising military protocol. Resupply was sporadic and garrison life left a lot to be desired from the soldiers stationed there. Poor living conditions, rampant disease, a lack of supplies and training—all exacerbated the miserable conditions of life on an isolated post. The

¹¹³ Colonel Theophilus Hastings had been a factor among the Cherokees. He is credited for helping renew and improve relations with the Creeks and thus, became a permanent factor among them. Crane, 201; William L. McDowell, *Journals of the Commissioners of the Indian Trade, September 20, 1710-August 29, 1718* (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1992) 188-190 discusses Hastings' commission.

¹¹⁴ *MPAFD*, II, "Hubert to the Council," October 26, 1717, 250; III, "Bienville to Hubert," September 19, 1717, 222-223.

¹¹⁵ Julie Anne Sweet, *Negotiating for Georgia: British-Creek Relations in the Trustee Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005) 38, 162, 182, 184-185.

wooden stockade itself was in constant need of repair from water rot and decay. The nearby presence of the English both threatened and tantalized soldiers stationed at the fort. Mutinies on French posts were common, but slightly more common at Toulouse. French soldiers frequently absconded to the English in the hopes of reaching Carolina and freedom. This was especially true for outlander posts like Toulouse.

Mutinies oftentimes turned violent with perpetrators fleeing east to Georgia or Carolina. More often the case involved runaways deserting to the English at the Creek town of Okfuskee. The first mutiny at Toulouse occurred a few months after the fort's construction. The most famous being the murder of Captain Jean Baptiste Louis DeCourtel Marchand in 1722.¹¹⁶ After killing Marchand, the mutineers took supplies and munitions and escaped across the Tallapoosa River for Carolina. Two officers escaped their captors; one making his way to the Alabamas at Hickory Ground, the other down river to Coosada. An assembly of French and Indians pursued the rebels and caught them about thirty miles from the fort. Those who were not killed in the ensuing battle were taken down river to Mobile where they were executed or made convicts for life.¹¹⁷

The placement of this stockade was particularly close to English commercial interests. It sat near a bifurcation of the heavily trafficked English Upper and Lower paths. Traders leaving Chickasaw and Choctaw lands in the north and west travelled east on this path to a junction just south of the fort. Governor James Oglethorpe figured it was a journey that pack-horse trains could make in about twenty-seven days. After a turn southward to lands belonging to the Lower

¹¹⁶ The French name Marchand translates to 'merchant' in English.

¹¹⁷ Albert J. Pickett, *History of Alabama and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi, From the Earliest Period* (Birmingham: The Webb Company Book Publishers, 1900) 229-230; La Harpe *Journals*, 261; *MPAFD*, III, "Bienville to the Spanish Commandant at the Adais," December, 1721, 316-317, "Memorandum on Artillery and Stores at Pensacola," April 24, 1723, 348-349. Marchand is significant as he was Alexander McGillivray's maternal great uncle.

Creeks along the Chattahoochee River, the route cut eastward again to the Savannah River where it joined the Upper Path. English adventurers used these paths to great success and they were vitally important communication, military, and trade arteries for Carolina.¹¹⁸

The constant presence of Englishmen among the Alabamas invited fears among the fort's occupants of imminent military action. Fear mostly centered on the likelihood that the Creeks might turn on the undermanned garrison at any moment. This prompted a steady stream of dire warnings from officers to officials back in Mobile. The superiority of English goods was seen as more than just an inconvenient reality. Correspondence reflects the real fear French officers had concerning their inability to match the volume of English commerce in the region. This failure might be used by unscrupulous traders to turn Creek allies into Creek enemies. The Creeks did not exactly dismiss these notions, however, and when confronted about English chicanery, the Alabamas simply played the part of the fox.

Despite contemporary evidence to suggest otherwise, the English esteemed the fort to be a powerful military installation bent on their destruction. English reports circulated rumors of "cunning" French commanders at Toulouse orchestrating elaborate schemes to turn Indian allies into English foes and incite African slaves to murder them in their sleep. Unable to accept accountability for their behavior, nor willing to recognize agency in the Yamasees and Creeks, the English suspected French and Spanish involvement in the attacks of 1715 "the [Alabamas] were subject to this Province untill [sic] 1715 ... they are now at peace with this Settlement [Toulouse], but as the French have secured their interest among them by building forts and placing [sic] garrisons, and carry on their trade by water carriage to their towns ... they will join

¹¹⁸ Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 134-136.

with them to make an entire conquest of this province....”¹¹⁹ Another source interestingly cites Catholic subversives: “so long as Priests and Jesuits are amongst ye Indians they would endeavor to sett them at variance with ye English.”¹²⁰ Defection to the French during the late war was surely at the “instigation of the French missionaries.” Sworn affidavits linked the recent hostilities to a grand international conspiracy. Allegedly, eyewitnesses spotted “enemy Indians” meeting with the Viceroy of Mexico, “in order no doubt to shew them their grandeur, that they may dispise [sic] us...., We need not acquaint the Government at home, how the French increase at Mobile, and now have built garrisons amongst the Creek Indians....”¹²¹

The Creeks learned to embrace this counterweight approach to dealing with colonial suitors. After the conclusion of the Yamasee War, the English implored the Creeks to expel the French stationed along the Coosa and Tallapoosa, hoping the southern frontier would return to an ante bellum status. The Creeks refused to play along, however, preferring the competition the French fort encouraged. It was an approach that Lieutenant François Hazeur noticed in 1740.¹²² Free to engage in diplomacy with three different European powers rather than simply allowing themselves to become pawns in Carolina’s commercial and territorial designs, the Creeks learned to operate multilaterally. The unofficial doctrine of neutrality was a common concept among matrilineal societies in eastern North America. With neither European party having a clear-cut advantage over them, the Creeks could enjoy a political balance of sorts. The French had to make concessions, too. Gaining diplomatic ground with the Creeks came at a price. The Creeks would

¹¹⁹ “Answers to Queries by the Board of Trade,” *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies*, (London: Kraus Reprint LTD., 1964) 321.

¹²⁰ “Col. Nicholson to William Popple,” *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies*, (London: Kraus Reprint LTD., 1964) 246.

¹²¹ “Committee of the Assembly of Carolina to Mr. Boone,” *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies*, (London: Kraus Reprint LTD., 1964) 206-207.

¹²² Thomas, *Fort Toulouse*, “Introduction,” by Gregory Waselkov, vi-x; *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to Maurepas,” May 8, 1740, 732.

control English incursions in the southeast, but only if the French permitted the type of economic competition necessary to allow this policy to work.¹²³

The French clearly underwent a change in formal policy after 1715. The extension of forts into the continent's interior was part of a broader shift in colonial strategy. The importation of African slaves, indentured servants, and European immigrants (although not discussed here in great detail) worked in conjunction with the infusion of private investment, as seen in the Crozat venture, to make Louisiane's profitability on par with the Atlantic coast colonies. The establishment of New Orleans in 1717 and the growth of plantations in its vicinity illustrate the slow maturation of a desire to replicate English commodity crop production. River trading posts and forts acted as beacons to French diplomacy and sought to extract deerskins more aggressively from the powerful Indian nations of the hinterland, and simultaneously check English imperial advances. The French would slowly depart from the strategy of maintaining small coastal perches that supported free-ranging Canadian *coureurs de bois* and Jesuit missionaries, who drifted independently across the frontier Southeast.

For the Upper Creeks who lived along the banks of the Alabama headwaters, Toulouse served as the most visible sign of this new policy directive. The Creeks learned that the pursuance of their own community's interests safeguarded them against control from outsiders. They resisted English territorial encroachments as long as the French maintained competitive commercial arrangements. Whether or not this was a conscious policy is still debated and most likely stemmed from the decentralized organization of Creek political life that dated back to a coalescent past. Archaeological excavations of Creek graves near the Toulouse site reveal the

¹²³ For books that discuss the Creek play-off system see: Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Steven C. Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); David H. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967).

level of competition between Europeans. Using chronological methods, archaeologists have been able to determine not only the source of specific goods, but also the degree to which factionalism played a role in Creek life.¹²⁴ This would have profound implications for understanding, not only the social and political structure of the Creek world, but also the seminal events in the coming decades.

¹²⁴ Gregory Waselkov, "Historic Creek Indian Responses to European Trade and the Rise of Political Factions, in Ethnohistory and Archaeology," in *Ethnology and Archaeology: Approaches to Postcontact Change in the Americas*, J. Daniel Rogers and Samuel M. Wilson ed. (New York: Plenum Press, 1988) 123-131.

CHAPTER 4

UPPER CREEK CORRIDORS OF COMMERCE: DISTANCE, SPACE, MOBILITY, AND THE CHARACTER OF THE CREEK ECONOMY

Overland paths and waterways existed as distinct cultural and economic phenomenon in the indigenous Southeast. The manipulation of space (exemplified in the previous chapter as contests for control over the region's overland paths and rivers after the arrival of the French and Spanish) was key for colonizing powers seeking to appropriate territory and peoples for their burgeoning empires. Creek communities also integrated strategies in accordance to geographic features in an effort to counter those same imperial forces for their own benefit. This chapter explores the relationship between mobility, material culture, landscapes, networks of trade, and the ideas of place. These concepts require explanation and a trade-based analysis best illustrates how material concerns are inseparable from the reproduction of culture, values, and the meaning of life for Creek communities. By looking at material items, their production, their movement through various trade networks, and their representative political and social meaning, one can better assess the dynamics and motives of an individual's engagement with self-defined affiliations and interests.

The contested territory of the Southeast was not a vacant landscape merely populated with Indians. It was an active place populated by nations and territories connected by trade networks, separated by boundaries, and defined by distinct traditions. These factors governed both a native community's identity and helped determine its ability to survive. Europeans, too, were forced to negotiate within an Indian political and cultural climate. Loose, difficult-to-

define, communal connections incorporated the main towns of the Upper and Lower Creek regions. As colonial pressures intensified throughout the eighteenth century, a political consciousness emerged and was delineated through real and imagined paths.¹ Communication between towns and the regular interaction between headmen and colonial traders and emissaries permitted the free exercise of political and economic arrangements that came to define the Creeks. They understood that their survival and welfare depended upon mobility and an access to certain territory and places. They jealously defended hunting grounds and agreed upon boundaries against intrusion, and after sustained contact, endeavored at great cost to preserve links with outside markets.²

The disparate groups that formed the Creeks gradually coalesced in response to the searing effects of the “shatter zone” that were rippling across the Southeast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They established new river valley communities and were linguistically similar with a common Mississippian background. Pragmatically escaping marauding Indian slavers from the North, Muskogean speaking peoples confederated into autonomous towns in the Alabama, Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Chattahoochee river valleys. Movement was an essential component of Creek life and survival for these peoples. Mobility, fragmentation, and reorganization characterized Indian life in the Southeast during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Invasive colonial market values turned the seventeenth century Eastern Woodlands into a “shatter zone,” primarily through the introduction of the Indian slave trade. The combination of epidemics and the sociopolitical dislocation from

¹ Imagined paths in this sense refer to the figurative paths to peace or war that frequently emerged during discussions between Natives and colonials. Paths to peace were symbolized as white and straight. Paths symbolizing war or detachment were colored red and often described as “grass covered,” “unsmooth,” and “crooked.”

² This general theme is present throughout Angela Pulley Hudson’s *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

widespread slaving operations were profoundly transformative. Coalescence in the wake of famine, war, and disease explain the varied origins of the many Native communities that formed the Creeks and underscored how mobility functioned as an act of agency by countering the effects of European military and commercial expansion.³

Archaeological evidence, historical records, and oral traditions provide useful insights into sociopolitical patterns that developed among the Creeks during and after the destructive events of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Migration legends and origin myths uncover revealing insights into how mobility mitigated formidable external obstacles. Both the symbolic and physical paths from distant, often violent western lands feature prominently in Creek orations told to Europeans.⁴ Creek origin myths are often complex dramas—difficult to follow—but abundant with symbolism and reveal historical cues from the nations traumatic past. Scholar Nicholas van Hear summarizes this tendency: “Diaspora populations tend to have among the most complex migration histories and to have accumulated the most substantial ‘migratory cultural capital.’” Relating origin stories served as an empowering exercise meant to turn crisis into an opportunity for victims to become agents of enterprise.⁵

Tchikilli [Chigelly], a prominent headman from the Lower Creek town of Cusseta, related the origins of his people in 1735 before colonial delegates in Savannah. Tchikilli discussed many common Creek cosmological themes—caves, anthropomorphism, and the colors red (war) and white (peace). Emerging from the mouth of the Earth in the distant West, the

³ Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, *Mapping the Mississippi Shatter Zone*, “Introduction: Mapping the Mississippi Shatter Zone,” 1-62; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 239, 244, 246, 248-250.

⁴ Albert S. Gatschet, *A Migration Legend of the Creek Indians Volume 1* (Philadelphia: D. G. Brinton, 1884) 224-230; 235. Gatschet refutes the obvious falsehoods associated with LeClerc Milfort’s relation of the Alabama origin story.

⁵ Nicholas Van Hear, *New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal, and Re-grouping of Migrant Communities* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998) 51, 62.

Cussetas engaged their Creek and Chickasaw neighbors in a prearranged, bloody war to determine which group was rightfully the oldest and most significant. When sufficient carnage completely covered a scalp pole in human trophies, the Cussetas were deemed the oldest, and thus, became the founding band of Creeks. The story continues through a series of events that encouraged the Cussetas to migrate east along a white footpath. After some deliberation they decided to find who made the white path. This journey brought new encounters and eventually led the travelers to towns of the peaceful Palachucholas (Apalachicolas). The Cussetas desired to live near this group, but as a prerequisite the Palachucholas demanded that the Cussetas abandon their war-like ways and live in harmony with their new neighbors. Tchikilli explained to his Georgian audience that keeping the “white path” was best for his people, despite his ancestors’ predilection for bloodshed. But while acknowledging their desire to take a peaceful course with respect to their new neighbors, the Cusseta headman warned, “they cannot yet leave their red hearts, which are, however, white on one side and red on the other.”⁶

This story is consistent with other Creek migration myths. The depiction of travel is not only an explanation of how this particular group originated, but also as a way to outline their political nature and frame of mind, in this case, towards the recent arrival of the colonists under James Oglethorpe. Conversations between town headmen and European officials frequently used

⁶ Gatschet, 244-251. Cusseta was considered the ancestral town of Coweta—the principal town of the Lower Creeks. Origin myths in this case are important, not necessarily as valuable history, but as determinants in “status relationships” between towns. Vernon James Knight Jr., “The Formation of the Creeks,” in ed. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser’s *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704* (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994) 375. The politics of mythmaking can also be seen with Steven Hahn’s treatment of this same story in his: Steven C. Hahn, “The Cusseta Migration Legend: History, Ideology, and the Politics of Mythmaking,” in *Light on the Path: The Anthropology of the Southeastern Indians*, ed. Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Robbie Ethridge (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006) 57-93. For Hahn, this migration legend was an attempt by Chigelly to both assert Coweta’s preeminence in the “ill-defined” Creek nation and proclaim his own political authority as not only the leading headman in that town, but as a voice for all Creek peoples.

the colors “white” and “red” to denote peace and war, while the “straightness” and “crookedness” of a metaphysical “path” (symbolic of a relationship or philosophy) was an allusion either to truth or duplicity. In this case, roads and travelers form a parable wrought with political overtures—trade and mutual respect equaled friendship and peace. Movement empowered Creeks in ways necessary both for their survival and personal identity.⁷

For native people living in the Chattahoochee River Valley in the decades before the eighteenth century, movement encompassed a profound sense of agency through a commercial discourse. Their migration to the Macon Plateau (on the Ocmulgee River) after the destruction of the Westos was an effort to exercise some measure of control over the southern trade moving west across overland paths from the Atlantic coast. Carolinians used a variety of terms for these people—“Ochese Creeks,” “Okmulgees,” “Cussetaws,” and “Kaweetas,” but due to their primary relocation near the banks of the Ochese Creek (modern-day Ocmulgee River), their most common appellation followed this water course. Estimates from 1709 list the “Ochasee” settlements as having eleven towns, totaling some 600 men and families with a few Apalachees interspersed among them. Carolina Governor Robert Johnson considered them “great hunters and warriors” and said that they “consume great quantities of English goods.” Another significant band of Creeks was located some 150 miles west of the Ochese peoples, on the Tallapoosa River. Governor Johnson indicated that this western group was also a significant trading partner for Carolina. The Cherokees, at the headwaters of the Savannah River though, were a disappointing contrast. Johnson considered them a “numerous people, but very lasey [sic],” due to their

⁷ Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads* 11-18. Hudson employs many cultural concepts in her analysis. She too cites Chigelly’s tale to Oglethorpe. Movement and its implications on the Creeks throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a central theme in her book.

unwillingness to engage market forces with comparable vigor.⁸ The geographical location of the Cherokees invited a near constant spate of warfare with both large northern Indian nations like the Iroquois, and the Middle Atlantic and Southern colonies. This seems to have precluded their ability to provide equivalent numbers in deerskins to their Creek counterparts.

The Upper Creeks were allied with the English for the first decade after Mobile's founding. Evidence attesting to their harassment of French-allied *petites nations* in the Mobile-Tensaw delta and Spanish missions is abundant in the colonial records. Friendly relations with one of the predominant groups that controlled the upper river systems feeding Mobile Bay was necessary to limit Carolinian commercial expansion. And while the French extended offers of peace to these distant antagonists as early as 1702, the Creeks along the headwaters of the Alabama River preferred their relationship with Charlestown to that of the fledging colony at Twenty-seven Mile Bluff. In May 1702, a peaceful Alabama delegation visited Mobile to assess the situation of the French there. This minor flirtation with the French was most likely a calculated gesture meant to test Carolina's commitment to their alliance with the Alabamas.⁹ Bienville was eager to demonstrate his desire for a lasting peace with the Alabamas and awarded his visitors surplus blankets along with various baubles and trinkets to assure their loyalty. He conditioned a hoped-for alliance on the Alabamas convincing their other Creek brethren to cease their relentless aggressions against the Choctaws, Apalachees, Mobilians, and Tomés. The two

⁸ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1708-1709*, "Governor and Council of Carolina to the Council of Trade and Plantations," 466-469. The Creeks were prolific suppliers of deerskins. As indicated above, the Cherokees were involved in constant fighting, hindering their contribution to the deerskin trade. The Chickasaws were a smaller nation, and were also perpetually engaged in warfare with the French and their native allies. Meanwhile, the Choctaws, although more numerous than the Creeks, were closely associated with the French and, thus, unable to procure enough firearms necessary to deliver comparable numbers of animal skins to the Creeks. Richard White in *The Roots of Dependency*, discusses the system of "gun sharing" among the Choctaws, 42-45.

⁹ Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 205-206.

groups parted that year on seemingly good terms.

The following May another party of Alabamas under a headman named Deerfoot visited Mobile. Unlike the previous spring, however, French storehouses were bare and Bienville had little to offer the visitors. Deerfoot promised to trade surplus corn to the hungry settlement at a reasonable price. Bienville agreed to the proposition. But this budding relationship collapsed as the small party of Canadian *coureurs des bois* sent to arrange the delivery of corn were perfidiously ambushed by Alabama warriors near present-day Montgomery, Alabama. The attack was most likely encouraged (and certainly armed) by Carolinian traders operating in the area.¹⁰ This incident was followed by a series of counter reprisals from the French and their Indian allies in what would inaugurate a decade-long guerilla campaign, neither party fully capable of striking a decisive blow against the other.¹¹

Over a decade later, following the Yamasee War, détente between the French and the Creeks permitted the establishment of a small garrison among the Alabamas. The French outpost of Fort Toulouse stood as a bulwark against unrivaled English advances in the Southeast. Its placement in the heart of Alabama (Indian) country would restrain English commercial efforts not only among the Creeks, but with France's indispensable allies the Choctaws and their inveterate foes, the Chickasaws as well. Its establishment worked in conjunction with France's decades-old gift giving policy initiative and Creek sensibilities regarding potent and aggressive

¹⁰ Alexander Moore, Thomas Nairne, *Muskhogeon Journals*, 76.

¹¹ Versions of this incident can be found in: McWilliams, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 63-68; Vernon J. Knight Jr. and Sherée L. Adams, "A Voyage to the Mobile and Tomeh in 1700 with Notes on the Interior of Alabama;" 179-194; Higginbotham, *Old Mobile*, 119-121, 126-131. The French and Alabamas smoked the Calumet of Peace, but the French learned that this was not an eternally binding ceremony and needed to be constantly renewed; Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 109-111 Bienville offered a bounty for Alabama scalps and prisoners/slaves. Five Alabama scalps bought a gun, powder, and five pounds of bullets. See: La Harpe, *Historical Journal*, 66, 68; Pénicaut, *Fleur de Lys*, 72-73, 123-125.

English market values and imperial aspirations in the region—something many Creek towns and the French feared. The growing plantations of the southern Atlantic colonies contributed to a general guardedness with respect to the English and their regional designs. Countering these and other external threats required an astute understanding of spatial/territorial possibilities and meanings.

Movement brought many advantages and changes to Creek towns. In the wake of the Yamasee War, the Spanish government tried to encourage factions of the Lower Creeks to migrate near the garrison at St. Marks, atop the Apalachee “old fields” that had been abandoned since the height of the Indian slave raids in that region. Until around mid century (1716-1763), Lower Creek groups established a series of towns in northern Florida to escape concerted English economic and military pressures. While the Spanish were unable to compete with the volume of trade goods offered by the English, (or the French for that matter) they did offer marginal succor from market and military subjugation. These groups would eventually become the Seminoles. In their case, distance from Creek polities and the catalytic market forces transforming much of the western world at the time seems to have caused a divergence from traditional modes of Creek social structure, and fostered a unique cultural hybrid in the swamps and savannas of La Florida. Their colonization of the dense Florida peninsula would sever most linkages with Creek country altogether by the end of the eighteenth century.¹² This type of mobilization is representative of the cultural traits long associated with migration in Creek communities.

¹² Boyd, “Diego Peña’s Expedition to Apalachee and Apalachicola,” 1-27; Charles H. Fairbanks, “The Ethno-Archaeology of the Florida Seminole,” in *Tacahale: Essays on the Indians of Florida and Southeast Georgia during the Historic Period*, ed. Jerald T. Milanich and Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978) 163-193. The ecological challenges and opportunities of the Florida environment allowed for adaptations to eventually form a new cultural identity for these people.

For the Creeks, and other Native groups, the environment was not merely a space where sociopolitical systems operated, but a place where people and relationships labored to coexist. Mobility and the utilization of territorial epistemology permitted the Creeks to manipulate colonial institutions economically and politically. The Creeks' conceptualization of the southeastern landscape was predicated on an ability to extend military power, move information, and trade goods across spatial divides—but not as a coordinated unit like a nation-state, rather as a collection of autonomous towns controlled by influential factions, each with a vested interest in reaching a secure balance between peace and plenty. Movement aided the organization of collective responses from these factions and their leaders. Roads between towns served to communicate shared experiences and elicit action when needed. The oft-told story of Lower Creek headman, Emperor Brims, who sent runners bearing knotted strands of deer hide to the various Upper and Lower Creek peoples, so as to acquire their support for attacks against Carolinian traders during the Yamasee War, is a testament of the way movement brought a collective political and military response during that conflict.¹³ Exchanges from long-distance locations were not separate from familial or kinship bonds that sought to provide a basic communal need.

Fictive kinship also expanded community horizons and permitted the extension of trade networks (through diplomacy) to secure external resources beyond a town's immediate surroundings. Scholars argue that this most likely aided coalescence during and after the “shatter

¹³ The story relating to Brims was found in Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 81-82. Ideas relating to movement, space, and boundaries are found throughout Angela Pulley Hudson's *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*. For a discussion of the many interdisciplinary approaches to Native American's relationship and interpretation of their physical and metaphysical surroundings see: James Taylor Carson, “Ethnogeography and the Native American Past,” *Ethnohistory* 49 (Fall 2002): 769-78.

zone” zone period.¹⁴ The process of formal adoption (a type of fictive kinship) expanded the role of the *fanimingo* (Muskogean for “Squirrel King”) functioning as a product of the peace-moiety in leadership institutions throughout the indigenous Southeast. The fanimingo operated as a title and an institution. As the matrilineal senior clan male (or clan uncle), the fanimingo acted as a representative or spokesman for his family or nation, among his adopted family or nation.¹⁵ As a “go-between,” the title assured a peaceful relationship with an external community and forged kinship networks that restored inter-communal and interpersonal trust. Diplomatic and commercial benefits to the fanimingo’s town of origin followed. Therefore, as an institution the fanimingo ideally guaranteed certain privileges and afforded special treatment and underscored the centrality of the town and family structure.¹⁶

As Joshua Piker notes, the challenge for contemporary scholars is that there is scant evidence of the Creek’s actually using the title of fanimingo, making it difficult to track the process of fictive kinship extension. When used, Piker argues, it was exclusively by and for the Upper Creek town of Okfuskee.¹⁷ Okfuskee’s privileged relationship with the Carolinians, and later Georgians, attests to an understanding of the role of fanimingo in diplomacy with the English colonies. It may, however, be logical to assume that this relationship extended to others as well, and was not exclusive to the Upper Creek town of Okfuskee. For instance, the actions of

¹⁴ Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 228-230.

¹⁵ Patricia Galloway parses out the diplomatic difficulties of translating matrilineal and patrilineal customs for the Choctaws and French. Usage of the term “father,” rather than “uncle” certainly confused rightful authority. Galloway further asserts that gift-giving rituals might have created “some sort of obligation similar to the fanimingo institution.” Patricia Galloway, “‘The Chief Who Is Your Father:’ Choctaw and French Views of the Diplomatic Relation,” in Gregory Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley ed. *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, 345-370. For her specific discussion of fanimingo and how this institution function within a commercial discourse see pages: 359-364.

¹⁶ For a first-hand account of how this selection process worked, and the ceremony affirming a fanimingo, see: Alexander Moore, *Nairne’s Journals*, 40-41.

¹⁷ Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America*, 24. Piker writes that “there are four examples of Okfuskees (and among the Creeks *only* Okfuskees) claiming the title of Fanni Mingo.”

the Alabamas parrot that of the Okfuskees in this respect, and it seems well within reason that they considered the French a comparable fictive kin relation. Observations of Creek behavior by the English and French illustrate an oversight they shared to a cultural rubric they most likely would not have understood, appreciated, or recorded. Patricia Galloway argues that this institution may have been articulated through a commercial discourse as well, specifically in the forms of trade and gift giving. The diplomatic conduct of Creek headmen through the eighteenth century authenticates the existence of a moral economy centered on interpersonal and inter-communal bonds with outsiders. Creek attention to how they valued interpersonal and inter-communal relationships compensates a failure to account for a formal identification of the term.¹⁸

Euro-American traders during the colonial and post-colonial eras also proved important factors in the establishment of meaningful commercial discourse between Creek towns and the Atlantic world. Marriages between these backcountry men and Creek women forged useful political, commercial, and communication conduits, empowering individual spousal interests as well as that of their broader community's. Creek wives taught local languages and customs, they processed deerskins, provided their husbands labor, children, useful information concerning the ever-shifting Creek mood on war and peace, and cemented alliances between husband-trader and ranking clan kin. Conversely, Creek interests in these marriages underscored the importance in connections with the deerskin trade and its dependable access to coastal entrepôt. With husband-traders headquartered in Creek towns throughout the year, town headmen maintained a semblance of control over the trade and ideally received regular supplies at fair prices. Steady

¹⁸ Dr. Joshua Piker, email message to author, 9/16/2011; Patricia Galloway, "'So Many Little Republics': British Negotiations with the Choctaw Confederacy, 1765," *Ethnohistory* 41 (1994): 513-537.

access to goods assured the prominent statuses of individuals, towns, and clans. For instance, it is estimated that frequent intermarriage between Euro-American traders and members of the prestigious Wind clan contributed to its esteemed reputation as the most reputable and celebrated of all the Creek clans.¹⁹

The introduction of market values to the indigenous South established a desire among Indian nations for external trade. As imperial rivalries for geopolitical control over the region intensified, maintaining territorial boundaries, shared spaces, interpersonal relationships, and trade routes was only possible through a firm management of the arms trade for both native and colonial alike. A key component of the Creeks' ability to satisfy their commercial demands and protect their territorial interests was a readily available access to arms and other European manufactures. In the years following the Yamasee War, (for the Alabamas especially and other Upper Creek groups to a lesser degree) this need for a military and commercial discourse was carried on with the most geographically viable option—the French.

By the time Iberville arrived on the Gulf Coast in 1700, the groups that would coalesce and collectively form the Creek Confederacy had already transformed from aboriginal cultures reeling from a series of shattering events, into hybridized societies that incorporated traditional ways with European manufactured goods. The processes that allowed these proto-Creeks to accept a sustained European commercial presence began in the formative decades before the arrival of the French. Well-established trade routes already connected southeastern peoples with

¹⁹ Andrew O. Frank offers another explanation, however. While connections built through intermarriage no doubt proved commercially and politically beneficial, the “distinguished” reputation of the Wind clan in particular might also be attributable to the frontier traders themselves. Frank suggests that inflating the clan’s status mitigated the effects these marital arrangements might have had on Euro-American traders trying to simultaneously coexist in two different social and cultural climates. Andrew O. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005) 35, n.32.

their English and Spanish neighbors. Despite the destructive forces unleashed by the Spanish *entrada* and Indian slave trade, ancient trade paths that had existed for centuries still functioned as corridors of commerce from the native coastal societies to those of the interior. Evidence suggests that in pre-contact times, peoples of the inland river systems were dependent upon coastal contacts and the prestige items they supplied, and that these interactions may have led to transformations in leadership strategies.²⁰ Societies nearer the Gulf coast like the Apalachees would have been among the first to encounter the sixteenth-century European beachheads that served as bases for military and colonial expeditions into the Native southeast. Archaeological excavations confirm the vibrancy of the long-distance relationships they shared with inland river system peoples. The presence of ornamental marine shells in Mississippian town sites is the most obvious indicator that these networks thrived in pre-contact times. Coastal connections in the form of rivers and overland paths would continue to serve as conduits well after contact, preserving not only avenues for needed goods and communication, but also, in a broader sense, they assisted in the creation of an autonomous Creek community through the exercise of neutrality to its fullest potential.

Societies of the Alabama River basin were introduced to European markets by degrees. “Isolation,” according to archaeologist Gregory Waselkov, “permitted native groups of the interior to gradually absorb European material culture in a selective fashion, integrating acceptable forms into their sociocultural systems.” Future victims of the slave trade (the Apalachees, Guales, Timucuan, and Chatots) acted as intermediaries, exchanging (and most likely fashioning) iron tools, brass bells and disk gorgets, glass beads and hand-crafted

²⁰ Mary Beth D. Trubitt, “Mound Building and Prestige Goods Exchange: Changing Strategies in the Cahokia Chiefdom,” *American Antiquity* 65, (October, 2000) 669-690.

ornaments from Spanish traders for deerskins and other peltries that they took to nearby Pensacola and St. Augustine for raw materials. Cultural reorganization took place through these middlemen and the goods they brought to proto-Creek peoples without the physicality of direct colonial occupation.²¹ As previously mentioned, the Marquette-Joliet expeditions (1673) encountered similar finds in their exploration of peoples along the Mississippi River and its tributaries.²² The possession of European goods commonly predated formal, sustained contact and their transformative effects were undeniable.

Many of these European-made items may have had a leveling effect on Native cultures. Previously scarce metals like copper held religious and political significance in Mississippian societies and were retained almost exclusively by hereditary chieftains and their retinue. Possessing exotic minerals such as galena from the upper Mississippi River Valley, unmodified hematite from the Great Lakes region, copper and mica from the Appalachians, confirmed the religious and social power of the elites within pre-contact societies. Distance also bestowed a supernatural component to these objects. Because distant places were often difficult to access, travelers were believed to have had an esoteric knowledge of the world beyond. The items they

²¹ Waselkov, "Historic Creek Indian Responses," 124; Marvin T. Smith, *Coosa: The Rise and Fall of a Southeastern Mississippian Chiefdom* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000) 83-84; See also: Cameron Wesson, *Household and Hegemony: Early Creek Prestige Goods, Symbolic Capital, and Social Power* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2008) 120-135.

²² Benjamin French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, 280-297; It is clear from Mark Boyd's 1937 translation of Marcos Delgado's 1686 expedition among the early Creeks that the Spaniards too acted as intermediaries along these trade paths. For over a decade before Delgado's mission, Spanish men from the province of Apalache intermarried with native women and established meaningful connections among them with coastal trading posts. Mark F. Boyd, "Expedition of Marcos Delgado, 1686," in *Florida Historical Quarterly* 16 (1937): 2-32; Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 123-124. The groups encountered by the Marquette-Joliet expeditions were recent Native immigrants to the area—fleeing westward to escape the intra-Indian violence emanating from market predators like the Iroquois, who were eager to maintain control over connections to colonial trade resource centers. Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 129-130.

brought to trade were viewed as mystical and having uncommon purposes.²³

Waselkov further reasons that as metals and minerals became more easily available from Native middlemen with European contacts along the coasts, they may have lost much of their prestige and no longer represented the socially stratifying status symbols they once did in pre-contact times. Rank was increasingly determined and reinforced by the goods men were able to obtain through individual merit and not excluded to one's family pedigree. This is an important aspect of how goods altered a traditional or ancient cultural arrangement.²⁴ Archaeologist's contribution to contextualizing the material culture of Native societies illustrates how markets, and the commodities they generated, worked with individual agency and indigenous values and cultural patterns to produce many transformational results.

Thomas Nairne's early observations of Creek governance in 1708 confirmed a still burgeoning meritocracy. Nairne remarked that the "Micho [Micco or headman] hardly determines any thing without consulting his Istechagoes, some ar [sic] of that order by birth (being the heads of such families as first settled the society) others are such Considerable old officers, as are taken into that designly for their merit ... The people know and respect them, bit it's impossible for a stranger to Distinguish them by their garb and Fashion, which in nothing

²³ Mary W. Helms, *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) 3-5, 16-17. Mary Helms examines how the mystique of distant places contained political and economic meanings. The knowledge of exotic places was exclusively the purview of elites and aided their regulation of the economic and political; "Luxury goods would grow in importance as social stratification intensified ... and the prestige goods trade that would enable chiefs to validate and reinforce their claims to leadership." Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis*, 40-41; Timothy R. Pauketat, *Lords of the Southeast: Social Inequality and the Native Elites of Southeastern North America* (Arlington, Va.: American Anthropologist Association, 1992) 187-188; Cameron Wesson, *Household Hegemony*; Joseph Hall, "Anxious Alliances: Apalachicola Efforts to Survive the Slave Trade, 1638-1735," in Alan Galloway ed. *Indian Slavery in Colonial America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010) 147-184.

²⁴ Waselkov, "Historic Creek Responses," 123-125. For a study in varying Mississippian leadership strategies see: Timothy Pauketat, *The Ascent of the Chiefs: Cahokia and Mississippian Politics in Native North America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994).

Differs from the rest.”²⁵ Even as early 1708, one can see how Southeastern Creek politics were increasingly anchored in consensus rather than mandate. Captain Raymond Demere opined on the Cherokee some fifty years later that even “The very lowest of them thinks himself as great and as high as any of the Rest, every one of them must be courted for their Friendship, with some Kind of a Feeling, and made much of.” Headmen were “commonly old and middle-aged People, who know how to give a Talk in Favour of whom they have a Fancy for,” and that such methods would influence the members of his town or clan, but that ultimately “every one is his own Master.”²⁶ In the coming decades, private decisions on the frontier marketplace further threatened and substituted other traditional arrangements.

Manufactured goods may have also aided in the erasure of distinctions between disparate groups who were in the process of coalescing. Archaeological finds near an early Carolinian trading house on the Ocmulgee River (near present-day Macon, Georgia) indicate that goods among the Southeast’s native inhabitants had dynamic consequences for traditional modes of life. Material life came to redraw individual boundaries and possibly explain a movement towards a cultural cohesion.²⁷ The reorientation of these early Creek peoples to the locales of market activity (such as with the ‘Ochese Creeks’ in the 1680s) demonstrates organization on a level that invites this assumption.

Early material exchanges with Europeans permitted the reorganization of native societies, allowing for practical interpretations for new situations—simplifying and accelerating domestic

²⁵ Moore, *Nairne’s Journals*, 32-33.

²⁶ William McDowell, *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754-1765* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970) “Captain Raymond. Demere to Governor Lyttelton,” July 30, 1757, 393. Hereafter cited as *DRIA-SC*.

²⁷ Gregory Waselkov, “The Macon Trading House and Early European-Indian Contact in the Colonial Southeast,” in David J. Hally *Ocmulgee Archaeology, 1936-1986* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994) 194.

tasks (iron tools, cookware, sewing needles, decorative cloth, etc.), while providing opportunities for expansion in other areas like hunting and waging war (firearms, ammunition, and gunpowder).²⁸ The exchange in firearms also made these tasks more lethal and efficient. And while exchanges through trade and gift giving quickly made Indian nations more formidable to each other and to colonizing Europeans, they also made them more dependent on regular commercial intercourse. Charlestown's founding in 1670 provided a more substantial English presence among southeastern peoples, and as Carolinian adventurers moved westward, they encountered proto-Creeks primed and ready to expand commercially. Carolinian traders provided the soon-to-be Creek peoples a convenient link to a coastal supplier by utilizing rivers and overland paths to establish direct contact with these coalescent groups. Indigenous migrations to the sources of these trade goods followed. Former middlemen like the Apalachees were replaced by English traders bold enough to venture deep into the interior and challenge the proclaimed regional authority of Spain. Within a few years, of course, the Spanish mission Indians themselves, who helped initiate the earliest commercial linkages with the Atlantic world, became the primary targets of the Creek-led Indian slave trade.²⁹

The practice of trade and gift giving may have also aided in the growth of factionalism among Creeks. Factions were certainly not a unique characteristic to the Creek peoples, being a standard component in the many matrilineal societies populating the Southeast. Archaeological evidence confirms how material exchanges highlighted, and possibly accentuated these internal

²⁸ For a discussion of the types of goods exchanged and their impact during the colonial period see: James Axtell, "The First Consumer Revolution," in *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* ed. Lawrence B. Glickman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999) 85-99.

²⁹ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 23-24. For specific treatment of these events and the ultimate fate of the Apalachees: John H. Hann, *Apalachee: The Land Between the Two Rivers* (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 1988); Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 207-211.

divisions, demonstrating pro-British and pro-French factions coexisting with a neutral faction in a highly effective trade balancing act. For example, early twentieth-century research by the Alabama Anthropological Society looked at graves and buried refuse heaps to reveal the scale and timeline of these factions. Sixty-one sites examined some twenty-five miles from Fort Toulouse and dating from the period 1700-1720 contained goods of primarily English manufacture with some French-made artifacts interspersed. However, burials from 1720-1760 revealed three distinct, equally proportioned groups representing exclusive ties to English and French sources with a third segment possessing quantities from both. Obviously, there were no burials containing exclusively French goods after 1760.³⁰

Debate persists concerning whether these special interest groups were the result of a collective Creek response to the Yamasee War (1715), or were the orchestrated strategy of famed Coweta headman, Emperor Brims. Historian Steven C. Hahn in his *Invention of the Creek Nation* (2004) proposes, among other things, that Emperor Brims authored what he terms, the 1718 “Coweta Resolution” and that this political arrangement governed Creek neutrality in the wake of the Yamasee War to prevent one colonial power having a commanding influence. Coweta is a heavily documented Creek town. It is unclear from the archival evidence the extent to which other Creek towns followed Brims’ policy, or simply acted in the interest of their personal clans or factions. Enough literature exists to indicate the “policy of neutrality” or factionalism was not exclusive to the Creeks.³¹ Their geographical location posited them nearer the commercial activities of the British Empire and endeared them to market forces perhaps more rapidly than

³⁰ Waselkov, “Historic Creek Indian Responses,” 123-131.

³¹ For other examples of factions existing among the southeastern nations see: Patricia Galloway, ““So Many Little Republics””: British Negotiations with the Choctaw Confederacy, 1765,” 41, no. 4 (Autumn, 1994) 513-537; James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004).

their indigenous counterparts to the west. Regardless, neutrality steered a middle course between competing Europeans and provided the Creeks a lucrative trade for over forty years.

These special interest groups remained a constant challenge for colonial officials seeking to consolidate their control over inland societies. French administrators often pressured the Choctaws to speak with one voice, as did the English with the Creeks. Unfortunately for the Choctaws, the combination of internal divisions and external pressures accompanied an economic dependency that degenerated into a bloody and culturally scarring civil war (1746-1750).³² That this was not replicated among the Creeks until early in the next century is a testament to the structure of their cultural and social institutions, their geographic location, and the settlement pattern of the colonizing powers. Insistences for the type of commercial exclusivity that was forced on the Choctaws by the French could not be replicated with any earnestness among the Creeks. The small French fort sat near the famed English Lower Path from Charlestown, with one branch leading to Chickasaw lands and the other to Choctaw country. Soldiers stationed at Fort Toulouse remained silent while Carolinian traders often operated within a few miles of the garrison's perimeter.³³

The English often pressured the Creeks to reach a consensus on issues as well, but they were also willing to concede Creek freedom to trade with their Catholic neighbors to the south and west.³⁴ Creek proximity to the chief ports in the region allowed them to exercise their

³² Patricia Galloway, "Choctaw Factionalism and Civil War, 1746-1750," in *Pre-removal Choctaw History: Exploring New Paths* ed. Greg O'Brien (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008) 70-102. For evidence of Choctaw neutrality and factionalism see: *MPAFD* V, "Vaudreuil to Rouillé," March 3, 1749, 18, 20.

³³ "Journal of Tobias Fitch," ed. Newton Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916) 199-202. Fitch openly mocked and challenged the French commander at Fort Toulouse concerning the supposed ownership of an escaped black slave. On one occasion, two Englishmen built a small trading post in the Alabama town of Akiouitamopa, near Toulouse. French Lieutenant Benoist and several men confronted the diminutive undertaking and effected its immediate removal; Verner Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 326.

³⁴ *British Parliamentary Record Office, South Carolina* (hereafter cited as *BPRO-SC*) 13: 126-127, "Charlesworth

discerning muscle, so to speak. Their familiarity with market principles was perhaps more firmly entrenched into their collective conscience than was the case with their Choctaw and Chickasaw neighbors. Viable trade flow strengthened the influence of certain Creek communities as evidenced not only with the Alabama towns near Fort Toulouse, and the briefly occupied post at nearby Okfuskee, but numerous other sites as well. It is no coincidence that the towns that became locales of market orientation also became centers of diplomatic activity.³⁵

Archaeological evidence also reveals the specific types of goods Europeans traded to the Creeks. These findings reveal the modes of transportation preferred by the colonizing powers, what goods they were best able to move, and how they were able to compete for Indian allegiances through the deliveries of exotic trade items and articles of war. The English preferred the overland paths from Charlestown, and later Augusta that led to the Upper and Lower Creek towns. Overland distances required lighter payloads to offset the expense of the journey. Before the Yamasee War, trade was primarily directed through private transactions between traders and individual headmen with goods arriving via Indian burdeners. The postwar period, however, offered a “rapid transition point” into a system administered by South Carolinian officials and where goods were moved increasingly by company owned packhorses.³⁶ Overland trade

Glover’s Journal,” Still Glover warned the Lower Creek headman Chigelly that if the Creek towns did not consolidate they would be “on the path to destruction.” They needed to stand together as “one mind and one tongue and one people” to avoid the destructive propensity towards factionalism that might inevitably lead to a civil war.

³⁵ Fort Toulouse was an especially active location for disparate Native groups who hoped to use French influence to broker peace accords. Bienville records an incident involving a Chickasaw delegation seeking French intervention in their conflict with the Cherokees and Choctaws. This meeting inadvertently occurred as the nearby Abekas and Tallapoosas sought a settlement to their own conflict with the Choctaws. *MPAFD*, III, “Bienville to Maurepas,” March 7, 1741, 740-744.

³⁶ William Ramsey, *The Yamasee War*, 193-194. Ramsey disagrees with the interpretation of both Verner Crane in *The Southern Frontier* and Kathryn H. Braund in *Deerskins and Duffels*. Crane surmises that packhorses were used from the beginning of the colonial period. Braund, however, posits that market forces played a critical role in the transition from Indian burdeners to packhorse trains. Ramsey agrees with Braund that there was a conversion from Indian burdeners to packhorses, but ultimately disagrees with her by arguing that change in modes of transportation

translated into higher-valued goods such as guns, blankets, decorative trinkets, wool clothing, and red and blue fabric.

The supply of clothes and items associated with one's physical adornment were an important object of treaty and social negotiations between Europeans and Creeks. Like today, clothing represented a significant expressive landscape for the individual, evoking a powerful cultural vocabulary. Providing the materials necessary for cultural and, arguably, political statements affirmed bonds between the giver and receiver. Cloth served a domestic purpose too. The gendered divisions of labor required Creek women to fashion and mend much of their family's clothing. When Lieutenant Diego Peña visited the Lower Creek town of Coweta in 1716, he recorded the reactions of some 130 women gathered together after they learned of their men's decision to cultivate an exclusive alliance with Spain. Angered at the probability of an English embargo, and equipped with the knowledge of past experiences with the meager quantities of cloth the Spanish were able to give, the Coweta women, Peña predicted, "would all flee to the English."³⁷

Textiles made up a significant portion of the trade revenues feeding the Atlantic world economies. The manufacture of woolens and cloth had propelled international commerce since the medieval period.³⁸ In North America, before the cotton boom of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this industry was dominated by the English and almost exclusively fueled

was caused by the Yamasee War, not market pressures.

³⁷ Nancy Shoemaker, "Body Language: The Body as a Source of Sameness and Difference in Eighteenth-Century American Indian Diplomacy East of the Mississippi," in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, ed. Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004) 211-222. Mark F. Boyd, "Diego Pena's Expedition to Apalachee and Apalachicola in 1716: A Journal Translated and with an Introduction," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 28 (July, 1949): 26; Hahn also discusses this incident in *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 93-94.

³⁸ Robert Brenner, "The Social Basis of English Commercial Expansion, 1550-1650," *Journal of Economic History* 12 (1972): 361-384.

by the trade in animal skins. While the French also traded red and blue (limbourg) cloth and brandy to the Indians, they primarily trafficked in lower cost items like flints, gunpowder, and musket balls, which were heavier, but easier to transport due to the north-south flow of the watercourses of the Alabama River system.³⁹ What is important for scholars to realize is that these items did not acculturate Creek peoples into Euro-American frames of reference, but that in many instances they were self-fashioned symbols of individual agency.⁴⁰

Colonial America was a dynamic place and both commercialism and consumption played an enormous part in shaping the lives of natives and Europeans alike. Increasingly, participation in a consumer marketplace augmented the role of the individual in the greater network of global exchange. In this sense, the Creeks were no different than their colonial European counterparts. Just as non-political experiences contributed to developing a uniquely American sense of identity in the years before the Revolution, Creek life was inundated by the new consumer marketplace in ways that produced interpretations based on shared, materialistic interests (i.e. the growth of

³⁹ The French also traded cloth to the Indians, but were unable to match the quantities of English fabric supplies. Red and blue limbourg cloth (produced in France) was a favorite among southeastern peoples and preferred over Dutch duffels and many English varieties of cloth. The individual expressions found in personal dress were an important and perhaps overlooked form of political articulation. Native peoples of the eighteenth century dressed in uniquely expressive ways. Individualism was demonstrated in hybridized fashions that incorporated European-made clothes with traditional native fibers and leather. Archaeological excavations also reveal how European glass-bead decorations on one's person (usually the hair) or on one's clothing were statements of individuality. These dress adaptations and glass bead arrangements permitted Native communities to identify themselves in personal ways. Diana DePaolo Loren, "Material Manipulations: Beads and Cloth in the French Colonies," *The Materiality of Individuality: Archaeological Studies of Individual Lives* ed. Carolyn L. White (Springer-Verlag: New York, 2009) 109-124; Bienville reports the profitability of the cloth trade in *MPAFD*, III, "Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas," June 10, 1737, 698-699. Verner Crane, 23, 39-40. Additionally, Crane tells us in "The Tennessee River as the Road to Carolina: The Beginnings of Exploration and Trade," that the defector, Jean Couture, aided Carolina in the early stages of its commercial expansion west of the Appalachian Mountains through an unrivaled familiarity with the southeast's river systems. For a discussion on how river and overland paths functioned within the Native southeast see: Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Land and Water Communication Systems of the Southeastern Indians," in Gregory Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley ed. *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, 27-42.

⁴⁰ Bruce G. Trigger, "Early Native North American Responses to European Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations," *The Journal of American History* 77 (March, 1991): 1195-1215. Trigger argues that trade goods acted as a cultural "middle ground," effectively creating shared cultural spaces, and should not be viewed as a meeting of 'lesser' or 'superior' goods.

factions and the more collective responses to external threats that were increasingly necessary after 1763). That colonial consumerism served a political purpose through enabling ordinary people to think in terms of a larger community is axiomatic to scholars of the American Revolution. How acquisition impacted the native world is still a burgeoning field of study. Yet, real and rumored trade embargos against the Creeks from European powers, and the culture of indebtedness shadowing so much of the native experience may not have fostered a political discourse recognizable to westerners, but it existed nonetheless.⁴¹

Consumption was certainly changing Creek life. Creek demands for goods evolved and gift lists became ever more extravagant and specific. These new items were especially costly to the French. The superiority of the British supply mechanism with regards to the Indian trade is perhaps clearest when contrasted with the more antiquated French-style mercantilist exchange system. Commanders at Fort Toulouse recognized this reality and although they could not alone revolutionize fundamental French economic structures, they did hope to better understand what the Creeks desired through replicating certain styles, colors, and functionality of the almost ubiquitous presence of English manufactures. In 1743, the Commandant at Fort Toulouse, Lieutenant François Hazeur, amassed ribbons and “other articles of merchandise” and suggested to his superiors the wisdom of reproducing those products and the trade methods of the English. Hazeur knew full well that Louisiane would lose the war for native hearts and minds if they

⁴¹ These viewpoints are developed further in two essays: James Axtell, “The First Consumer Revolution,” 85-99 and T.H. Breen, “Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution,” 100-129 found in Lawrence B. Glickman ed., *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*. It is necessary to understand how the Creeks fit in the Atlantic world economies beyond simply suppliers of skins and slaves. They were consumers and, like their colonial neighbors, experienced profound cultural and political transformations from their connections with the global market of goods.

failed to remain competitive.⁴² Until the 1740s, simple fabric, basic utensils, and ammunition sufficed for successful trade shipments for the French. In September 1736, 7,000 red and blue ells of limbourg cloth were traded for about 50,000 animal pelts.⁴³ Lead shot and powder usually rounded out most “request lists” from the inland nations. By 1759, however, annual presents from the French detailed the changing cost of keeping frontier allies. Brilliantly colored textiles along with guns, ammunition, and metal cutting and digging implements were mainstays on inventory lists, but increasingly visible were other items of note: copper shoe-buckles, cloaks, trimmed shirts, gold, silver, and pewter buttons, hats, gorgets, cravats, sewing needles, tumblers, and sear springs—all at great expense to Louisiane and the Crown.⁴⁴

Methods for transporting these goods inland took a variety of forms. Ancient overland paths served the communities of pre-contact peoples by providing communication, trade, food, and a variety of human interactions ranging from warfare to seasonal games and religious festivities. Early European travelers (peaceful and not) used a maze of interconnected inland roads to access Indian population centers. Frequently finding large game along these thoroughfares consequently provided meat for travelers. Lieutenant Diego Peña’s 1716 expedition encountered buffalo, whitetail deer, and large herds of domestic cattle. Indian scouts that accompanied his mission hunted these animals to great success.⁴⁵ Dependent upon the local natives for food, even the earliest Spanish explorers in the region like De Soto and De Luna trusted native guides and rigorously followed these trails to Indian chiefdoms so as to avoid

⁴² *MPAFD*, IV, “Vaudreuil and Salmon to Maurepas,” July 21, 1743, 207-210.

⁴³ Surrey, *Commerce*, 356-357.

⁴⁴ *MPAFD*, IV, “Statement of the Requests to the King from the Colony,” 1759, 227-241.

⁴⁵ Boyd, “Diego Peña’s Expedition,” 1-27.

starvation.⁴⁶ It was not uncommon for Indian peoples to navigate these roads for hundreds and perhaps even thousands of miles on missions of war or diplomacy. In the early eighteenth century, the Iroquois used the “Great Warriors Path” for marauding distant Catawba towns (located in the Carolina piedmont).⁴⁷ Cherokee and Creek emissaries frequented the same path to visit distant Shawnee and Iroquois lands as late as the removal period.

Contact among Creek towns was also a necessary component in maintaining community cohesion. Inter-town connections facilitated a limited political consolidation and united communities during ceremonial rites. While Creek towns were largely autonomous, intercommunity religious festivals like the annual harvest ceremony or Busk may have contributed to common ethnic identities between disparate groups. Additionally, certain powerful headmen and faction leaders like Emperor Brims, and later, at midcentury, the Wolf King of Mocolussah, and the Mortar commanded authority over multiple towns. This is not meant to suggest that social gatherings among the many groups living in Creek country equated a form of political consolidation. The different regions of the so-called Creek Confederacy remained perpetually divided on pivotal issues throughout the colonial and early national periods, while some groups like the Seminoles split away entirely. But by midcentury, trade and communication routes forged a uniquely Creek ethnic identity through shared experiences, challenges, and threats. This would not have been possible if these communities existed in

⁴⁶ De Soto relied on Indian guides to escort his expedition through the maze of trails and roads that connected population centers. De Soto and De Luna often complained that their guides were frequently lost on these highways, inviting starvation or ambush. The state of pre-contact warfare was such that it may have prevented native guides from acquiring an adequate knowledge of these roads. This theory is supported in Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998) 167-169.

⁴⁷ James Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors From European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 41-42.

isolation. Trade and communication routes allowed these kinship-based communities to flourish. They connected towns as physical markers demonstrating the extent and scale of Creek economic and military prowess, paradoxically promoting cooperation and factionalism.⁴⁸ It is important to note, however, that the human-made paths that connected many of the Creek towns served a primarily local function and should be distinguished from the broad-ranging, interregional roads.⁴⁹

The roads were at most about two-feet wide. Indian burdeners moved along them in single file on foot, and before the widespread proliferation of horses, carried goods on their backs. Paths typically ran alongside rivers in regions below the Fall Line, and meandered through mountain passes in hillier terrain. European traders and diplomats into Creek lands recorded the names of the trails they took. Their writings give contemporaries a glimpse into the character and function of this vast network.⁵⁰ These avenues served as the primary means for supplying the early capital, settlement, and labor necessary to colonize the Southeast. For the Creeks, these roads provided a connection with the emerging capitalist Atlantic economy, while still allowing them to preserve communal values.⁵¹

The path most favored by Carolinians, and subsequently the Georgians, was the Lower Trade Path that ran from Augusta to the Lower Creek town of Coweta. This road then traveled southwest to the Tallapoosa town of Tuckabatchee. From there it was possible to travel

⁴⁸ Hahn, 241-242; Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*,

⁴⁹ Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "Land and Water Communication Systems," 27-28.

⁵⁰ William E. Meyer, *Indian Trails of the Southeast* (Nashville: Blue and Gray Press, 1971) 1-11. Meyer identified over one hundred separate trails throughout the Southeast. Although Meyer's descriptions of the Southeastern trade and war paths are seemingly less in depth than those that ran through Appalachia and elsewhere, his analysis still assists contemporary scholars in understanding how extensive the wartime and trade activities of the Creeks and others were; Tanner "Land and Water," 29. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 33-35. Ethridge discusses (and defines) Fall Lines and how they provided natural contours on the landscape, aiding overland passages.

⁵¹ Dr. Karl Davis, email message to author, May 31, 2011.

southwest to New Orleans and beyond. The Upper Trade Path ran from north of Augusta west to Okfuskee, and beyond to the northern reaches of the Mississippi River. Spanish missions and settlements on the Gulf Coast were linked with St. Augustine via the famed *Camino Real*. Two separate branches from this road led to Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw towns. Junctions along the roads became important conduits for a market orientation.⁵² Other roads such as the previously mentioned “Great Warriors Path” linked Creek lands with those of the northern nations such as the Shawnees and Iroquois. Indian runners constantly traveled these roads, participating in both material, and nonmaterial forms of exchange.

Europeans also utilized paths between their settlements and Indian towns so as to increase commercial traffic and provide a common defense through the quick movement of men and supplies. Trade and defense were inexorably linked because trade partners and military allies were one in the same. Colonial records portray a southeastern landscape alive with armies of traders crisscrossing the region’s land and water routes to achieve metropolitan and individualistic objectives. Control of paths that led to Indian country was an important imperial strategy for the English, Spanish and French, each seeking inroads to garner Creek affections. Speed through Creek lands was of utmost concern to Carolinians trying to forefend Catholic agents, and vice versa. Upon hearing of the French and Spanish approaching and possibly impeding his mission among the Lower Creeks in 1728, Carolinian Creek agent, Charlesworth Glover, hoped to head off the “French Captain” and “posted down in these towns to try and make

⁵² Indian roads through the southeast were myriad. See: Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 120-129, 175-177. For information about what prompted movement to locales of market activity at junctions along these roads, see: Hudson, *Creek Paths*, 13, 21-22. For a painstakingly detailed description of the past courses and present remnants of the roads and trails through Upper Creek country see: John H. Goff, “The Path to Oakfuskee Upper Trading Route in Georgia to the Creek Indians,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 39 (March 1955): 1-36.

our cause as good as theirs.”⁵³ Equally important was the symbolic nature of cutting paths through Indian country. By the early nineteenth century, in concert with using preexisting roads across the Southeast, colonizers carved additional roads in the landscape from their settlements along the coasts to Indian towns of the interior. The meaning for road construction for Europeans was clear—they sought to eventually possess the land. Initial forays into the interior served the dual purpose of making roads and chronicling pertinent information regarding the region’s native populations.⁵⁴

For example, Marcos Delgado left Apalache in 1686 to locate the Rio del Espíritu Santo (Mississippi River) and to provide Spanish officials with evidence of possible French activity under La Salle. His instructions stated that he was to make a record of the region’s flora, fauna, and mineral deposits, determine the width and depth of rivers, obstacles along the trade paths, and the strength and behavior of the Indians. Additionally, Delgado was to detail the character of the roads, and repair them when and where possible so as to improve communication channels with the Apalachees and the presidio. But historical accounts attest that many of the paths were woefully deficient for large caravans of animals and men. Delgado complained that “the large axes brought were broken cutting undergrowth in the road, for it was necessary to open the entire road with axes and machetes with much labor.” Upon completion, however, his journey among communities eventually known as the Upper Creeks yielded hoped-for positive results “that the work may bear fruit from the toil through which we have passed to overcome the greater

⁵³ *BPRO-SC*, 13:149, “Charlesworth Glover’s Journal.”

⁵⁴ Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*, 22-23. Much of the premise of Hudson’s work discusses how roads into Indian country became a means for whites to first know and then possess Creek lands. Also, for an analysis on how colonialism functioned with the landscape see: Andrew Sluyter, “Colonialism and Landscape in the Americas: Material/Conceptual Transformations and Continuity Consequences,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91 (June, 2001): 410-428.

difficulties so that today communication will be easy by opening roads through land near by you, and as you asked me.”⁵⁵

In addition to overland trails, rivers of the lower Mississippi valley acted as highways to nearly every part of the region. Tens of thousands of miles of navigable river systems aided European, particularly French exploration, commerce, and conquest across the Southeast. In many cases, river courses permitted cargo to cross at portages. Portages often served the same winding river, shortening journeys and making watercourses more efficient than strictly land-based routes. Traveling east to west, English traders were restricted to overland paths, employing teams of pack horses, oxen, slaves, and Indian burdeners typically over a 500 mile, one-month journey from Charlestown to the interior Creek towns and trading posts.⁵⁶

However, since most southern rivers run north-south, the Gulf of Mexico became Louisiane’s connection to the wider Atlantic world. The rivers that emptied into Mobile Bay, and the Gulf of Mexico beyond, served a variety of functions for the French empire. The bay itself is some thirty-miles long and from four-to-eight-miles wide. Its depth allows for easy access to ocean-going vessels though ships were occasionally stranded on sand bars at low tide. Bad weather damaged or doomed these vessels at the expense of the Crown and proprietors, necessitating a network of bar pilots and vessels to carry supplies from anchored ships to the shore. Goods were unloaded on Dauphin Island due to both the poor conditions of the nearby wharf at Mobile and the shallowness of the inland rivers. French use of watercourses like the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers undoubtedly shaped their overall strategy with respect to

⁵⁵ Boyd, “Expedition of Marcos Delgado, 1686,” 2-32.

⁵⁶ Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 126-128, 135.

relations with the inland nations and rebuffing Carolinian aggression.⁵⁷

Creek towns controlled specific drainage systems with the Upper towns controlling the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Alabama basin, while the Lower towns commanded the Chattahoochee and Ocmulgee river systems. These tributaries were an essential component of their cultural survival. As mentioned earlier, the Creeks were initially hostile to French settlement along the Mobile River. The Alabamas agreement to permit the construction of Fort Toulouse in the vicinity of their town Taskigi, while simultaneously leaving trade corridors open to St. Augustine, Pensacola, Charlestown, and subsequently Augusta, is a testament to a policy meant to circumvent entangling alliances with the emerging European nation states, thus preserving a sense of autonomy from the coercive influence of imperial power structures and outside markets.

This is not to suggest that southeastern peoples were not dependent or susceptible to the lure of market forces. Charlesworth Glover, Carolinian agent to the Creeks, noted in 1728 that “it’s the trade that governs these people.”⁵⁸ The trickle of guns in the early seventeenth century had evolved into a quenchless demand for armaments and alcohol by the early eighteenth—necessary for advancing the fur trade, military prowess, and satiating addiction. But Euro-Americans needed southeastern peoples too, particularly the Creeks. The act of trading itself was an insight into the motivations of both parties involved. While the Creeks sought to limit the European presence in their country, the trade paradoxically prompted an increased number of Euro-American merchants and diplomats willing to ply their goods and strengthen commercial networks with Creek towns and headmen. It is also important to distinguish between goods

⁵⁷ Nancy Surrey Miller, *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Régime, 1699-1763* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Agents, 1916) 67-68; Harvey H. Jackson III, *River of Life: Coosa, Tallapoosa, Cahaba, and Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

⁵⁸ *BPRO-SC* 13: 144, “Charlesworth Glover’s Journal.”

making the need and the need making the goods, as Steven C. Hahn so cogently did in his essay, “Mother of Necessity: Carolina, the Creek Indians, and the Making of a New Order in the American Southeast, 1670-1763.”⁵⁹ Recognizing the reality of mutual dependency, Creek leaders came to understand the benefits of maintaining connections with the Atlantic world economies, beyond simply satisfying basic needs. They manipulated market forces, imperial rivalries, and factional divisions to the greater advantage of their clans and towns. In a sense, they used internal divisions to their collective advantage.⁶⁰

Indian alliances often determined what rivers and portages Euro-Americans accessed. Building forts and trading posts near borderlands protected and policed these potentially hostile places and pressed territorial interests there. The movement of men and materials up and down southern rivers served an important imperial and native function. The French employed a variety of watercraft, each serving a specific purpose. Bark and dugout canoes, pirogues, and felucca regularly plied the rivers of Louisiane, transporting emissaries, priests, and varying quantities of trade goods for barter. Larger boats frequently referred to as “keel-boats,” “barques,” “brigantines,” or “caiches” moved considerable tonnages of men and materiel up and down river. These vessels were more generally known as “traversiers” or simply “bateaux.” Since La Salle’s 1683 voyage down the Mississippi River to establish a meaningful export trade with natives of the interior and future French settlements along the Gulf Coast, watercourses served a grand

⁵⁹ Steven C. Hahn, “Mother of Necessity: Carolina, the Creek Indians, and the Making of a New Order in the American Southeast, 1670-1763,” in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760* (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 2002) ed. Charles Hudson and Robbie Ethridge, 79-114. By providing the “wish list” to Alonso Marquez del Toro, Hahn asserts that Creek headman, Tickahonoabe, not only illustrates the chicanery of some town leaders, but also differentiates items considered necessities (needs) from luxuries (wants). By the mid-eighteenth century, it becomes clear that the Creeks *desired* certain items, and *needed* others. Subsequent generations of Creeks—after the first sustained contacts were established in the seventeenth century—developed certain tastes for the aesthetics of eighteenth century life.

⁶⁰ For a more detailed explanation of how Creek kinship systems worked in conjunction with factionalism see: Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 23-26.

metropolitan strategy.

French bateaux were considerably larger than those of their English and Spanish counterparts, neither of which had boats above fifty or sixty tons. The French varieties were typically flat-bottomed vessels and could be up to forty-feet long. Smaller boats had the capacity for carrying sixteen to twenty tons. Two-dozen oar men were required to push forty-ton cargos upstream in the larger ships. Black slaves, French soldiers, and *petites nations* men powered and guided the boats. Trips upstream were especially grueling, and in the case of missions deep in Alabama or Choctaw country, might be as long as 300 miles from the coast. Contents included food, trade goods, and other sundry articles and necessities. As had been the custom since Louisiane's founding, trade goods functioned as a form of soldier's pay, much more valuable than gold or silver specie. Journeys were planned in the spring when water levels were highest to avoid underwater obstacles.⁶¹ River traffic, coupled with the nearby subsistence economy, provided lifeblood to Louisiane.

Mutual dependency between Indians and Europeans was no more of a reality for than for the French. Foodstuffs were a basic component of trade throughout much of the French tenure in Louisiane. Food exchange played a universal role in interactions with frontier traders in general. Creeks were anxious to establish connections with white colonizers and did so through these more provisional exchanges.⁶² This does not mean that food and other items were always freely given. Customs often dictated a reciprocal exchange of goods and services. Manufactured wares were traded for corn and garden produce. Complaints often surfaced from colonial officials that Creek prices for these exchanges were higher than the value of the transported merchandise. That

⁶¹ For observations relating to Louisiane's commercial intercourse via watercourses to the Upper Creeks see: Nancy Surrey Miller, *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Régime*, 74-75.

⁶² Daniel Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves*, 191-218.

Indians proved surprisingly market savvy always frustrated colonial administrators. While the French bitterly resented the regular stream of Native delegations who visited their crude forts and coastal towns—draining precious supplies—the English growled that they too were being unreasonably price gouged.⁶³ That traders in the field were dependent upon a Creek willingness to exchange was apparent though.

Euro-American progress in Indian country throughout much of the eighteenth century largely depended on the willingness of the native peoples to barter food. In many respects, food might be seen as a great equalizer—temporarily offsetting Indian dependency on Euro-American wares. To stave off starvation on his mission to the Cherokees in 1757, English agent John Chevillette lamented to his superiors that “To encourage the Indians of parting with such Quantity I found myself obliged to direct the Traders to give them better Goods for their Corn *as they usually do...*” [Emphasis added]⁶⁴ French settlements not only relied on Creek offerings of military assistance, but also depended upon Creek readiness to supply a steady traffic of meat and produce.⁶⁵

Food for the Creeks was something to be shared with kin and travelers alike, and functioned as a means of practicing ritualized diplomacy. Carolinian Indian agent Tobias Fitch

⁶³ Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee*, 142-143; Piker engages the ethic of frontier exchange between the English and Upper Creeks.

⁶⁴ *DRIA-SC*, “John Chevillette to Governor Lyttelton,” March 1, 1757, 344. Concerning other examples where items like ‘corn’ factored into frontier diplomacy or catering to the needs of Carolinian traders in the field, see the aforementioned volume, pages: 116, 154, 233, 258-259, and 337. Katherine Braund in *Deerskins and Duffels*, argues that Cherokee women jealously defended their corn crop (75). Creeks commonly traded foodstuffs with the Cherokees and other nearby groups. Braund suggests that famine and warfare impacted Cherokee provisions more than the Creeks, especially during the Anglo-Cherokee war. Perhaps this reality was yet another benefit of Creek neutrality.

⁶⁵ *MPAFD*, IV, “Vaudreuil to Maurepas,” October 30, 1745, 250; Alfred Reynolds, “Alabama-Tombigbee Basin in International Affairs,” 244. Despite the lack of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, it can be assumed that if these types of exchanges were occurring in places like Mobile and Pensacola, then they must have been taking place at inland outposts like Fort Toulouse and Fort Tombeché among the Choctaws.

recorded how food integrated with ritual during his diplomatic mission to the Upper Creeks in 1724. A series of sumptuous banquets held in his honor in the towns that he visited, all afforded him the best they had to offer. “The King of the said Town [Okfuskee] Takeing me by the hand Lead me To a house Where were [sic] Sitting all the head men of the Several Towns there about; And after passing Some complements there was some fowls Brought in and Set Before me.” The Okfuskee headman made a speech where he extolled the virtues of their friendship with the English and asked forgiveness for the paucity of his offerings to the emissary.⁶⁶ The hospitality shown Fitch was an essential component of Creek protocol required to maintain an alliance with an external trade source. Providing sustenance to individual travelers in the field, or directly to colonies such as Mobile and Pensacola, assured communal survival through the regular provision of necessities and extended diplomatic ties to distant places by establishing firm interpersonal/inter-communal relationships.

Provisions aiding diplomatic and commercial missions included a wide variety of foodstuffs for traders. This was not confined to corn, of course. Traders who did not bring their own livestock into Creek country bartered for meat from locals, or hunted for it themselves. Creek males supplied many of these men with “fat barbecued briskets, rumps, and tongues of buffalo and deer, as well as plenty of bear-ribs.” Cooked over an open fire, or fried in bear oil, traders like James Adair often boasted that he and his companions ate as good among the Indians as they did back in the English settlements. Meanwhile, women furnished agricultural produce from their gardens, cooked, and occasionally engaged in prostitution.⁶⁷ During times of scarcity,

⁶⁶ “Fitch’s Journal,” Mereness, 176-177; For James Adair’s observations of Creek hospitality see: *The History of the American Indians*, 462-463.

⁶⁷ Adair, 446, 447; For a mere sampling of the discussion on the gendered spheres of Creek life see: Theda Perdue, “Native Women in the Early Republic: Old World Perceptions, New World Realities,” in Frederick E. Hoxie,

Creek men and women traded at higher rates. Indian agent Daniel Pepper, among the Upper Creeks in 1756, remarked that, “Every Thing here continue [sic] very scarce, so that Victuals can hardly be purchased at the most extravagant Rates.”⁶⁸

Changes in cultural values regarding the food trade did take place in subsequent decades, however. By the late eighteenth century, as the number of whites (almost exclusively Anglo-Americans) in Creek country escalated, town headmen felt less compelled to offer such grand hospitality with outsiders. Food seems to have evolved from having a social purpose to an economic one. This shift in a cultural paradigm was attributable to growing numbers of encroaching whites, but also differences in the traders entering Creek country. The new generations of Indian traders were less dependent on traditional exchange customs. Creek leaders grew especially concerned when these individuals lived outside Creek towns where they openly cultivated their own crops and raised livestock, all with the help of black slaves.⁶⁹ Self-reliant traders were less willing to barter for subsistence goods with local headmen, nullifying seasoned exchange protocols in the process.

By the 1730s, the enterprising Okfuskees emulated the Alabamas by courting a trading post of their own. A trading post or fort was a center of market orientation and brought the twin benefits of influence and trade wealth to the community. Upper Creek prosperity can be measured on multiple fronts, however. Population growth around midcentury required heavier

Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert ed., *Native American and the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999) 85-122; Amelia Rector Bell, “Separate People: Speaking of Creek Men and Women,” *American Anthropologist* 92 (June, 1990): 332-345; Richard Sattler, “Women’s Status Among the Muskogee and Cherokee,” Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman, ed., *Women of Power in Native North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995) 214-229.

⁶⁸ *DRIA-SC*, “Daniel Pepper to Governor William Henry Lyttelton,” December 21, 1756, 296.

⁶⁹ Superintendent of Indian Affairs, John Stuart’s regulations for traders operating in the Southern District are found in Katherine Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 192. Stuart voices his concerns over bringing “Negroes and mulattoes” into Indian country. This was due to the prospect of their uniting with the Indians.

commercial traffic to satisfy the collective need for products of European manufacture. Increasing immunity to communicable diseases, relative peace with their neighbors, the adoption of fugitive Natchez and Shawnee refugees, along with more efficient modes of production brought by the benefits of trade with colonists all contributed to the growing power and influence of the Upper Creeks. Okfuskee town strength (measured in numbers of warriors or “gunmen”) was close to 2,500 gunmen or about 6,000 people total. Counting the additional refugee families and the growing resistance to diseases in these communities by the early second half of the century, and the figure approaches a population of perhaps four times that number. The Cowetas (or *Kaouitas* as the French referred to the Lower Creeks) numbered a mere 1,030 warriors by comparison.⁷⁰ Population growth also ushered new benefits and challenges to Upper and Lower towns, crystallizing cooperative efforts to counter increasing pressures from the Atlantic coast colonies as they continued pressing westward. The process of adopting outsiders allowed southeastern Indian societies to persevere and thrive.⁷¹

French policy makers grew concerned when the Okfuskees on the upper Tallapoosa River (situated on the Upper Trade Path) opened negotiations with the English for a fort in their town in 1735. The diplomatic and commercial benefits the French fort brought the Alabamas had not gone unnoticed by the Okfuskees. Cartographic examples illustrate how a close relationship with Europeans brought prestige and influence to Upper Creek towns.⁷² The Okfuskees understood

⁷⁰ These population figures are found in Major Robert Farmar’s letter from January 24, 1764 located in the *Mississippi Provincial Archives English Dominion*, I. (hereafter cited *MPAED*) ed. by Dunbar and Rowland (Nashville: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911) 94-97; See Wood’s chart/figures in Peter H. Wood in “The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790,” in Gregory Waselkov’s *Powhatan’s Mantel: Indian in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989) 60-61; Shawnees among the Upper Creeks see: *MPAFD*, IV, “Vaudreuil to Maurepas,” 222; Natchez among the Upper Creeks see: Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 88. Ethridge discusses the Natchez settlement of Nauchee.

⁷¹ *DRIA-SC*, “Daniel Pepper to Governor Lyttelton,” November 18, 1745, 255.

⁷² Gregory Waselkov, “Indian Maps of the Colonial Southeast: Archaeological Implications and Prospects,” in

themselves to be linked with the English through bonds of kinship and hoped to maintain their privileged town status by serving as a locus for market activity in the region. After the establishment of the colony of Georgia in 1733, rival ambitions with neighboring South Carolina concerning the Creek trade complicated frontier politics for native and Anglo alike. The logistical advantages of a fort among the Okfuskees were apparent to colonial administrators. Such an establishment would aid diplomatic and commercial efforts to access the much-coveted Choctaw trade.⁷³ The decision for the Okfuskees to permit the fort was crucial, but bitterly contested by their Upper Creek neighbors, who were understandably concerned about growing English power in the region and perhaps jealous of Okfuskee's potential windfall. Discussions between Georgia and South Carolina concerning the placement and control of the trading post erupted into a bitter frontier rivalry that would occasionally result in violent and humiliating episodes, as seen when Georgian trader Patrick Mackay assaulted South Carolinian William Edwards in the Okfuskee town square.⁷⁴

During the arbitration between the two colonies, it seems likely that savvy Creek observers became astutely aware of the interesting opportunity such a rivalry presented. English officials, wary of imperial distinctions being made by the Creeks, tried in vain to discourage

Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use ed. Malcolm Lewis (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 205-222. Social circles oftentimes represented native towns. These drawn population centers varied in size with more important towns shown as larger circles. European and native towns were sinewed together in a web-like illustration of commercial and diplomatic intercourse—the larger native towns were obviously beneficiaries of a more privileged relationship with external trade sources.

⁷³ Choctaws occasionally brought their wares to Upper Creek towns to trade with the English. The Upper Creek groups like the Alabamas facilitated this trade by acting as middlemen. "Lieutenant Outerbridge to Governor Lyttelton," in *DRIA-SC, 1754-1765*, 423; *MPAFD*, IV, "Diron d'Artaguetto to Maurepas," October 24, 1737, 146-151.

⁷⁴ For a detailed description of the process that led to the establishment of the short lived Fort Okfuskee (1735-1743), and what prompted the McKay-Edwards incident see: Joshua Piker's *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America*, 30-37.

them from privileging one colony over another.⁷⁵ This divisive strategy of the Creeks was not confined to the three contesting European powers in the Southeast. It was a strategy that could be applicable to individuals, trading companies, and local and state governments operating under the same flag. Markets permitted the free exercise of individual judgment to remarkable success. Georgia eventually won the right to construct the fort, operating it until 1743 before abandoning the small, neglected post. But the Okfuskees initially visited and traded with Charlestown much more frequently than Savannah, despite allowing the Georgia garrison in their town.⁷⁶ In subsequent decades, Savannah's growth in the Creek trade eclipsed Charlestown's. After South Carolina brokered a Cherokee-Creek peace in the fall of 1743, they built a "fort" of their own in Okfuskee town, but never occupied the post. Never a serious threat in the region, the French contemptuously referred to the small trading station "as merely a house surrounded by stakes."⁷⁷

Trade, and a strict adherence to diplomatic protocol, allowed the French to nurture Indian affections and slightly offset their huge numerical inferiority. That the French were able to maintain their far-flung commitments in Louisiane and keep the skin trade at respectable levels until 1744 (the first year of King George's War) with a mere 1,600 traders is a testament to their cunning, weighted threats, and skillful maneuvering. French skin traders moved some 100,000 deerskins, along with bear, otter, beaver, and buffalo to coastal entrepôts in 1744 alone. But the war's diversion of metropolitan resources elsewhere reassessed expectations for this traffic. As the French sent fewer supplies to Louisiane, English and Dutch traders were able to lacerate the French fur and skin trade across the continent. Moreover, due to a scarcity in trade resources,

⁷⁵ Piker, *Okfuskee*, 34-35. Piker says that colonial officials in Charlestown frowned on the Creeks (Okfuskees) making distinctions between them and Savannah.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁷ Gregory Waselkov, Brian M. Wood, and Joseph M. Herbert, *Colonization and Conquest: The 1980 Archaeological Excavations at Fort Toulouse and Fort Jackson* (Auburn University at Montgomery, 1982) 53-54.

French prices for skins dropped, while those for the English soared.⁷⁸ King George's War would be a dress rehearsal for the coming French and Indian War.

The yearly yield in deerskins from the Choctaws stood in stark contrast to that of Creek hunters. The French policy of diplomatic gift exchange provided a limited product, forcing gift exchange customs to contend with the full force of English market entrepreneurialism and private enterprise. Until the 1740s, French records indicate that once the Choctaws had satisfied their need for merchandise, they simply stopped hunting and lessened their demand for more goods.⁷⁹ With the Choctaws' finite motivation to hunt, coupled with an already anemic supply of manufactures, French strategy suffered in comparison to an avaricious English desire to expand trade through the same incentivization processes used to motivate the Creeks—a credit system, large quantities of cheap goods, and watered down rum from their West Indian sugar cane plantations. When compared to their Creek neighbors to the east, the limited number of deerskins the Choctaws contributed to French storehouses illustrates their lack of integration in the Atlantic markets. The Choctaw's geographic location nearest the French simply precluded them from having access to the same market opportunities as the Creeks. This contrast attests to Creek integration in the emerging capitalist world.⁸⁰

As King George's War invited the English to press farther west, the introduction of the same market values that had taken hold among the Creeks began to consume many Choctaw groups. Aggressive English marketers promised a more abundant and dependable supply of

⁷⁸ Nancy Miller Surrey, *Commerce of Louisiana*, 358-360.

⁷⁹ Alfred Reynolds, "The Alabama-Tombigbee Basin in International Relations," 136; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 65-66.

⁸⁰ *MPAFD* III, "Bienville to Pontchartrain," 188; *MPAFD* III, "Bienville's Memoir on Louisiana," 538; Adair, 309; See also: Patricia Galloway, "Choctaws at the Border of the Shatter Zone: Sphere of Exchange and Spheres of Social Value," in Ethridge and Shuck-Hall ed. *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, 333-364.

valuables than the French. This demanded cultural and economic adaptations unique to the Choctaws. But English traders were unable to consistently fulfill their promises to Choctaw headmen prior to 1760 due to the inherent danger and distance in the journey, resulting in widespread social and political instability. Like the arms trade, alcoholism inaugurated an inescapable cycle of debt. The French supplied brandy to the southeastern Indians against the wishes of the Jesuit ministry, but their devotion to the trade in spirits paled in comparison to Carolina and Georgia's. Charlestown's long-standing connection with the liquor trade allowed for the illicit transportation of large quantities of rum along overland paths. Because unscrupulous English traders did not share reservations similar to the Jesuits about alcohol's proliferation among the Indians, they were free to use it to compete with the French and induce the Native Southeast to establish enticing debt-credit relationships that could only be paid by acquiring more deerskins.⁸¹

Decades earlier, at the height of the Indian slave trade, credit from traders functioned to encourage the seizure of women and children when debts proved too steep. This nearly resulted in the destruction of Carolina. As the Indian slave trade waned, however, traders took Indian livestock, other property, and eventually land as payment, thereby impoverishing their native clients. These harsh practices terrified many Creek leaders, possibly prevented the English from successfully winning over the entirety of the Choctaws before 1763, and encouraged the need for certain groups of Creeks to counter aggressive English commercial practices. In effect, the system encouraged Creek headmen to ingratiate themselves to the French on their southern

⁸¹ Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 34-68; James Taylor Carson, "Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 1690-1840," *Ethnohistory* 42 (Summer, 1995): 495-513; Patricia Galloway, "Choctaw Factionalism and Civil War, 1746-1750," 70-102 and Greg O'Brien, "Protecting Trade Through War: Choctaw Elites and British Occupation of the Floridas," in O'Brien, *Pre-Removal Choctaw History*, 103-122;

corridor. Equally pervasive was the fear among many Upper Creeks that the French would “set the Choctaws against them.”⁸²

Indians could not rationalize profit as a principle.⁸³ The Choctaws failed to understand why they paid higher prices than the Creeks. The Creeks were enraged when they discovered they were paying higher prices than the Cherokees.⁸⁴ They did not appreciate that the distance from Charlestown to Creek country was greater, thus, driving up the cost of the journey. Trading posts/forts were required to curtail those costs, argued colonial administrators. This new market reality worked in French favor, allowing Louisiane to tighten its control on the Choctaws and some of the Upper Creek towns.⁸⁵

Still, Louisiane’s inability to provide adequately for its Native allies and provide a counterweight to the English commercial assault compromised any serious effort to win over a majority of the Upper Creeks. The French colony’s energies were further weakened after the establishment of Georgia and a series of intercolonial conflicts that drained resources away from their efforts to maintain far-flung commitments like the Alabama garrison.⁸⁶ The results of

⁸² *BPRO-SC* 13:149, “Charlesworth Glover’s Journal,” Creek headman Chigelly complained to Glover that debts were impossible to payoff, no matter where his people turned. Glover countenanced his superiors to get involved on this issue, and that the Indians should not be forced by traders to repay their debts. This would surely drive them towards the French or Spanish, “Glover’s Journal,” 145-149.

⁸³ Lance Greene and Mark R. Plane, “Introduction,” in *American Indians and Market Economy, 1775-1850* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010) 10.

⁸⁴ *DRAI*, “Journal of an Indian Trader,” January 11, 1755, 56-71. The Creek headman, Gun Merchant, “I am now about to make a Demand of you and all the Traders in our Nation...[to] trade with us the same as Traders do among the Cherrockees....” A passionate, protracted discussion ensues where the agents are harangued about the discrepancies in the English’s treatment of the two nations.

⁸⁵ White, *Roots*, 56-65. Bradford L. Barham and Oliver T. Coomes in *Prosperity’s Promise: the Amazon Rubber Boom and Distorted Economic Development* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996) argue that interior posts extended credit to indigenous peoples for their role in the extractive process of valued resources. So-called “extractive economies” historically establish credit-debt relationships with groups living in resource-rich periphery zones. Capital is distributed in these places through the form of regionally valued goods. This system has proven successful in seducing large populations over considerable areas and over long periods of time.

⁸⁶ Malatchi, a Lower Creek headman, was scolded by a French officer in 1755 for allowing the English to encroach so far beyond the Savannah River. “What, do the English out do you or are they your Masters that you suffer them

Louisiane's demise would threaten Creek town autonomy and jeopardize their unofficial policy of neutrality. In the postwar period (after 1748), however, the creative utilization of overland paths and watercourses to the southern port towns of British-occupied Mobile and Pensacola would aid factions among the southern Upper Creeks in a quest for self-determination. Passages to the southern Upper Creek communities were more expedient than those to eastern centers of market activity both due to shorter distance and the north-south flow of the Alabama-Tombigbee river systems.⁸⁷

Material exchanges and the spaces through which they passed provide a wealth of ethnohistorical information about Creek identity and political vocabulary throughout the colonial period. Anthropologists often argue that individuals exist “not in a world of events but in a world of meaning.”⁸⁸ Viewing trade as a means to understand how material concerns were entwined with culture, values, and the structure of life in a particular space allows scholars to understand the Creek world on its own terms. The challenge for Creek communities in the coming decades involved changes in the play-off system once the French were expelled from North America. An examination of the Creek role in niche markets as this strategy transitioned helps illustrate how domestic transactions contributed to global purposes. The local economy of the Creeks—whether food exchange, or the slave and skin trade—along with their movement towards centers of

to proceed in this Manner?” Malatchi responded that he was aware of their (English) gradual encroachments beyond the river and that “The Middle of Savanna River was the Boundary between both Parties, but since Georgia was settled by Mr. Oglethorp [sic]...the Creeks consented that he should build a Fort on this Side of Savanna River but the English not content with their Settlements upon that River have advanced a great Way beyond it....” “Journal of an Indian Trader,” in *DRIA, 1754-1765*, 67.

⁸⁷ This final point is found in Joshua Piker's, “White & Clean” & Contested: Creek Towns and Trading Paths in the Aftermath of the Seven Years' War,” *Ethnohistory* 50 (2003): 315-347. Piker argues that post-war Creek discussions concerning trade paths were essential to understanding a community-based Creek ideology. Piker contends that community-based histories more accurately portray the Creek world than those discussing the Creeks in terms of region or as a nation of peoples.

⁸⁸ Henry S. Sharpe, “Memory, Meaning and Imaginary Time: The Construction of Knowledge in White and Chipewyan Cultures,” *Ethnohistory* 38 (1991): 162.

market orientation, eliminated spatial differences between global and domestic economic structures and realigned worldviews. Future leaders would need to possess a more nuanced understanding of how best to preserve communal values through memories of past economic arrangements.

CHAPTER 5

TEMPORAL ALIGNMENTS: CREEK FACTIONS AND THE CONSUMMATION OF FRENCH LOUISIANE

The Creeks were not a homogenous native society, but defined, separated, and simultaneously, united by gender, kin, age, and political affiliation. These sectorial interests operated as smaller segments within the larger community of Creek towns and shared in the common pursuit of sociopolitical strategies that augmented their access to material and ceremonial resources beyond their immediate surroundings. When the English defeated the French and forced them to withdraw a military presence from North America, an invaluable means to counter Carolinian and Georgian diplomatic and trade pressures was lost for the indigenous Southeast. This chapter will examine the internal challenges brought to Creek communities by this development and the types of adjustments necessary to reinstitute a commercial and diplomatic balance on the Gulf coast.

The commitments of war were an unfortunate consequence to life on the margins of empire. This was something to which Europeans living along the Gulf coast during the eighteenth century had grown accustomed. Trade suffered as ships were either diverted to the theater of operations in distant Europe, or more profitable colonies elsewhere. The English captured French ships that attempted to carry on regular commercial intercourse with Louisiane, or arrived grossly behind schedule and laden with merchandise ill-suited for the Indian trade—all to the chagrin of colonial administrators who desperately pleaded with metropolitan officials in France about the necessity of maintaining allies with inland nations through the exchange of

goods.¹ A failure to maintain sufficient inventories for visiting native delegations compromised more than French strategy in the region. Creek play-off strategies hinged on competition between European nation-states and when the French failed to secure enough supplies to bolster headmen in their interest, they complicated an intrinsic balance.

King George's War (1744-1748) brought record high prices and chronic shortages to Louisiane, greatly hindering French relationships with their Indian allies. Governor Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnal (or simply Vaudreuil) labored in vain to persuade the Upper Creeks to join the northern nations "of the Wabash and Ohio" in raids against the English. He confessed, however, that he "was not able to succeed in it as far as the Alabamas were concerned, who still preserve a precise neutrality" in their dealings with Europeans.² An English effort to construct a stockade among the Okfuskees, a few miles from Fort Toulouse in 1743, was met with great concern by French officials, who repeatedly implored the and Tallapoosas to destroy the small installation.³ With threats against the garrison near the Alabamas more real than ever, the French redoubled the fort's defenses and sent additional presents for the Indians from Mobile.⁴ This minor conflict in the 1740s, of course, was a mere precursor to the more celebrated intercolonial contest to follow—the French and Indian War (1754-1763). As in all previous conflicts, the French and English waged a concerted campaign to appropriate the Indian allies of the other.

¹ *MPAFD*, V, "Kerlérec to Berryer," September 29, 1759, 241-242.

² *MPAFD*, IV, "Vaudreuil to Maurepas," March 15, 1747, 306.

³ *MPAFD*, IV, "Vaureuil to Maurepas," February 12, 1744, 214-224.

⁴ *MPAFD*, V, "Kerlérec to Berryer," December 1, 1758, 199-202; Lachlan McGillivray operating in the vicinity of Fort Toulouse witnessed the goings and comings of river traffic to the outpost. With war looming, he wrote that the improvements to the "Allebawmaw" fort made "it a pretty strong one; they have had a Boat come up lately deep loaded with a Priest, Popery, and Brandy." McDowell, *DRIA, 1750-1754*, "Lachlan McGillivray to William Pinckney, ESQ," December 18, 1751, 215-216.

What began as a skirmish in the Ohio Valley between French soldiers, Virginia militia, and their Iroquoian (Mingo) allies at the Battle of Jumonville Glen in 1754, erupted into a world war with global consequences that came to impact the social and political lives of the native South. Eager to draw English commitments away from the European theater, Louis XV deliberately withheld troops from French colonies in the Americas in the hope of winning major victories on the continent against Britain's key ally, the recent Prussian upstart Frederick II. France's weaker navy (by comparison to Britain's) and extensive land border virtually compelled it to adopt this strategy. Britain conversely used its naval power to further alienate overseas French possessions from metropolitan connections, leaving the colonies vulnerable to the privations of blockade.⁵

From the outset of hostilities, imports to Louisiane diminished to little more than a trickle. While the interwar period saw a slight flourish in commercial operations—agricultural exports benefiting from high prices and cooperative weather—the onset of war once again thrust Louisiane into dire indigence. By 1759, Louisiane's soldiers were on half rations and the prices of commodities like wine and flour were so expensive few could afford them. High-priced commodities weakened the resolve of soldier and colonist alike, encouraging an increasing reliance on the illicit trade with the neighboring Spanish colonies in Florida, the Caribbean, and Mexico.⁶

The situation in Louisiane was such that no trader was refused, not even the occasional wayward Dutch or English vessel that might find its way to ports like New Orleans, or more commonly, Mobile. Before Governor of Louisiane, Louis Belcourt, Chevalier de Kerlérec, left

⁵ For an overview of European strategies during the Seven Years War see: Franz A. J. Szabo, *The Seven Years War in Europe, 1756-1763* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008).

⁶ Nancy Miller Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Régime*, 208-219.

New Orleans to review troops and conditions at Mobile in the spring of 1759, he instructed a subordinate, Major Francois Simars de Bellisle, that “no ship of any kind, loaded with foodstuffs and other items necessary to the colony, be annoyed in any way by anyone...either English or French, or any ship commissioned by, and flying the flag of Holland or Denmark.”⁷ Despite strict prohibitions against doing so, English captains had occasionally plied their trade in French waters for years, whether intentionally (through smuggling) or not (emergency stops caused by distress of some kind). During times of war, English boat captains often used the exchange of deserters as an excuse to unload cargoes of valued goods and African slaves in French settlements in the Caribbean and along the Gulf coast. Raw materials such as animal skins and agricultural commodities were then loaded onboard and shipped to the Atlantic coast colonies for process in Britain. After procuring the necessary papers, ship captains easily circumvented the cumbersome Navigation Acts and sold their illegal goods under the guise of their goods having originated from ports in the Carolinas.⁸ This illegal network was by no means a minor issue to British colonial officials as far away as New York and Rhode Island, where the majority of the ships originated. Colonial administrators complained that these types of unregulated activities were prolonging the war because they contravened the blockade and sustained a French presence among the Indians.⁹

Trade of this sort was not confined to maverick English and Dutch ship captains. Anglo-American traders operating in the interior offered a wide variety of goods to both French soldiers and their Indian allies. The infrequency of supply from Mobile is well documented. And while inland forts like Toulouse and Tombeché (among the Choctaws, on the Tombigbee River) were

⁷ Marc de Villiers du Terrage, *The Last Years of French Louisiana* edited by Carl A. Brasseaux and Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette, La.: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana) 102-103.

⁸ Surrey, *Commerce*, 443-463.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 461.

self-sufficient to the extent that they grew gardens, raised livestock, and bartered with local native populations, they still depended on the regular supply of manufactured goods from France. The French also used readily available spirits such as brandy to coax British manufactures from the Creeks themselves. Traders and colonial officials then redistributed these goods to influential headmen, completing a cycle that allowed the French to remain competitive in the battle for native approval. Twentieth-century archaeological excavations at places like Fort Toulouse also reveal that these exchange arrangements with the local native populations may have also eased the rigors of garrison life.¹⁰

The days of the ad hoc empire were over and both France and England recognized that this latest campaign was one for global domination. The contest was especially bitter in North America. British naval blockades combined with the strategy to utilize colonial militia to harass French installations proved highly effective. Efforts to recruit Indian allies escalated to new heights. In 1755 the French at Fort Toulouse invited many pro-French Upper and Lower Creek headmen to discuss English land encroachments and trade policies. Notable headmen from the Upper Creeks included the Gun Merchant, Devil's Landlord, the Okfuskee War Captain, and the Red Coat King. Coweta headman Malatchi (the nephew of Emperor Brims) and several other unnamed headmen represented the Lower Creeks. While talks mainly focused on British behavior in the region, the headmen made demands on the French too. They collectively insisted that the French lower their trade prices. The French officers immediately accommodated the request. The benefits of water carriage helped make this possible, giving the French an advantage

¹⁰ Waselkov, Wood, and Herbert, *Colonization and Conquest* 175, 176, 183. Waselkov et al. also illustrate the presence of clay pipes and various gun parts of British origin at the Toulouse site. McDowell, *DRIA, 1754-1765*, "Captain Raymond Demere to Governor Lyttleton," April 11, 1757, 365-366. Demere reported, "I am informed that some of our Creek Traders sell Goods to the French Officers and those Goods are to their Indians with, which if it be so, your Excellency will best know what to do."

over the English, who relied on land routes to move their goods.¹¹ The presence of the headmen at the French fort and their demands illustrate a profound sense of agency. These leaders clearly understood that their role in this global contest was as neutrals. They encouraged a competitive commercial climate and in the process received concessions from the two belligerent parties. Neutrality expressed through the dual attributes of political guile and the factionalism of Creek social structures both contributed to a widely recognized and recorded disposition of impartiality from colonial policy makers.

The plantation economies, land speculation, and growing populations of South Carolina and Georgia led to an ever-expanding desire for land. Small-scale violence and raids had occasionally erupted between Creek warriors and settlers even during peacetime, but by the late 1750s, isolated incidents were becoming more frequent and carried alarming ramifications. A skirmish that left several Upper Creeks dead near the Ogeechee River in the fall of 1756 became a cause for concern to Carolinian officials, who were increasingly anxious about French influence in the region.¹² Incidents like this accompanied dire pronouncements from the British military about the necessity of establishing forts in Creek country. Creek agent Daniel Pepper extolled the virtues of a British fort to an assembly of Creek headmen in May 1757. But as Pepper explained to South Carolina Governor William Lyttelton, French influence was so prevalent among his Creek audience that they were convinced “we want forts purely to enslave them.”¹³

French officers at Mobile and Fort Toulouse hoped to capitalize on growing Creek resentment of British military and civilian thrusts west of the Savannah River. Animosity about

¹¹ McDowell, *DRIA, 1754-1765*, “Journal of an Indian Trader,” January 11, 1755, 56-74.

¹² *DRIA*, “Lt. White Outerbridge to Governor Lyttelton,” October, 22, 1756, 210-211

¹³ *DRIA*, “Daniel Pepper to Governor Lyttelton,” May 7, 1757, 369-373.

these recent developments was particularly strong with Malatchi, but stronger still with the pro-French Upper Creek factional leader, Yahatatastenake of Okchai (also known to the English as Otis Micco, the Great Mortar of Okchai, or simply The Mortar). British behavior was disconcerting to many prominent Creek headmen. The example they set among the Cherokees with the establishment of Fort Prince George (1753) and Fort Loudoun (1756) awakened anxieties from earlier decades about British territorial ambitions in the region.¹⁴

Meeting the French again at Fort Toulouse the following summer in 1756, The Mortar relayed a message from the Cherokees to the attending Creek body that “the English has [sic] now a Mind to make Slaves of them all, for [they] have already filled their Nation [the Cherokees] with English Forts and great Guns, Negroes and Cattle.”¹⁵ English relations with the Cherokees had been deteriorating for decades. Covert French agents such as Pierre-Gaspard Adhémar de Lantagnac operated among the Cherokees, and sustained steady contact with the Alabama garrison.¹⁶ Lantagnac, and others, routinely sought a Cherokee military alliance and in

¹⁴ *DRIA*, “Same to Same,” Pepper recorded that “The Mortar behaved with the most intolerable Impudence and Presumption and but his whole Behaviour confirms me in the Suspicion I entertained of his being greatly in the French Interest, which I have more and more Reason to suspect by ... his carrying the two Cherokees to the French fort, where they made heavy Complaints against the English for building Forts in their Nation and overrunning their Lands with white People...,” June 28, 1757, 387-390. The “earlier decades” remark is in obvious reference to the Yamasee War. Blunting, or at least controlling, English enterprises occupies a significant amount of the conversations from Creek headmen during the entirety of the colonial period. For more on Creek visitors from Fort Toulouse promising French intercession in Cherokee affairs see: John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001) 77-78, 88-89.

¹⁵ *DRIA*, “Creek Traders to Governor Lyttelton,” July 31, 1756, 152; Fear was a strategy heavily employed by the French in a variety of instances. One French officer at Fort Toulouse informed a group of Cherokee headmen that the Carolinians had “Conjournors amongst them that could send up different Bundles of Sickness to their Nation which they scattered amongst their Towns from which proceeds the Decrease of their People.” The officer further pointed out that these same English traders routinely “beat and abuse their Warriors, and debauch their Women.” *DRIA*, “Intelligence from Judge’s Friend to Captain Raymond Demere,” December 10, 1756, 265-266.

¹⁶ For information relating to Lantagnac’s role among the Upper Creeks and Cherokees see: *MPAFD*, V, “Kerlérec to De Machault d’Arnouville,” October 1, 1755, 159-160. For information relating to his mysterious life and circumstances among the English and Indians see: *MPAFD*, V, “Petition of Lantagnac to Kerlérec,” October 1, 1755, 161-165.

the process enlisted the support of several prominent headmen to build a fort near the Cherokee town of Tellico.¹⁷

Kinship ties linking Creek and Cherokee towns were strengthened after the conclusion of the Creek-Cherokee War in 1753. Ritualistic adoption customs held at annual religious ceremonies after the war reinforced fictive kinship relations between towns and headmen. These rites further accentuated the necessity for involvement in one another's affairs.¹⁸ While initially allies of the British during the French and Indian War (joining them in several of the earliest campaigns against the French in the north, most notably at the battle of Fort Duquesne) many Cherokee leaders faced a myriad of pressures to renounce their former allegiance. Pro-French factions, kinship ties with many Upper Creek towns and leaders, and encouragement from influential headmen such as The Mortar compounded with English trade abuses and land seizures to unravel many pro-British sympathies. The French encouraged Cherokee headmen to visit frontier garrisons like Fort Toulouse and Mobile where officers could supply them with what few goods they had and passionately sermonize an eternal friendship.

Exploitative British trade methods were as rampant among the Creeks as they were among the Cherokees. Prices remained high despite pleas from prominent headmen to lower them. Although the Creeks were strictly neutral from 1757-1759, it is reasonable to assume they would have been more amendable to entreaties from New Orleans had the French been able to consistently support influential factions consistently. Visitations to Mobile from Creek delegations became more frequent as the inland flow of goods deteriorated and promises

¹⁷ *DRIA*, "Major Andrew Lewis to Captain Raymond Demere," September 11, 1756, 202-204; Villiers du Terrage, *The Last Years of Louisiana*, 132-133. Kerlérec wanted the British to learn of his devices among the Cherokees. He wrote, "My intention was also that the English see and learn of the [Cherokee] liaison and this communication with the French. I have reason to believe that this manner of operation has given the English something to think about, especially those who are at Fort Duquesne," 133.

¹⁸ Steven C. Hahn *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 250.

continually went unfulfilled. Governor Kerlérec feared the outcome if Louisiane failed as a viable strategic option for impatient headmen. These leaders faced internal pressures and responsibilities of their own, and if Louisiane failed to deliver, pro-French factions might either turn pro-English, or resign to neutrality. Fort Toulouse was unquestionably important as a diplomatic center for native policy, so relations with the neutral and pro-French Alabamas were paramount in maintaining a competitive mooring for the French in the Southeast. As one French politician observed at the time, “On the part of these four tribes of the Alabama contingent which have never had any other goal but that of perfect neutrality, it is presumed that they can no longer really believe that they can easily regain the confidence of the English without deciding on some spectacular act of betrayal against us. This would surely happen if, after they have stricken our enemies, we leave them short of things which they need and which the English furnished them in abundance.”¹⁹ Kerlérec was not averse to seizing private property from inhabitants to maintain gift-giving obligations. In July 1760 Kerlérec met with an Alabama headman in Mobile, claiming to be a spokesman for “the tribes in his area.” The headman assured the governor that if French assistance did not reach the Alabama towns soon, they [the French] would be “abandoned by them and exposed to their just resentment.”²⁰ Kerlérec was determined not to let this happen and seized private warehouses for trade items. But the confiscation of private property could do little to alleviate his precarious position. Fewer gifts to these headmen weakened Louisiane’s ability to exact a meaningful strategy in the Southeast. In time, the lack of supplies forced the Francophile Choctaws to solicit peace terms with the

¹⁹ Terrage, *The Last Years*, “The Minutes of the Council of War,” June 24, 1760, 125.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, “Kerlérec to Rochemore,” August 4, 1760, 126.

Chickasaws and more aggressively extend trading opportunities to British traders stationed among the Upper Creeks.²¹

But the Creeks in general were increasingly disillusioned with their Anglo-American neighbors, too. Illegal (unlicensed) Carolina and Georgia traders insolently peddled their wares in the woods surrounding many Creek towns in an effort to escape the oversight of colonial authorities as well as the traditional *talwa* structure. Traders aggressively pushed the rum trade (despite colonial officials' prohibitions), and continued to deceive susceptible native hunters through an exploitive debt-credit system. By 1759 French agents (both native and European) were fomenting discontent at many Creek town meetings. Violence erupted over the brutal murder of British trader John Ross and two associates in Okfuskee on May 16, 1760.²² The Mortar labored to encourage the deaths of all British traders in a Pocotaligo-style massacre, and then confederate in a grand-alliance with the Cherokees and other northern Indians against the British colonies.²³ While some eleven British traders were eventually murdered over the course of 1760, most Creek leaders, including many who frequented Fort Toulouse like the Gun Merchant and the Devil's Landlord, chose to remain neutral, and, in some cases, provide a safe haven for desperate British merchants located in the backwoods.²⁴ The Wolf King of Mocolussah, who had also visited Fort Toulouse, was unabashedly pro-British and even invited

²¹ John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier, 1754-1775* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1944) 95-97.

²² Piker, *Okfuskee*, 58-59. The traders' lackluster reputation seems to have contributed to their demise, according to James Adair, who characterized one of the men (most likely Ross) as "surlly and ill natured." Adair, 278.

²³ *DRIA*, For The Mortar amongst the Cherokees and others see: "Richard Heughes to Lieutenant Outerbridge," December 26, 1757, 424; "Daniel Pepper to Governor Lyttelton," June 28, 1757; and "Daniel Pepper to Captain Raymond Demere," June 27, 1757, 390. For a look at activity from the French among the "northern Indians" see: "Daniel Pepper to Lyttelton," March 30, 1757, 351-357; "Same to Same," November 18, 1756; and "Governor Glen to Old Hop," 24-26. For a detail on the plans to murder the traders and join the Creeks see: Oliphant, *Peace and War*, 88-89.

²⁴ Hahn, *Invention*, 254-255. For Hahn, these actions were born less from competition between towns or factions and more from an adherence to Brims "Coweta Resolution."

Creek agent Daniel Pepper to construct a fort near his town.²⁵ Pepper wisely, but respectfully rejected this idea.²⁶ But the persistent fear was that Fort Toulouse posed serious complications to British efforts with the native South by inciting defections among a traditionally “neutral” people. The English believed the French “stir up the Indians to War against us by hatching Lyes and using every mean and low Artifice in their Power to bring their Schemes to bear.”²⁷ First Minister William Pitt, in England also considered the idea of invading Louisiane, recognizing the French garrison’s potential danger with respect to keeping peace on the frontier. Pitt approved a coordinated assault on Louisiane by way of Fort Toulouse and Mobile in March 1758.²⁸ Trade goods from the British Atlantic colonies continued to flow into Creek country at an ever so higher rate, despite the recent unpleasantness. Pitt’s well-documented plans to destroy Louisiane, although frequently discussed, ultimately came to nothing.²⁹

It was English policy to confront concerns about the security of their alliances with native peoples through the construction of forts. Creek observers witnessed the construction of Fort Loudoun and the continued abuse of their Cherokee neighbors with dismay. A chain of events ensued inaugurating the Anglo-Cherokee War in 1758, culminating in Fort Loudon’s besiegement, surrender, and the subsequent massacre of many of its inhabitants by vengeful Cherokee-Creek warriors in August 1760.³⁰ Some Creek towns like Oakchoi brazenly displayed English scalps in their public squares from murdered Carolinian traders and settlers.³¹ Despite

²⁵ *DRIA*, “Daniel Pepper to Governor Lyttelton,” December 21, 1756, 297-300; “Journal of an Indian Trader,” January 11, 1755, 56-72. According to Pepper, The Wolf “declared himself a true Englishman. Whatever Intimacy might have been between him and the French, it was only to deceive them for some triffling [sic] Ends.”

²⁶ John Alden, *Southern Colonial Frontier*, 91.

²⁷ *DRIA*, “Pepper to Lyttelton,” April, 25, 1757, 367-368.

²⁸ Gertrude S. Kimball, *Correspondence of William Pitt Vol. I* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1906) 202-203.

²⁹ *DRIA*, “Pepper to Lyttelton,” December 21, 1756, 297-300.

³⁰ For a discussion of the events leading to war see: Oliphant, *Peace and War*, 31-68, 69-112. Oliphant records how many of the captives from the fort were treated. Some were taken to The Mortar’s camp where they were forced to dance in the evenings for his enjoyment. This was a common form of punishment for captives, 138.

³¹ Gertrude S. Kimball, *Correspondence of William Pitt Vol. II* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1906) 268.

passionate efforts by British agents to maintain Cherokee, Shawnee, Savannah, Catawba, and many Creek towns in their interest, the French skillfully exploited fears among these southeastern peoples and were largely successful in helping create a rudimentary, pan-Indian alliance with The Mortar acting as one of its cardinal leaders in the South. This is not to suggest that to war against the British was to be allied with the French. Factions among the Cherokees and others were as self-serving as those among the Creeks, but through the utilization of gift-giving practices and an adherence to diplomatic protocol, the French were able to capitalize on native factional interests in innovative ways.

No attack on Fort Toulouse and beyond could be successful without some level of consent from the local Creeks. The Alabamas, Coushattas, Tallapoosas, and Abeikas commanded the rivers and territory around the fort, but their adherence to a policy of neutrality before 1759 precluded their direct involvement in a potentially ruinous European conflict. This reality frustrated British policymakers, anxious to cajole the southeastern nations to a friendly submission before annihilating Louisiane. Former South Carolinian merchant, Edmond Atkin, desired to reform official imperial policy towards the native Southeast in such a way as to make this possible.

Atkin argued that intelligent diplomacy and meaningful control over the licentious traders would garner more Indian support than displays of raw military strength. Bureaucratic reforms in Indian policy were necessary if Britain ever hoped to manage a vast North American empire. Louisiane's ability to maneuver around the types of circumstances that nearly caused Virginia's extinction in the early to mid-seventeenth century (Anglo-Powhatan Wars), and the Carolinas in the early eighteenth (Tuscarora and Yamasee wars) did not go unnoticed among well-informed reformers. Atkin subscribed to an older plan that proposed the establishment of two jurisdictions

for administering Indian affairs—a northern and a southern superintendent divided geographically by the Ohio River.³² The northern office administered the Iroquois and their allies, while the southern department supervised the Cherokees and their Muskogean neighbors. Before his appointment as superintendent of the southern district, Atkin devised a plan, identifying the challenges and benefits of reforming the current system of trade. Atkin thought an honest implementation of his 1755 plan would ultimately dislodge the French from the Southeast. A key step in that direction involved the destruction of Fort Toulouse.³³

Atkin recognized that Creek neutrality frustrated this strategy. “The Policy of the Creeks,” he reported, “leads them to live in Peace with all their Neighbours; but above all to preserve a good Understanding with all white People, English, French, and Spanish; with each of whom they have Intercourse. This last principle is frequently inculcated by some of the Chiefs in their Harrangues, from the motives of their National Safety and Interest, while they take part against neither, but are Courted by them Severally, and receive Presents from each.”³⁴ While Atkin was undeniably an intelligent and pragmatic leader, evidence also suggests he was ham-handed, inept, and prone to catastrophic blunders in judgment. To make matters worse, he was dependent on colonial governments to fund his initiatives. Upon visiting the Upper Creeks in the fall of 1759, Atkin expressed Britain’s determination to maintain their historic relationship and continue the flow of goods to their towns. While he emphasized that his purpose was not to attack Fort Toulouse, his presence nonetheless, was greeted with suspicion from Creeks and

³² Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Indians of the Southern Colonial Frontier: The Edmond Atkin Report and Plan of 1755* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1954) xxxi-xxxii. William Johnson was Atkin’s counterpart in the north.

³³ Alden, *Southern Colonial Frontier, 1754-1775*, 70. For a brief look at others in the South Carolina government who supported reforms of the trade system see pages, 74-76.

³⁴ Jacobs, *The Edmond Atkin Report*, 62. For John Juricek’s views on Atkin see: John Juricek, *Colonial Georgia and the Creeks: Anglo-Indian Diplomacy on the Southern Frontier, 1733-1763* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010) 230-263.

European observers alike.³⁵ He and his entourage reassured Creek audiences that they did not come to destroy the French fort or make trouble in general, but simply to secure their allegiance to Britain by ending trade with the Catholic powers. His rhetoric was often aggressive and his threats of a trade embargo were unwelcome, untimely, and ill-conceived. Kinship ties with the French garrison were several generations old when Atkin arrived. His tone and blustering presence angered the Alabamas in particular.³⁶ His party was briefly attacked in September 1759, while traveling through Alabama country. Later that same month, while giving a speech at the Tallapoosa town of Tuckabatchee concerning the necessities of exclusivity in trade between Britain and all the Creek towns, a Cusseta headman named Tobacco-Eater violently accosted Atkin with a hatchet. Atkin survived, but the outburst underscored the acrimonious state of affairs in Creek country.³⁷

New factions emerged in response to external economic and military pressures. Opportunities brought by market forces worked in conjunction with Atkin's heavy-handed ultimatum regarding trade exclusivity. In Thomas Nairne's time, Indian towns might splinter and move rather than tolerate a diversity of special interest groups.³⁸ By the mid-eighteenth century though, a multitude of factions coexisted in relative harmony, often within the same town. For decades, trade routes from the Atlantic and Gulf coast supplied Creek headmen with a sufficient amount of goods to satisfy their needs and accommodate pro-British, pro-French, and non-aligned factions. What essentially made this arrangement work was that no particular faction dominated at the expense of another. This latest inter-colonial contest, and Atkin's subsequent

³⁵ Hahn discusses the observations of a Spanish spy named Andres Escudero. *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 246-247.

³⁶ Alden, *John Stuart*, "Atkin collected an armed guard, and made an impressive entrance into the Creek nation." 98.

³⁷ Shuck-Hall, 93-94; Hahn, 245-250; Adair, 269-270; Allen D. Chandler, *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (Atlanta: C.P. Byrd, 1904-16, 1974-76), 28 vols. 8:168-170, "At a Council held at the Governor's House on Thursday 11th October 1759." Hereafter cited simply as *CRSG*.

³⁸ Moore, *Nairne's Journals*, 62-63.

actions to suppress economically what had evolved into a accepted political order, alarmed Creek leaders in a way that hurt future relations with the British, especially in the postwar period.³⁹

Before Tobacco-Eater's assassination attempt on Atkin in Tuckabatchee in 1759, Atkin had smoked the calumet of peace with the assembled headmen, but purposely excluded The Mortar and his pro-French entourage from partaking in the ceremony. The headman's close association with the French was common knowledge. Atkin most likely refused access to this symbolic ritual to underscore Britain's determination to alienate leaders who were disloyal and quarrelsome. This act of disrespect against the attending pro-French faction at Tuckabatchee only deepened a growing divide between Britain and Creek country. In much the same way as Cadillac's cultural obtuseness was reflected in his refusal to receive the calumet with the Natchez in the 1720s, Atkin's same disregard helped draw pro-French factions among the Creeks ever closer to the embittered Cherokees.⁴⁰

After the assassination attempt, and the general hostility his presence engendered (primarily among the Alabamas), Atkin coordinated a trade embargo on many Upper Creek towns. This directive sought to punish the duplicitous behavior of the pro-French Upper Creek and Cherokee factions and weaken a French resolve that had been significantly buoyed by British smuggling.⁴¹ The embargo worked. The French were unable to satisfy visiting native delegations that came to their forts and port towns seeking goods that had been supplied by the British traders. The Alabamas were quickly humbled and extended peace offerings to the British at Tuckabatchee within a month. Atkin used this opportunity to exact a humiliating treaty from

³⁹ Email conversation with Gregory Waselkov, April 20, 2012. Waselkov argues that the Creeks may have observed the successful implementation of neutrality among the Iroquois and strove to replicate this system in their dealings with Europeans in the Southeast.

⁴⁰ Sheri-Shuck-Hall, *Journey to the West*, 90-97; Steven Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 244-252; Adair, *History*, 268-272.

⁴¹ Shuck-Hall, 93-94.

the Alabama headmen. The treaty sought to consolidate British control over the Upper Creeks and break the local autonomy of the towns by eliminating viable trade alternatives. Headmen from the six Alabama towns assembled at Tuckabatchee and placed several bundles of dressed, white deerskins at Atkin's feet as a symbol of capitulation. The conditions for reopening trade were severe. Trade was permitted at the towns of Mocolussah and Little Tallassee (where the British had established trade houses) only if the Alabamas ended all their commercial discourse and visits with the French (including forts and port towns like Mobile and New Orleans), allowed safe passage for British traders in route to Choctaw country, prevented access to unlicensed British traders, and publically swore fealty through the display of "English Colours" in their town squares. Atkin assured them that violation of any one of these conditions would lead to harsh economic repercussions.⁴² Although the headmen placed their mark on the treaty and agreed to follow its provisions, Alabama hunters and headmen continued to make regular visits at Fort Toulouse and Mobile. They also continued to hear French talks and accept their gifts as they had for decades.⁴³ Avoiding the French, especially for the Alabamas was virtually impossible. The fort was in close proximity to several vital water and land trade routes.

Of course, the French were unable to supply their eager friends adequately. Promised trade items never arrived despite the ceaseless pleas from Kerlérec. This inability or unwillingness from French officials to resupply the colony impaired pro-French factions from building an imposing Creek-Cherokee alliance against Britain. The Anglo-Cherokee War increased the manifold threats across the frontier, which also contributed to trade resource

⁴² Edmond Atkin to William Pitt, "Superintendent Atkin's Treaty with the Alabamas at Tuckabatchee," October 10, 1759, in *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789*, ed. W. Stitt Robinson (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 2003) 88-90; Shuck-Hall also discusses this treaty and the conditions that surrounded its inception in 1759-60. The actual document is silent on Atkin's condition to renew the embargo if each of its conditions failed to be met.

⁴³ *MPAFD*, V, "Kerlérec to Berryer," August 4, 1760.

deficiencies for the interior. Kerlérec lamented that "...all the Indians, who lack everything in general, even the necessary munitions to defend themselves against attacks by the English, can do nothing but abandon our alliance and make a new one with the British."⁴⁴ When The Mortar learned that his efforts among the Cherokees were in vain, he reportedly resigned himself to neutrality in despair. No doubt equally disheartening to other pro-French Creek factional leaders was the intimidating reality expressed in visiting Mohawk delegations to Charlestown. It was certainly no accident that Governor William Bull invited these two groups at the same time in early 1760. It had the desired effect in helping keep a majority of the Creeks neutral.⁴⁵

Warfare accentuated factionalism and division in many Creek communities, but this did not translate into the violent civil war that ruptured the Choctaws in the 1740s. Warfare for the Creeks was always personal and familial, never national. Europeans struggled with this concept failing to appreciate how one region or group of towns could be at war, while others were at peace. Individual towns were autonomous. Factions even emerged from towns professing devotion to different European powers, but a headman rarely made a decision contrary to the general welfare of his particular town or clan. While access to goods motivated and increased self-interest among Creek leaders, cultural antidotes prevented the caustic errors that would do irreparable damage to an embryonic sense of collective identity. The same external forces that were helping create social fractures through enticing trade opportunities—cemented by alliances and kinship ties—also contributed to the development of a more unified, coherent semblance of Creek nationhood. This is not meant to suggest that the community failed to play a significant role in Creek life even after 1763, superseding an allegiance to a broader Creek identity, but that outside challenges increasingly impacted ever-larger segments of Creek society, not just

⁴⁴ Villiers du Terrage, *Last Years*, 136-137.

⁴⁵ Alden, *Southern Colonial Frontier*, 128.

individual towns or headmen. The eviction of France from North America after the French and Indian War brought powerful market forces to bear, removed the imperial equilibrium, and saw a fundamental shift in the geography of trade away from the companies located in Charlestown and Augusta and more towards stewardship in Mobile and Pensacola. This invited the next generation of vigorous Creek leadership to resurrect subterfuge, neutrality, and political dexterity in new, albeit limited, ways.

The outcome of the war impacted the Southeast's native inhabitants far more than any pitched battle could have done. Louisiane's marginalization in the scope of imperial strategy spared it the rigors of conquest. Limited successes at commercial agriculture and low population growth all contributed to a listless economy. Postwar treaties brought unrivaled British market values to the region and wrought unprecedented changes to native life. Fighting in North America effectively ended on the Plains of Abraham in 1759. With the fall of Quebec, France's empire in the Americas crumbled under the weight of a British military machine. Spain entered the war late on the side of France resulting in the temporary loss of Cuba to the British. Under the Treaty of Fontainebleau (1762) Louisiane was secretly offered to Spain as a concession for their involvement in the war. The Treaty of Paris (1763) yielded the eastern portion of Louisiane to Britain, ceding the western half to Spain in 1766, which it used as a geographic buffer protecting its mines in New Spain from an avaricious British North America.⁴⁶ France negotiated with Britain to keep the valuable Caribbean possessions of Saint Pierre and Miquelon. Meanwhile, Spain exchanged Florida for Cuba and retained New Orleans. The Mississippi River was finally opened to international traffic.

⁴⁶ Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves*, 104. Usner adeptly illustrates how a small population and weaker commercial linkage with the Atlantic world economy minimized Spain's strategic importance.

For the Creeks, the unexpected French surrender presented a calamitous prospect. Without the French providing a valuable counterweight to the British, Creek headmen worried about the future of those for whom they provided. Their vulnerability was never more starkly illustrated than when South Carolina governor, Henry Ellis, explained to a body of Upper Creeks that “as an untaught People, it was impossible they could themselves make those Necessaries they were constantly furnished with by Us.”⁴⁷ Georgia governor, James Wright, went further in early 1763 when he boasted “You know you cannot do well without us, but we can do without you ... you have tried the French and you know they can not supply your Wants.” Colonial governors underscored the necessity of the former pro-French Creek factions coming together and cooperating with a new world order built on trade and friendship. If the Creeks refused the proverbial olive branch approach, Wright assured them that British forces would invade the Creek homeland and “annihilate their people.”⁴⁸

Viewpoints like these expressed by the British colonial leadership, coupled with the receding French forces at Fort Toulouse and elsewhere, left few options for Upper Creek headmen like The Mortar. For decades neutrality permitted the free flow of goods into Creek towns, establishing a blossoming material culture that simultaneously strengthened a powerful factional leadership. In July 1761, with French victory in doubt, The Mortar publically denied ever having been “in the French Interest, or an Assistant in, or Encourager of, the Quarrel between the Cherokees and the white People.” He stated his intention to serve the British and expressed his gratitude for any presents they might send him. The Georgia assembly agreed to grant him a “Silver Gorget and Arm Plates,” that symbolically made him a medal chief in their

⁴⁷ *CRSG*, 8:417-418, “At a Council held in the Council Chamber at Savannah,” November 8, 1760.

⁴⁸ *CRSG*, 9:12-14, “At a Council held in the Council Chamber at Savannah,” January 4, 1763.

sponsorship.⁴⁹ Following this example was one option for many other headmen. Others—specifically among the Alabama’s—opted a different course altogether.

When Kerlérec received word of Louisiane’s cession to Spain in early 1762 he grew concerned about the fate facing French colonists and soldiers living on the distant frontier.⁵⁰ For weeks, a stream of native emissaries arrived and departed New Orleans demanding supplies the French government had promised months and years earlier. In a letter to Étienne François de Choiseul, Kerlérec wrote, “I am acting in the same way to persuade them to have patience, but that is a virtue unknown to those people, and they can do nothing but make their peace at once and turn their weapons against us, since we cannot even give them powder to defend themselves, and we ourselves shall immediately be in the position of lacking it to repel their raids.”⁵¹ The blockade and war effort crippled Louisiane’s ability to provide for its far-flung commitments. Outlying garrisons like Fort Toulouse suffered from food supply shortages more than ever. To ward off the possibility of a sudden attack from desperate native factions, Kerlérec even devised an unfulfilled plan to invite influential Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creek headmen to the capital and take them hostage until French property and citizens were able to safely withdraw.⁵²

The remaining weeks of a formal French presence in Mobile involved tedious negotiations surrounding the language and meaning of the Peace of Paris. While some inland French fortifications remained, colonial inhabitants—civilian and military—vacated Fort Toulouse. Distrust between the British now stationed in Mobile under Major Robert Farmar, commander of the 34th Regiment of Foot, and the French commanded by Director-General, Jean Jacques Blaise d’Abbadie, delayed the evacuation of the outpost for months. Kerlérec instructed

⁴⁹ *CRSG*, 8:539, “At a Council held in the Council Chamber at Savannah,” July 21, 1761.

⁵⁰ *MPAFD*, V, “Louis XV to Kerérec,” January, 1762, 274-275.

⁵¹ *MPAFD*, V, Kerlérec to Choiseul,” February 10, 1762, 275.

⁵² *MPAFD*, V, Kerlérec to Choiseul,” May 2, 1763.

D'Abbadie to oversee the transfer of authority in the region. Preparations for evacuation, however, stalled over issues of how to properly handle both the "French [military] possessions" as outlined in the recent treaty, and the impossible to guarantee demands from British commanders involving the local Indian populations (especially the Upper Creeks near Fort Toulouse) that they would not rise in anger against Anglo forces. D'Abbadie reported to Kerlérec that "the English are giving me here, Sir, more trouble than the Indians They wish to understand by guaranty even the attacks that the Indians might make I have by no means failed to let the English know all that you have done ... to have words of peace and union between the English, the red men, and us carried to the Indians. That is, I think, the only guaranty that we can give them about the way of thinking of these different nations."⁵³ That the garrison was near starvation further complicated evacuation plans, because any effort from D'Abbadie to remove the men without proper authorization would result in their immediate imprisonment by the British. D'Abbadie ultimately ignored Farmar's warning concerning the garrison's remaining twenty men and ordered them to evacuate and descend the river to Mobile. He admitted to Kerlérec that he "would rather see this garrison prisoner of war at Mobile than to let it die of hunger at a post where I cannot maintain it." D'Abbadie eventually agreed to join Farmar and speak with the Creeks concerning the British and the future of Louisiane.⁵⁴ Alabama and Coushatta warriors accompanied the remaining occupants safely to Mobile when the fort was eventually evacuated.⁵⁵

Both commanders composed a message and attempted to assure much of the native South that peace between France and Britain was commensurate with a peace between "the red men

⁵³ *MPAFD*, V, D'Abbadie to Kerlérec, November 6, 1763, 291-293.

⁵⁴ *MPAFD*, V, "Same to Same," November 6, 1763, 291-293.

⁵⁵ *MPAED*, I, December 18, 1763, 81-83.

[who were] partisans of one side or of the other.” The kings of England and France hoped “to smooth the road and render them white over all the earth....” Analogies involving roads and paths and the colors red and white pervade the dialogue in the postwar period. The commanders argued that violence was the only impediment to the types of commercial relationships that could potentially develop. Peace assured “that the entire land may be white and that the roads may be made smooth, without stone, without briars, and without thorns.”⁵⁶ The nature of paths both literal and metaphysical along with the new direction of trade would play a profoundly important role in the coming months and years.

Concerning the status of the vacated fort, Major Farmar addressed the issue with the congregation of Creeks who escorted the French to Mobile. Farmar assured the Alabamas that the fort would not be garrisoned without the Creek’s permission. And even then, the fort would only exist for the purposes of trade and not “as bad words have been Carried amongst you to make you believe the English intended to take away your lands and Drive you out of the Country....” The fort remained unoccupied and according to Jean-Bernard Bossu’s romantic portraiture, burned to the ground by the grieving Alabama headman Tamathlemingo.⁵⁷

Archaeological evidence disputes the fort was destroyed in this manner, however.

Interpersonal and inter-communal ties between the Alabamas and the French fort may not have resulted in symbolic acts of arson, but they did unquestionably lead to what Sheri Shuck-

⁵⁶ *MPAFD*, V, “Minutes of Council with Choctaws,” November 14, 1763, 294-301. Though the title of the record of the speech mentions only the Choctaws, it is clear that this “talk” was given to the nations of the Creeks too. The French, however, were careful not to call the two nations together in one place. “This shall be accomplished by several separate assemblies, some for the above-mentioned Choctaw nation only, and the others for those known under the name of Alabamas (understood to mean all ‘the Creeks’), observing so far as possible that the above-mentioned Choctaw and Alabama Indians shall not be at Mobile together.

⁵⁷ Jean-Bernard Bossu, *Travels*, 54-55. Bossu writes that Tamathlemingo dies soon afterwards from alcoholism and a broken heart. Gordon Mitchell Sayre in *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 310-312, argues that this was a popular postwar depiction of their former allies—excessively mourning their departure. We know that the Alabama headman accompanied his people west of the Mississippi River in 1765.

Hall has characterized as a second migration. Abandoning their Creek homeland almost immediately after the evacuation of the fort, a group of some eighty Alabamas and Coushattas sailed down river to Mobile in April 1764. From Mobile they migrated west to Spanish Louisiana near the commercial nexus of Manchac—located on a pass connecting lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain. Two hundred followed suit in 1766, and another sixty four in 1771. Each band relocated near market locales where they could engage in trade. But as Anglo-American land encroachments and commercial competition amplified, Alabama-Coushatta groups continued evermore westward, always settling near major rivers with easy access to port towns on the Gulf coast. By the early nineteenth century, American settlement radiating from the Mississippi River would push Alabama-Coushatta migrants into the Caddo lands of modern-day western Louisiana and eastern Texas.⁵⁸

Daniel Usner has characterized the period following the French and Indian War as more transitional than transformative for the inhabitants of Louisiane (and what would become British West Florida). While scholars generally consider the effect on native populations in the Southeast as one of reduced options due to British encirclement, alternatives to enact play-off strategies for the Creeks illustrate how neutrality was perhaps culturally intrinsic as well as a conscious decision, and not exclusively reliant on having multiple competing European powers vying for their affections. A British presence along the southern corridor challenged the well-entrenched Augusta and Charlestown merchants in the east. Headmen from the northern Upper Creek towns were equally concerned about the competition brought from the more expedient routes in the south.⁵⁹ Trade and communication flowing from Mobile and Pensacola threatened

⁵⁸ Shuck-Hall, *Journey to the West*, 106-108.

⁵⁹ Joshua Piker, ““White & Clean” & Contested,” 317. Piker mentions that the road to the Upper Creek country from Mobile and Pensacola was only 225 miles as compared to the 280 miles to Augusta. Additionally, the north-south

the specific worldview of established headmen like The Mortar. Joshua Piker's article, "'White & Clean' & Contested: Creek Towns and Trading Paths in the Aftermath of the Seven Years' War," expertly examines how rivalry between factional leadership in the Upper Creek towns of the postwar commercial climate accentuated the saliency of the community in Creek life. But it is also important to illustrate how Creeks reinterpreted their options by helping create a familiar culture of commercial competition between Europeans. Future factional leadership needed to recognize and exploit this.

flow of the Alabama-Tombigbee River basin benefited the trade to a specific set of towns. For a description of the path from Pensacola to Upper Creek country see: "Attempts towards a Short Description of West Florida by [Bernard Romans]," in *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, (hereafter cited as simply *DAR*) Volume VI, edited by K.G. Davies (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1974) 188-189.

CHAPTER 6

NEUTRALITY IN TRANSITION: THE TERRAIN OF FACTIONALISM

The arrival of the British on the Gulf coast challenged the trade and diplomatic advantages enjoyed by Upper Creek towns since the arrival of the French and Spanish near the turn of the eighteenth century. The departure of the Catholic powers escalated uncertainty and factional competition among an Upper Creek leadership eager to redefine and redirect the balance of power in the region in ways that enhanced the statuses of their communities and personal prestige. A recurrent few of these Upper Creek headmen continually appear in the colonial records of British West Florida in the years immediately preceding the American Revolution. Their discussions with colonial administrators reveal not only the saliency of the community in Creek life, but also how market principles were subordinate to social arrangements and responsibilities. Through a discourse relative to the geographic location of towns (whether European or Creek) and those communities relation to one another, prove that trade and diplomatic networks were multi-dimensional and situational. This reality complicated efforts from British merchants, traders, and administrators as they labored to instill order across colonial the Southeast.

Both Europeans and Creeks understood the importance of the geography of trade. For Europeans seeking an advantage over their imperial rivals in the North American Southeast, and commercial and diplomatic access to indigenous allies was critical in their overall geopolitical missions. On his errand to the Lower Creeks in 1728, Charlesworth Glover remarked: “I hear

there is a French man coming with a talk to you, I wou'd have you take no notice of anything he says. If it was a talk from their great men it would have come from the French path.”¹

Encouraging a healthy competition from multiple directions was an intrinsic Creek objective. Superintendent John Stuart observed this in 1768: “some amongst them [the Creeks] wish to see that competition for their friendship renewed, which subsisted when the French and Spaniards had footing near them, and from which they reaped great advantages.”² During much of the colonial period, this play-off strategy succeeded, using a confusing array of individual town or factional interests. But this counterbalancing system was compromised in the wake of a diminished French and Spanish presence in North America immediately following the French and Indian War.

The war's outcome did not extinguish factionalism among the Southeast's indigenous populations though. French and Spanish activity among factions of the Choctaws and the smaller Indian nations residing along the eastern banks of the Mississippi River encumbered British efforts to consolidate control in the West. For the Upper Creeks, who controlled the Alabama, Coosa, and Tallapoosa river systems, the introduction of new market realities created factional tensions, which in turn complicated British colonial policies meant to police Creek behavior. Because British West Florida was virtually defenseless, its administrators were susceptible to the persistent fear of a pan-Indian alliance against them, and therefore, advanced policies that oscillated from conciliatory to those fostering dissention. Fears of a pan-Indian alliance were never realized though, and while British trade policies often alienated and frustrated many local headmen, protest did not manifest itself beyond a few isolated incidents of targeted violence and harmless banditry. By contrast, controlling violence along the Georgia/South Carolina borders

¹ “Charlesworth Glover's Journal,” *BPRO-SC*, 13:130.

² Juricek, “Superintendent Stuart to Hillsborough, reporting Upper Creek Isolation,” December 28, 1768, 347-348.

after 1763 was a greater consideration for the British, especially as settlers flagrantly squatted beyond agreed-upon boundaries, irreverently drove cattle across ancestral hunting grounds, and violated the traditional talwa structure by plying Indian clients with rum and subjecting them to unscrupulous trade methods outside the towns.³ For the Upper Creeks, pivoting the geography of trade away from these more disturbing developments in the East (Georgia/South Carolina) preoccupied factional leadership. Fresh trade opportunities in the former French and Spanish towns of Mobile and Pensacola divided Upper Creeks, especially as British land lust in places like the Mobile-Tensaw delta and the Escambia River valley tinged Indian conferences and talks.

An elemental concept in the geography of trade was the spatial relationship among economic agents and how these individuals and commercial forces privileged certain Creek towns over others. Distance obviously complicated economic matters due to transportation costs, the difficulties in managing more remote supply chains, and the expenses associated with entering, regulating, and defending new market access points. In the postwar period, the British were able to reduce their transportation costs to inland indigenous nations by limiting the distance to their towns through the development of posts along the north-central Gulf coast. British West Florida benefitted Anglo-American skin-trading companies and territorial expansionists alike, but in the process complicated the Creek political landscape through the creation of new ephemeral interest groups with designs on influencing, controlling, and/or,

³ Governor James Wright estimated that when he entered office in 1760, there were less than 6,000 settlers in the province. By 1766, the Georgian population was over 10,000 and growing. The African slave population also more than doubled in the same time frame from 3,578 to 7,800. See: *CRSG*, 37, pt. 1:141-144, "Governor Wright to Shelburne," November 18, 1766. The colonial population of the Lower Mississippi Valley also increased dramatically in areas other than the main port towns of Mobile, Pensacola, and New Orleans. From 1763 to 1783, these populations concentrated in three principal settlements: Natchez (and its immediate surroundings on the Mississippi River), Baton Rouge and Manchac farther south, and the Tensaw settlements, near the junction of the Alabama-Tombigbee rivers. British West Florida's total population was somewhere from 6,000-8,000. See: Robin F. A. Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida, 1763-1783* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1988) 18-20; David Taitt had a low opinion of the traders at this time, considering most of them, "Composed of Deserters, Horse thieves, half breeds and Negroes. They all trade without any Licenses or permits," Mereness, "Journal of David Taitt," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, 525.

limiting trade from Mobile and Pensacola. A decade-long conversation between British colonial officials and the principal Upper Creek headmen would ultimately establish a new leadership, trade, and influence axis that linked the Upper Creek town of Little Tallassee with the Tensaw region and the ports of Mobile and Pensacola by the 1780s. This would have profound implications for the Creeks as they continued to use geography as a means to defend against external threats and secure trade resources as they had earlier in the century.

Euro-American settlements pushed as far west as the Creek hunting grounds on the Ogeechee River by 1765. This worked in conjunction with a British military and commercial presence on the Gulf coast, exciting fears and confusion among both Upper and Lower Creek headmen about British motives with regard to settlement. Strategies varied among Creek leaders on how best to approach these postwar challenges. A strike against any one of these settlements might invite serious British military and trade repercussions. In reference to this dilemma, The Mortar of Okchai complained to Georgia governor, James Wright, “that he and his Family are Masters of all the Land, and they own no Masters but the Master of Breath; but he thinks the White People intend to stop all their [Creek] Breaths by their settling all round them.”⁴ French and Spanish agents, still residing among the Creeks, were partly to blame for creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and were not averse to perpetuating rumors as a tactic. Pontiac’s Rebellion in the Ohio (1763-1766) was likely encouraged by French machinations in the backcountry.⁵ One Lower Creek headman verbalized his concern to Governor Wright “that the French and Spaniards said a great Number of English Troops were landed at Pensacola, Mobile etc. and that they were to go away from those Places: And that the Designs of the English were

⁴ *CRSG*, 9:72-73, “The Mortar and Gun Merchant to Governor Wright,” May 8, 1763.

⁵ *MPAED*, I, “From Governor Johnstone and John Stuart,” June 12, 1765, 184-188; John Alden, *John Stuart*, 234-235.

to surround the Indians and punish them for their past Misbehaviour and to make them tame.”⁶ The Creeks might not have been able to stop the British from possessing Mobile and Pensacola, but they could strive to contain them there. The question concerning former French military and commercial installations troubled headmen like The Mortar. In May 1763, The Mortar spoke for the Upper Creeks when he asserted that the lands previously occupied by the French were loaned to the Alabamas, and not for the French to relinquish during Parisian treaty negotiations.⁷ Efforts to reassert Creek control over this region remained salient issues in the coming years.⁸

For Europeans, control of trade was an essential component in the mercantilist system and maintaining order on the frontier. Cooperation from native headmen was an elemental part of this process. Newly acquired territory from Spain and France created six new British governor’s positions, each equal in the task of licensing traders, who now had access points to previously unexploited parts of the Southeast (i.e. through Mobile and Pensacola). The Scotsman, John Stuart, Edmond Atkin’s successor as Superintendant of the Southern District, vied against other appointed officials in the chaotic task of trying to regulate a frontier rife with men of questionable character and motive. The governors unequivocally opposed Stuart’s attempts to consolidate his authority to license and regulate the trade, however.⁹ Stuart’s approach to hardliner nativists like The Mortar stood in stark contrast to Atkin’s confrontational style. Without the tools necessary to regulate the trade, episodic violence, miscommunication, and political backbiting characterized much of the colonial drama during this period.

⁶ *CRSG*, 9:76, “His Excellency’s Memorandum and Answer,” May 15, 1763.

⁷ *CRSG*, 9:72-73, “The Mortar and Gun Merchant to Governor Wright,” May 8, 1763; see also: *Ibid.*, 1:52.

⁸ The Creeks were fundamentally distrustful of the British and strove to limit their settlement objectives. See: Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, “The Mortar and Other Upper Creek Headmen to Superintendent Stuart, Rejecting Trade from West Florida,” July 22, 1764, 217-218.

⁹ *BPRO-SC*, 30:131-137, “Governor Boone to the Board of Trade About the Authority of Superintendent Stuart,” April, 7, 1764.

Trade was one challenge for the superintendent; western settlement was another. In earlier decades, increasing pressure to compete with South Carolina prompted Georgian settlement on lands as far as the Ogeechee River (some fifty miles west of Augusta). This inevitably invited skirmishes with Creek hunters and raiding parties, who had jealously controlled the area for generations. Augustan trader George Galphin explained in a letter: “If anything brings War it will be the Ogeechie [sic] Settlement for they and Indians keep Robbing one another.”¹⁰ Issues involving settlement west of Augusta, past grievances over trade debts, and future boundary agreements, however, were resolved at the fruitful Augusta Congress in November 1763. Here assembled many of the most prominent headmen from among the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Catawba, Cherokee, and Creek nations assembled. Through the skill of veteran Indian traders like Lachlan McGillivray and George Galphin, the colonies obtained a remarkable series of concessions by the assembled nations.¹¹ Many past grievances were reconciled, with the Creeks agreeing “to a new boundary for Georgia that encompassed all of the advanced settlements of the colony,” and trade guarantees from Mobile and Pensacola.¹² Direction of trade was a major issue at the conference, especially considering the conspicuous absence of anti-British Creek faction leaders like The Mortar.¹³

The British regarded The Mortar as “bold and enterprising” and would do everything within reason to charm him into submission.¹⁴ But when fourteen settlers were murdered in December 1763 near Long Canes in South Carolina, it was assumed by colonial officials that

¹⁰ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “George Galphin to Superintendent Stuart,” June 2, 1768, 46-47.

¹¹ Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 221.

¹² *Early American Indian Documents, V*, (hereafter cited as *EAIID*) edited by W. Stitt Robinson, “Journal of the Congress at Augusta with the Indians,” October 1-November 21, 1763, 263-303.

¹³ John Juricek, *Georgia Treaties, 1733-1763*, “Superintendent Stuart to the Early of Egremont,” December 5, 1763, 359-361.

¹⁴ Juricek *Ibid.*, “Same to Same,” 361.

The Mortar, whose noticeable absence from the late congress, may have played a part.¹⁵ Upper and Lower headmen quickly distanced themselves from the heinous incident, hoping to ward off the inevitable trade embargo to their towns. Notable Upper Creek headmen came forward blaming the crime on “a Parcell of young Fellows,” or “Runagadoes” from the Lower towns. Always a staunch ally of the British, Upper Creek headman, the Wolf King of Mocolussah, went further, suggesting that if resolution of the murders could not make the proverbial path “straight” once more, the British should close the Upper Creek trade path altogether, “and [let] the Grass grow upon it, and if you will supply them [the Upper Creeks] another Way.” It was understood that this “other way” was from the conveniently situated southern ports of Mobile and Pensacola.¹⁶

This appears to have been a strategic guise on the part of the Wolf King. He argued that troubles emanating from the incident at Long Canes concerned the young warriors from the Lower towns, and additionally accused Lower Creek leaders of impeding Upper Creek verbal contributions at the Augusta Congress. By traveling to Pensacola and arguing for a closure of the path from Augusta, the Wolf King likely understood that an opened southern corridor created competition between east coast merchants and colonial officials with the new proprietors and administrators then emerging along the Gulf coast and by-passed the Lower Creeks. Shorter distances from the Gulf coast to the Upper towns guaranteed cheaper prices and traveling via river courses (mastered by the French) assured quicker, more dependable deliveries.¹⁷

¹⁵ *CRSG*, 9:114-115, “Mr. Galphin in his Letter to his Excellency,” January 5, 1764. James Adair considered The Mortar responsible for these murders: *The History of the American Indians*, 269-270, 314.

¹⁶ Juricek, *Georgia Treaties, 1733-1763*, “Upper Creek Reply to Superintendent Stuart’s Protest,” March 6, 1764, 11-12.

¹⁷ The Wolf also argued the expediency of a southerly path. Taitt records that, “the Wolf seemed a Sensible Old Man, said he might be a hundred years old, and that the fatigues he had undergone in going down to the Colonies in Georgia and Carolina, had effected him and made him look as old as he did.” Mereness, in ed. Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies*, 385.

British traders flocked to West Florida. French colonists still residing in the colony found themselves in a precarious position. Major Robert Farmar's manifesto to the French inhabitants of Mobile in October 1763 encouraged them to remain "in their diverse abodes" as they would be protected under British law, once they professed an oath of allegiance. He assured them that their Catholic faith would not prejudice his government against them, but an oath of loyalty was necessary after three months or they would be given eighteen months to gather their property and leave.¹⁸ Of the ninety-eight French families living in Mobile, Farmar figured only ten might remain.¹⁹ While many did leave for New Orleans, others stayed and cooperated with the British government and performed various valuable functions for the new regime. Some like Louis Favre and Chevalier Montault de Monbérault, served as interpreters and midlevel functionaries for the new government. Monbérault, commanded Fort Toulouse from 1755-1759, and had a personal relationship with many Upper Creek leaders like The Mortar. He was a man of considerable property and influence.²⁰

With an atmosphere of uncertainty concerning proper jurisdiction in the region, accounts of conflicts between military and civilian authorities pervade the early records and correspondences during this time.²¹ One of the principal traders who relocated in Mobile from

¹⁸ *MPAED*, I, "Manifesto issued at Mobile by Major Farmar," October, 1763, 60-63.

¹⁹ *MPAED*, I, "State of the Revenue of Louisiana, with Appointments Civil and Military, whilst under the French Government," January 24, 1764, 30-31.

²⁰ Robert Rea, *Major Robert Farmar of Mobile* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1990) 41; For information about Monbérault's service at Fort Toulouse and for British West Florida see: *The Memoire Justificatif of the Chevalier Montault de Monbérault: Indian Diplomacy in British West Florida, 1763-1765* translated and introduction by Milo B. Howard, Jr. and Robert R. Rea (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1965).

²¹ For a discussion of British immigration to West Florida after the French and Indian War see: Robin Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida*, 6-21; for information on the skin traffic leaving Mobile and Pensacola see: Fabel, 55-60. Traders moving from the eastern companies, John McGillivray among them, see: Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 56-57. In Robert Rea's, *Major Robert Farmar* we learn of an incident involving John McGillivray, his "hirelings," the daughter of the aforementioned Chevalier Monbérault, and Major Robert Farmar. John McGillivray's men were notorious characters, most likely fugitives from other colonies, but typical of the types of men attracted to the Indian trade. A famous incident involved their having insulted Chevalier Monbérault's daughter, resisting arrest

Augusta was John McGillivray—Lachlan McGillivray’s younger cousin—who had immigrated from Strathearn, Scotland a decade earlier. Upon John’s arrival in Charlestown, Lachlan instructed his young relative in the mechanisms of Indian trade just as his uncle, Archibald McGillivray, had apprenticed him. In a relatively short time, John became as capable of turning a profit and commanding influence as his older cousin. His initial forays in the native South involved the Chickasaws and Upper Creeks, where he established invaluable connections that aided his move to Mobile in 1763. He chose two Chickasaw wives with whom he fathered two métis sons, anchoring his kinship ties with native leadership elements, just as Lachlan had done in Little Tallassee. His arrival in Mobile led to his lucrative partnership with Peter Swanson in a trading house venture where he laid a firm commercial foundation for the McGillivray family on the Gulf coast. Trade with individuals like John McGillivray promised new benefits and challenges for the Upper Creeks.²²

For decades, eastern trade routes from South Carolina and Georgia (the Upper and Lower paths) geographically privileged the Lower Creek towns, while French sources benefited the Upper Creeks from the south and west. This, of course, did not mean the Upper Creeks were insulated from British trade. Towns such as Okfuskee long benefited from their fictive kinship ties with resource centers such as Charlestown and Savannah, but still acknowledged their place further down the trade path. An assemblage of Upper Creek headmen articulated this point to

and prosecution for the affront from Farmar’s soldiers. More than an isolated incident though, this was indicative of how unmanageable the employees of even the most considerable traders had become.

²² Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 155-156. Keeping with the Scottish nepotistic tradition common at the time in places like Charlestown and Savannah, Superintendent John Stuart appointed his cousin Charles Stuart as his deputy superintendent when Chevalier Monbérault absconded to New Orleans under inauspicious circumstances in June 1765. Charles Stuart employed John McGillivray as his principal translator and Indian advisor to the British government in Mobile. For information on the details surrounding Monbérault’s alleged intrigues with pro-French- faction Choctaws, and other possible embellishments regarding his special relationship with individuals like The Mortar see the accusations raised by Johnstone in, *The Memoire Justificatif of the Chevalier Montault de Monbérault*, 95-104.

Superintendent Stuart, when they emphasized their commitment to an historic commercial relationship with the British, despite being at a greater distance: “It was our Forefathers that Entered into peace and friendship with the people of Carolina, which we still approve of and are willing to do everything in our power to hold them fast and keep the path between us white, notwithstanding we are the back part of the Nation.”²³ The many southern Upper Creek communities,²⁴ which had commercial histories more in sync with the French at Mobile, likely, saw an opportunity in the recalibration of trade flow with McGillivray from the Gulf south. A reliable southern trade certainly privileged “the back part of the Nation” just as the Upper and Lower paths had for the northern Upper towns and Lower Creeks since the mid-to-late seventeenth century. Just as they had with the Catholic powers, factions among the Upper Creeks encouraged new commercial opportunities on the Gulf coast, but also labored to limit the growth of these new British settlements.²⁵

For nearly a year after the withdrawal of the Spanish government and upon invitation from the British, periodic waves of Creek delegations traveled to Pensacola and received gifts. At one such conference in September 1764, the Wolf King of Mocolussah granted the British a large S-shaped tract of land. Because of the sandy soil around Pensacola, outlying farms were necessary to grow corn and raise cattle for the town’s subsistence—something the Spanish had neglected to do, relying almost exclusively on the enterprise of local Indians and imperial imports.²⁶ The allocation was “Ten Miles in depth from Deer Point [southern-most point on

²³ John Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, “Upper Creek Chiefs to Superintendent Stuart, Replying to his December 17 Talk,” April 20, 1767, 335-336.

²⁴ Joshua Piker in ““White and Clean and Contest: Creek Towns and Trading Paths in the Aftermath of the Seven Years War,” is perhaps the first to make the designation between southern and northern Upper Creek factions.

²⁵ At a general meeting at the town of Little Tallassee on April 10, 1764, the Upper Creek’s insisted that the British on the Gulf coast submit to the territorial confines previously held by the French and Spanish, Juricek, *Treaties*, “Upper Creek ‘Great Talk’ to Superintendent Stuart and Governor Wright,” May 20, 1764, 212-214.

²⁶ *MPAED, I*, “From Major Forbes to Sectary of State,” 1764?, 141-143.

Santa Rosa Island], opposite to the Island of Saint Rose, quite round the Bay of Pensacola, and to Extend along the Sea Coast, to the Point of Mobile Bay, from thence up the East side of Mobile Bay, till it comes Opposite to the Town of Mobile.” The grant was also conditioned on: a prohibition of the rum trade to the Wolf King’s people, a strict adherence to the agreed upon settlement boundaries and reliable commercial intercourse with British entrepôt on the Gulf coast.²⁷ Settlement beyond the outlined boundary, the Wolf King threatened, would result in “a declaration of War” and the scalping of many settlers.²⁸ The Upper Creek leader’s actions, however, were unsanctioned by other headmen with vested interests in alternative trade directions in the region, but his adroit willingness for a connection to outside markets without allowing those same markets a controlling influence through territorial degradation (i.e. settlement) superseded any concerns about seeking the approval of others.

Superintendent Stuart was pleased with the agreement, though he recognized its illegitimacy.²⁹ Complicating matters with the Creeks even more were the results of the Mobile Congress earlier that spring (1764). Stuart and Major Farmar worked together in achieving a long-sought peace accord with a majority of the Chickasaw and Choctaw leadership. Peace with the Choctaws was especially necessary, not only for the security of British West Florida and the westward expansion of the deerskin trade, but also to check Upper Creek designs in the region. Like the Augusta Congress the previous year, the conference at Mobile successfully relieved past grievances and established a more friendly commercial footing with these powerful inland nations. The conference garnered Choctaw loyalty and witnessed previously pro-French headmen symbolically “casting aside” their French allegiance, pledging to advance and assist

²⁷ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, “Captain Robert Mackinnen’s Conference with, and “Grant” from, The Wolf King and other Tallapoosa Headmen,” September 5-10, 1764.

²⁸ *MPAED*, I, “Report of William Forbes on Pensacola,” January 30, 1764, 112-114.

²⁹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, “Governor George Johnstone to John Pownall, Secretary to the Board of Trade,” October, 31, 1764, 224.

British goodwill gestures to nations as far north as the Illinois country, and cooperation in the regulating of unlicensed trade. But perhaps most important to British West Florida was that Choctaw leadership granted them a large land concession of their own.³⁰

The Choctaws ceded claims to several contested islands between the Mobile and Tensaw rivers. A boundary was then set that paralleled the Alabama River to a vaguely defined location north of the junction of the Alabama-Tombigbee rivers. It then proceeded west and southwest to the banks of the Pascagoula River to a point some thirty-six miles (12 leagues) from the Gulf coast and as far west as the eastern shore of the Mississippi River, where Choctaw influence waned in favor of other smaller nations residing there. Lands north of Mobile were disputed terrain for the region's indigenous inhabitants, however. The Upper Creeks resented Choctaw claims, and when British settlement threatened this territory called "Tensaw," headmen like The Mortar balked at Choctaw presumption and prepared to chasten any new European arrivals there.³¹

Many Upper Creek headmen had many concerns about the southern trade. The entrepreneurial spirit emerging from companies like John McGillivray's along the Gulf coast invited a flourish of commercialism. Traders might no longer need to travel through Creek lands to access the Choctaws, nor were the Chickasaws as distant. The commercial and military advantages for the Choctaws were also glaringly apparent. The Choctaws could easily control a southern trade corridor from Mobile, denying the Upper Creeks a role in regulating the western flow of goods that passed through their towns. Additionally, as Joshua Piker argues, competition between southern and northern Upper Creek factions and town leaders arose in response to this

³⁰ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Treaty with the Choctaws and Chickasaws at Mobile," March 26, 1765, 251-253; Juricek, *Ibid.*, "Superintendent Stuart to John Pownall, Reporting on the Mobile Congress," April 16, 1765, 254-256.

³¹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, "The Mortar and other Upper Creek Headmen to Superintendent Stuart, Rejecting Trade from West Florida," July 22, 1764, 217-219.

trade and the new settlements.³² Northern Upper Creek towns like Okfuskee and Okchai benefited diplomatically and commercially from the generations-old overland paths and the interpersonal and inter-communal relationships linking their towns with Augusta, Savannah, and Charlestown.³³ Conversely, southern Upper Creek towns were more geographically situated to benefit from southerly-river courses and land routes. This, perhaps, best explains why some Upper Creek headmen favored trade from the Gulf coast, while others were vehemently opposed.

British settlement on lands lent to the French was particularly galling to leaders such as The Mortar. Delegations of Upper Creek headmen explained to British officials that the French had been given usufruct rights to settle Tensaw, just as they had when they constructed Fort Toulouse among the Alabamas. Leading southern Upper Creek leaders initially welcomed a measured British presence along the Gulf coast, as demonstrated by the Wolf King's generous allowance and trade guarantees. But his actions in Pensacola and the Choctaw's presumptive behavior in ceding lands north of Mobile created new factions among the Upper Creeks as a response. At a major gathering of Upper Creek headmen at Little Tallassee in April 1764, another figure joined the growing political fracas. Little Tallassee's leading headman, Emistisiguo, came forward as a recognized spokesman for the Upper Creeks and presented a counterweight to The Mortar's anti-British position. At the Augusta Congress (1763), Emistisiguo acted as The Mortar's substitute, representing his Upper Creek constituency.³⁴ At the 1764 meeting at Little Tallassee, Emistisiguo highlighted the generational importance Fort Toulouse played in the life of his hometown, but he also expressed no interest in seeing the

³² Joshua Piker, "'White & Clean' & Contested."

³³ For a description of this path see: John H. Goff, "The Path to Oakfuskee Upper Trading Route in Georgia to the Creek Indians," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 39 (March 1955): 1-36.

³⁴ This is confirmed by Emistisiguo's "talk" at Little Tallassee. He voices collective opinions held about major issues impacting the Upper Creek towns. Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, "Upper Creek 'Great Talk' to Superintendent Stuart and Governor Wright," May 20, 1764 212-214.

British reoccupy the fort. He was comfortable with a commercial relationship with British West Florida and optimistic about promises regarding limited settlement north of Mobile in the fertile lands of the Mobile-Tensaw delta. He assured Stuart that he was “glad ... that the vessels [riverboats] are going and coming there with Goods to supply his Nation, and other Indians and that they may never want for Goods” either.³⁵ Emistisiguo’s position as a voice of influence seemed secure, but when The Mortar decided against the new southern trade a few weeks later, Emistisiguo dutifully followed suit.³⁶

While Emistisiguo represented a prominent faction among the Upper Creeks, The Mortar commanded considerably more influence and had an antagonistic reputation as a counterweight to British interests in the region. Additionally, Emistisiguo recognized the primacy of his factional rivals in the northern Upper towns led by The Mortar. But it appears The Mortar’s absence at several notable Indian conferences, coupled with his past allegiance with the French cost him politically. David Taitt noticed this on his mission to the Upper Creeks in 1772: “You will plainly observe by these answers that the Nation [Upper Creeks] is divided one part against another which is caused by a jealousy [sic] between the Abeckas [northern Upper Creeks] and Tallapusses [southern Upper Creeks] in regard of the respect that has been of late showed to Emistisiguo, who unfortunately is of a Slave race.”³⁷

The Mortar feared British expansion and expressed his disfavor with breaking a time-tested commercial discourse to Augusta, which had helped provide him commercial/political clout as a factional leader. “The [Augusta] Path was made before he [The Mortar] was Born, by

³⁵ Juricek, *Ibid.*, “Emistisiguo and Other Upper Creek Headmen to Superintendent Stuart,” July 15, 1764, 215-217.

³⁶ Juricek, *Ibid.*, “The Mortar and Other Upper Creek Headmen to Superintendent Stuart, Rejecting Trade from West Florida,” July 22, 1764, 217-218.

³⁷ David Taitt’s 1772 mission to the Upper Creeks is recorded in Mereness, *Travels*, “Journal of David Taitt,” 524. Taitt continues on the same page, claiming that “those in the Upper Towns carry the greatest authority.” Taitt’s mention of Emistisiguo’s lineage is a reference to his father having been a captive during the slave trade.

which they were supplied with Goods, and he expects no Alteration will be made.”³⁸ The Mortar bolstered this sentiment in a message to Governor Wright later in the summer of 1764 where he conveyed his regret at ever having been in the French interest. This was merely a play to British sentiments. He sent a string of white beads collected from other leading Upper Creek headmen, along with a symbolic white eagle’s wing to affirm eternal friendship with and loyalty to Augusta. It was “their desire,” he proclaimed, “that the Great Old Path between Augusta and the Nation, may be kept White and Clean, and that they may be Supplied with goods etc. by that Path, as they want to know no Other.”³⁹ A more advantageous southern trade route threatened to undermine his authority by favoring headmen in the towns of the southern Upper Creeks. The Mortar here effectively outlined the position of the northern Upper Creek towns with regard to the continued health of their commercial relationship with Augusta, and a formal rejection of Emistisiguo’s earlier endorsement of trade to the south via Mobile and Pensacola.

Upper Creek headmen and their communities had long-standing relationships with merchant companies from Georgia and South Carolina. Interpersonal and inter-communal bonds privileged certain towns and individuals. How those bonds might be phrased, understood, or measured varied a great deal, but eighteenth-century Creeks envisaged their social world in terms of family and community, whether they were dealing with indigenous neighbors or Europeans. While evidence confirms The Mortar’s conspicuous leadership of the most prominent pro-French Upper Creek faction,⁴⁰ he still relied on British trade, either directly or indirectly and long

³⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, “The Mortar and Other Upper Creek Headmen to Superintendent Stuart, Rejecting Trade from West Florida,” July 22, 1764, 218.

³⁹ *CRSG*, 28 pt.2:52-53, “Talk of The Mortar, Creek chieftain, delivered at Fort Augusta,” Augusta 24, 1764.

⁴⁰ Referring to The Mortar as pro-French is somewhat misleading. He was nativist and considered his affiliations with other Indian nations and Creek towns far more important than that those towards any particular European power, as evidenced by his continual pursuit of pan-Indian alliances with the Chickasaws under Paya Mingo Euluxy, the Cherokees, and the Shawnees. See: James Adair, *History of the American-Indians*, 310-31; DAR, V, “John

recognized its role in the lives of his people. New sources of commerce from the south threatened to undermine certain realities. While courting the colonial governors in Georgia and South Carolina with apologies and other goodwill gestures on one hand, The Mortar stated on an official visit to Pensacola that he “desires that his Nation may be supplied with Goods from Augusta as they have been for many years, and that he will not suffer any Horses with Goods Either from Pensacola or Mobile...” He would seize any pack trains or vessels carrying goods from the Gulf coast and consider them free gifts. Equally instructive to his understanding of the new British role on the Gulf coast was when The Mortar sent a necklace or belt of both red and white beads to John Stuart, who was stationed at Pensacola. The administrator was to discard the stringed red beads and return the remaining white if he desired peace.⁴¹ This demand is inconsistent with earlier, more conciliatory messages he sent Georgian officials.

After briefly examining the way the Okfuskees related to the Georgia-South Carolina rivalry of the 1730s, notions of kinship linking Creek towns with places of market orientation such as coastal ports may have also accounted for The Mortar’s inconsistent message. This is not meant to suggest that his motivations were without thought of personal gain and his reputation, or distrust of British schemes among the Choctaws, but that cultural values may have also factored into how he related to outsiders. The Mortar’s behavior and reference to history illustrates how tradition governed decisions in previous generations with regard to the Upper and Lower paths and centers of market activity. He essentially denied there was comparable familiarity between his communities and the new British posts on the north-central Gulf of Mexico. Inter-communal and interpersonal bonds occasionally linked Creek and colonial towns.

McIntosh to Charles Stuart,” 185-186. It was necessary to consider him pro-French in this sense, because this was one way the British antagonistically viewed him.

⁴¹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, “The Mortar and Other Upper Creek Headmen to Superintendent Stuart, Rejecting Trade from West Florida,” 217-218.

Okfuskee openly enjoyed such a privileged status. It is, therefore, logical to assume that The Mortar's town of Little Okchai may have enhanced its own commercial standing by drawing from the inter-communal relations built by neighbors like the Okfuskees or the Alabamas. If this was the case, the northern Upper Creek rejection of Gulf coast trade may have assumed a cultural nuance as well as a pragmatic one.⁴²

Superintendent Stuart and Governor of British West Florida, George Johnstone, were confused by the contradiction of The Mortar's statements. They assumed scheming backcountry merchants were influencing Upper Creek decisions.⁴³ The Mortar's refusal to trade with Mobile and Pensacola did not "seem to us to be the Dictates of their own reasons, but rather the Instigation of some Evil minded persons, because it is certainly the Interest of the Creek Nation that they should be supplied with Goods from as many places as possible and from the nearest places...they may always depend on having a surer supply and that the Goods will arrive in better Order and the Indians will find a better markt [sic] for their skins." Many trading companies in Savannah, Augusta, and Charlestown dispatched branch firms to Mobile and

⁴² These thoughts were developed through a series of conversations with Dr. Joshua Piker via email, May 17-18, 2012. It is important to mention this cultural motivation if only to help underscore how inter-communal and interpersonal relationships played a part in this discussion concerning trade direction. While Little Okchai and Okchai were two different towns, they still maintained close familial connections with one another: Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 84. The Mortar's passionate defense of the more familiar trade paths illustrate his commitment to time honored networks linking his town of Little Okchai with older towns like Okchai and Okfuskee. The Great Old Path from Augusta and Charlestown passed through Okfuskee first before traveling to the other Upper Creek towns. David Taitt tells us that Okchai (alternately spelled OakChoys) was about thirteen miles from Okfuskee: Mereness, "Journal of David Taitt," *Travels*, 528. For a perspective on how these inter-communal relationships between Creek towns functioned see: Gerald M. Sider, *Lumbee Indian Histories: Race, Ethnicity, and Indian Identity in the Southern United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Sider states on page 231: "Before consolidation of these [Indian] confederacies as great trading, warring, slaving, and slaveholding regional empires, the core feature of their social formation was that their constituent towns seem to have been widely connected to other native towns in a diverse array of non-coterminous ties – ties that had substantially different boundaries, substantially different "maps." It is first necessary to understand how these various communities related to one another before understanding how they related to outsiders.

⁴³ David Taitt's mission among the Upper Creeks is complicated by these Augusta merchants. He writes: "I found the [Upper Creek] Indians in such a Situation by the Idle speeches of some unworthy hirelings to whom the Merchants in Augusta had made known some of their Intentions that if I had been observed in doing the smallest matter I must have run a very great risk for what the Indians does not understand themselves the Traders will assist them and you know the Indians jelous [sic] disposition," Mereness, "Journal of David Taitt," 524.

Pensacola anyway. Johnstone and Stuart assured the northern Upper towns “They will be the very same persons who supplied you before, that will supply you now. When the path is opened and clear these very men will probably remove from Charles Town and Georgia to this province as more convenient for themselves as well as for you.” They also asked why the Creeks objected to the British settlements at Tensaw when they had permitted the French to reside there.⁴⁴

The Mortar’s favorite line of argument was that the Upper and Lower path’s legitimacy rested on historical precedent, which accordingly, proved the British favored towns like Okfuskee and Okchai above all others. Emistisiguo cleverly disputed this, however, citing the Lower Creek town of Coweta’s rightful claim to having opened the road a century earlier.⁴⁵ The paths then traveled through the southern Upper Creek towns (Tallapoosas) second and lastly to the northern Upper Creeks (Abeikas). Emistisiguo deftly exploited The Mortar’s attempt at historicity by observing that the path from Augusta and Charlestown was certainly the oldest, and most revered, but that simple geography meant trade accommodated the Lower towns first. Likening the paths and towns the road encountered from the east to a string of beads, Emistisiguo explained that trade passed from Augusta and Charlestown via “the Cowetas, from thence to the Tuckabatchies [southern Upper Creeks] and Abekas” last.⁴⁶

Throughout the remaining years of British West Florida, Emistisiguo carefully dodged the trade path issue when he was in the presence of northern Upper Creek factions as he did while speaking in Okchai in 1772. Stressing the popular Upper Creek desire to limit the

⁴⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, “Reply to the Upper Creek Talk of July 22 by Superintendent Stuart and Governor Johnstone,” November 30, 1764, 225-226.

⁴⁵ *CRSG*, pt.1, 38:246-261, “Governor Wright’s Meeting with a Small Creek Party Headed by Emistisiguo,” April 14, 1774. Emistisiguo asserted before Governor James Wright that the “Their Forefathers Trod in a White Path to Charlestown, and He would do the Same. That the Cowetas were the First who Opened the Path.”

⁴⁶ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Upper Creek ‘Great Talk’ to Superintendent Stuart, Seeking Georgia-Lower Creek Reconciliation,” February 4, 1774, 136-137. Piker also discusses Emistisiguo’s reasoning in his article, “‘White & Clean’ & Contested,” 326-328.

geographic expansion of British West Florida, Emistisiguo celebrated the path to Augusta as “old” and “white.” As an appointed Upper Creek spokesman, he was trusted with advocating a party line, so to speak. “As for the path to Augusta it is an Old and beloved path but the path to Pensacola and Mobile I do not know much about it. It is true since the Congress at Augusta the Chickasaws has got another path [from the south] for their goods but still I hold my Old Friends [Carolinian and Georgian merchants] by the hand.”⁴⁷ This comment acknowledged the benefits enjoyed by the Chickasaws, while refusing to alienate his “Old Friends” in the east.

Emistisiguo’s skill at speaking and negotiating won him many British friends and caused Governor Wright to assert that he was “a man by far of the greatest consequence, weight, and influence of any in the Creek country.”⁴⁸

Emistisiguo could count on continued opposition from The Mortar. With historic rivals of the Creeks like the Choctaws benefitting from a southerly commercial flow, Emistisiguo’s desire for a Mobile/Pensacola trade must have lost support among other Upper town headmen, especially as tensions between Creeks-Choctaws-Chickasaws violently escalated into open conflict in the late 1760s.⁴⁹ But encouraging trade from the Gulf coast was a pragmatic necessity for all involved. Disagreements involving lands cessions and debt repayment between Augusta/Charlestown merchants and the Lower Creeks verged on open warfare. Disputed lands as a result of the Creek-Cherokee war contributed to the need of company and colonial officials to receive repayment for debts. Financial troubles coupled with a series of violent reprisals from

⁴⁷ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Emistisiguo to Superintendent Stuart,” April 19, 1772, 428-429.

⁴⁸ *CRSG*, 37, pt. 2:371, “Governor Wright to Hillsborough,” September 17, 1768.

⁴⁹ *DAR*, V, “John Stuart to Earl of Hillsborough (No. 40),” February 7, 1772, 36-39. Stuart discusses encouraging trade with the Choctaws and Chickasaws. The principal headmen of the Choctaws assembled in Mobile in early 1772 revealing that the French in New Orleans were still eager to trade with them, but that with the English so close, they had given up their French medals and “esteemed themselves very happy in the friendship of the English on whom they depended for support and were determined to look for no other white people, . . .” For a description of the movement to war with the Choctaws see: “Journal of David Taitt,” in ed. Mereness, *Travels*, 507-534.

Lower town warriors against Georgian-Carolinian hunters operating on contested Creek lands. All this inevitably disrupted trade flow from South Carolina and Georgia.⁵⁰ In light of these developments and The Mortar's intransigency, Emistisiguo prudently guarded his desire for a firmer relationship with British West Florida in mixed company, but championed it to colonial officials in private discussions nonetheless. Repeatedly, Emistisiguo emerged as a voice of reason from the standpoint of the British.

In the wake of Pontiac's Rebellion, the British urgently sought a reaffirmation with the Upper Creeks and resolution of the arresting issues compromising settlement in Tensaw and trade from Mobile and Pensacola.⁵¹ Stuart and Johnstone sent a friendly message to the Upper and Lower towns in November 1764, inviting them to a grand congress in Pensacola in May 1765. That spring, several hundred Upper and Lower Creeks arrived in the port town, eager to receive expected gifts and discuss past and present grievances with regard to land usage, trade prices, and trade from West Florida. Former French officer at Fort Toulouse, Chevalier Montaut de Monbérault, translated the meeting's proceedings. Monbérault had recently become John

⁵⁰ The murders of three white hunters—William and George Payne and James Hogg—by Lower Creek Limpiki, son of Coweta headman Sempoyaffi, sparked a serious backlash. For British anger over the incident see: Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties 1763-1776*, Governor Wright and Superintendent Stuart to Upper Creek Great Medal Chiefs, Protesting Payne-Hogg Murders,” December 27, 1765. The Wolf of King of Mocolussah expressed his concern with Stuart and Governor Wright's protest. He then lectured them on Creek factionalism and distanced the actions of the Lower towns from the Upper. For his reply see: Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “The Wolf King's Reply to Wright-Stuart Protest,” April 29, 1766, 20. The Tallapoosas, Abeikas, and Alabamas voiced their concern over the behavior of the Lower Creeks and assured John Stuart that they hoped the trade continued to their towns despite the actions of others. Juricek, *Treaties*, “Purported Talk from Abeika Headmen to Stuart and Wright, as Delivered to Taitt at Augusta,” August 23, 1774, 151-152.

⁵¹ *MPAED*, I, “From Governor Johnstone and John Stuart,” 184-188. The state of the British military operating on the Gulf coast was desperate. Fear of an impending Indian attack was prevalent among colonial administrators. Even though Pontiac's Rebellion in the Ohio country waned by the summer of 1765, the necessity of charming important leaders like The Mortar was more important than ever. With British troops stretched so thin on a virtually unmanageable frontier, open conflict with a large nation like the Creeks would be disastrous. General Thomas Gage was unable to send requested troops, leaving the British vulnerable. Gage advised his subordinates to utilize other means of securing their borders i.e. “Embassies, fair promises, presents ... [and] creating Jealousies amongst themselves, and using those Engines in the best manner.” This was certainly reminiscent of the tactics employed by the over-extended, undermanned French forces in Louisiane. A “divide and conquer” approach would prove helpful in checking a Creek-Choctaw presence.

Stuart's personal deputy and advisor in recognition of both his interpersonal relationship with many prominent Upper Creek headmen and his professed cooperation with the new regime.⁵² When The Mortar begrudgingly arrived two days after the Pensacola Congress began,⁵³ he voiced his concern over the Wolf King's generous land cessation the previous year. The Mortar's chief complaint was that the grant had not been sanctioned by the whole of the Creek nation and was, therefore, null and void. But when Chevalier Monbérault privately translated the extent and purposes of the request for land, and assured The Mortar that true British interest in the region was modest, the headman relaxed his opposition and even agreed to future land concessions if promises of mutual respect were met. The British assured the Creek delegates they would not require more land in the future.⁵⁴ This arrangement would go through a trial phase of four years. If peace between Britain and the Creeks lasted, "then there will be an Addition made to the Lands already granted [by the Choctaws and the Wolf King]." Any attempts to settle north of the Alabama-Tombigbee junction (the vaguely agreed upon boundary), however, would incur the wrath of the northern towns.⁵⁵

⁵² *MPAED*, I, "Congress at Pensacola," May 26-28, 1765, 192, 197.

⁵³ The Mortar was convinced that John Stuart would try and poison him once he arrived. John Alden, *John Stuart*, 205; *The Mémoire Justificatif*, Howard and Rea, 36-38.

⁵⁴ Much of Monbérault's *The Mémoire Justificatif* is a self-serving treatise both defending and boasting of his influence in various Indian congresses. But none of the British officials (Stuart, Johnstone, and their agent John McGillivray included) completely trusted the former French officers in their employ. The delicate relationship with the Upper Creeks and Choctaws was a constant concern, and it was feared the French were fundamentally disloyal, motivated by personal gain, and an ultimate desire to ruin the new colony. This is evidenced by the treatment of Louis Favre and Chevalier Monbérault. Both were suspected of duplicitous motives and eventually removed from their posts.

⁵⁵ The boundary was vaguely defined and not formerly established until 1772. *MPAED*, I, *Ibid.*, 188-201; "His Excellency the Governor, John Stuart Esq. Superintendent, Lieutenant Colonel Wedderburn, &c., Indian Chiefs Interpreters, &c. as Usual," May 29, 1765, 201-204. The Mortar was impressed (or so it is recorded that way) with Stuart's initial disposition. Recognizing the psychological effect of the gesture, Stuart records that he "received him [The Mortar] with the Medals, Gorgets, Commissions etc. which the French gave the Chactaws, strewed under my Chair and Feet; they soon attracted his Attention. He was struck with the Sight, and from it formed Ideas of our Influence with that Nation superior to any I could otherwise have conveyed, which contributed greatly to facilitate our Negotiations." Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Superintendent Stuart to Pownall, Reporting on Post-Congress Talks in Mobile and the Pensacola Congress," August 24, 1765, 275-278.

During negotiations, The Mortar also posed an interesting question to Chevalier Monbérault: “Is it possible that you [Monbérault], who at the time you were with the French so often exhorted us not to yield a bit of land to the English, you chide us today, and press us with so much fluency to give it up to them?” Monbérault slyly replied that he had indeed made those overtures, but that his earlier remarks were for the good of the Creek people at that time. Recognizing the factional spirit among the Creeks, he believed any other entreaty would have certainly caused a civil war. Now that the British encircled them on all sides, he explained, it was necessary for Creek leadership to consolidate in manner and opinion for the sake of peace and commercial prosperity.⁵⁶ Monbérault did not appreciate how a culturally integral component like factionalism transcended colonial competition and British encirclement. While trade exacerbated Creek factional divisions for the first half of the eighteenth century, the late war’s outcome presented new challenges to Creek leadership and internal tensions that were increasingly embodied in a few principal characters, or emergent elite.⁵⁷ This is evident in the notable attention given Creek leaders at conferences held in Pensacola and elsewhere. The importance afforded these men and the role they played in negotiations with colonial officials is plainly seen in the order the headmen signed treaties, who led the talks, and who the administrators primarily addressed at pivotal diplomatic moments.⁵⁸

In Little Tallassee, Emistisiguo continued to use the Upper and Lower path’s historical distinction to discredit the validity of the northern Upper Creek faction’s preferences for commercial relations with South Carolina and Georgia. He agreed with The Mortar that the traditional trade from Augusta were older and certainly “white,” but again stressed that they

⁵⁶ *The Memoire Justificatif of the Chevalier Montault de Monberaut*, trans. Howard and Rea, 171-172.

⁵⁷ Vernon Knight Jr., “The Formation of the Creeks,” in Hudson and Tesser’s ed. *The Forgotten Centuries*, 375.

⁵⁸ Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee*, 178-179.

passed through the Lower towns first. Recent misdeeds and escalating violence from the Lower Creeks along the Georgia corridor were certain to “bring us who are in the back Part [of the Creek nation] into poverty by their doings.”⁵⁹ Lower Creek importance in trade and diplomacy reigned supreme in earlier times as a result. Emistisiguo was always quick to remind his listeners that it was the Lower towns that first opened the path from “Ochese” a century earlier. Being sensitive to the demands of his people for goods and understanding the benefits to other options for trade that did not preference the Lower towns first, Emistisiguo artfully balanced his rhetoric as never to alienate other opportunities. He openly expressed his desire that paths to British towns on the Gulf remain open and “white,” even while echoing The Mortar’s concerns about the relationship enjoyed by British West Florida and the Choctaws, settlement in and above Tensaw, and the growing prestige of the southern Upper Creek towns. On a trip to Savannah in 1768, Emistisiguo revealed his determination to maintain ties with British West Florida and that “he had visited the Governour of Pensacola, and presented him with the Tail of a white Eagle,” and considered all the British the same and “that he would always use his utmost Endeavours that the road between the white and red People should be kept white.”⁶⁰

The First Pensacola Congress (1765) did little to abate tensions. Still angry about price disparities between the Creeks and the Cherokees, leaders like The Mortar insolently discarded their medals and incited further frontier violence in the immediate wake of the late congress, creating a general atmosphere of “mischief.”⁶¹ While Upper Creek headmen were divided on

⁵⁹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Emistisiguo to Superintendent Stuart, Proposing Redirection of Upper Creek Trade Toward Pensacola and Mobile,” February 4, 1774, 441.

⁶⁰ *CRSG*, 10:567, “At the Council held in the Council Chamber at Savannah,” September 3, 1768.

⁶¹ *MPAED*, I, “From William Struthers to Governor Johnstone, April 10, 1766, 516-517; The Oakchoy King predictably denied culpability in the escalating tensions, and asked for a continued commercial discourse with the British via “the old Path & where the Boats comes up to supply us & have supplied us,” despite the various “Accidents happening to white People in Regard to their Goods.” *MPAED*, I, “Answer of the Chiefs,” May 16, 1766, 526-527.

how best to approach the British along their southern corridor, they were united in their animosity to the Choctaws, who now posed an even greater trade and military threat to them.⁶² Official correspondence reveals that a Creek-Choctaw war was widely encouraged by British officials as a means to weaken and distract the two Indian nations from possibly exploiting the thinly spread British military resources along the Gulf coast.⁶³ Experienced Creek agents such as Lachlan McGillivray and George Galphin cautioned against any involvement in the two nation's quarrels, advising Stuart to use his influence to support a policy of neutrality. Upper Creek headmen such as The Mortar and Emistisiguo surmised the scheme though, and their suspicions and condemnations tainted future talks on land usage, boundaries, and trade direction.⁶⁴ Despite how bitter and protracted hostilities during the Creek-Choctaw war became, British activity in the Tensaw and trade via Mobile and Pensacola never receded as a subject from conversations between Emistisiguo and Stuart. Trade direction and preferred paths consumed much of their discussions, always remaining a salient issue with the Little Tallassee headman. When the British pressed the Upper Creeks for land along the Escambia River (which emptied into Pensacola Bay), they used the Tensaw boundary dispute as a pretext for arranging another grand congress at Pensacola in October 1771.⁶⁵

⁶² They openly taunted the Upper Creeks in one instance. Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Stephen Forrester to Governor Johnstone, Reporting Upper Creek Acceptance of Choctaw War Challenge," May 25, 1766, 297. Alden, *John Stuart*, 224-225.

⁶³ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Governor Johnstone to Elias Legardere, Commissary to the Choctaws," November 21, 1765, 291-292; The British were not shy about this strategy and frequently threatened the Creeks with enforcing it. *Ibid.*, Colonel Tayler to General Gage, Reporting the Passing of the Crisis," November 30, 1766, 317-318. Stuart countenanced against it, however. See: Juricek, *Ibid.*, "Superintendent Stuart to Governor Johnstone, Urging Restraint Toward the Creeks," December 13, 1766, 319. Adair, *The History of the American-Indians*, 288-289.

⁶⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Molton, Emistisiguo, and the Second Man of Little Tallassee to Governor Johnstone," May 20, 1766, 296-297; *MPAED*, I, "Answer of the Chiefs: The Mortar alias Otis Mico," May 16, 1766, 529-531.

⁶⁵ *DAR*, II, "West Florida Council Memorial," March 9, 1771, 140-142.

After smoking the calumet of peace with Stuart, Emistisiguo and his troop of fellow headmen bestowed the superintendent “the greatest Compliment we are capable of paying.” Although the practice of fanimingo is obscure in the records, it appears that what followed was a formal rite akin to it—a fictive kinship arrangement between Stuart and the leading Creek town representatives present at the ceremony. Since the proceedings were on the Apalachicola’s ancestral lands (Pensacola), they stepped forward first and gave Stuart the title of Appalachicola Mico (King). The Lower Creeks of the town Cusseta followed suit and named Stuart, Cussitaw Mico. Lastly, the Upper Creeks spoke and extolled the virtues of the Alabamas (southernmost of the southern Upper Creeks) as “great in War in Peace, and solicitous for the good of all the Tribes, as you [Stuart] are the Father of all the Southern Indians and constantly employed in taking care of their Interests, we call you Alibama Mico.”⁶⁶ In an instant, Stuart effectively embodied the physical paths commercially linking the British with the Upper and Lower Creek towns. The same could be said of the other two honorable titles, but the Second Pensacola Congress was meant for, and directed by, the Upper Creeks. It seems an unlikely coincidence that out of the sixteen Upper Creek towns represented at the Second Pensacola Congress, none of the assembled headmen represented prominent northern (Abeika) Upper Creek factions or towns.⁶⁷

After these pleasantries, however, the Congress quickly broke down. Emistisiguo began with the usual protests concerning land encroachments, the depredations of unlicensed traders operating outside the towns, and the profligacy of the rum trade. Stuart, under pressure from the new Governor of British West Florida, Peter Chester, blindsided Emistisiguo by asking for two

⁶⁶ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Proceedings of the Second Pensacola Congress with the Upper Creeks,” October 29-31, 1771, 387-401.

⁶⁷ Piker makes note of this incident too in “‘White & Clean’ & Contested,” 327. The treaty lists the attending headmen and their representative towns. The Mortar’s absence was no surprise, as he promised never to return to Pensacola for more talks.

thin strips of land (five miles in depth) on each side of the Escambia River, stretching some thirty-five miles inland, to satisfy the agricultural needs of the colony. Stuart also asked Emistisiguo to help mark the Tensaw boundary once and for all. British settlements increasingly crossed well beyond the Alabama-Tombigbee junction, causing a stir of protests from the Upper Creeks.⁶⁸ Emistisiguo denied (either rightly or smartly) having the proper authorization from the other leading Upper and Lower headmen to grant such a request. He then changed the subject, protesting the Choctaws' audacious allocation of the islands in the Alabama-Tombigbee rivers (north of Mobile) to the British seven years earlier. Emistisiguo then used the current war with the Choctaws as an excuse to postpone settling the Tensaw boundary until the following May. Stuart refused to back down, and in an effort at rewriting history, he asserted that at the First Pensacola Congress (1765) the Upper Creeks granted the British "all the French settlements at Tassa [Tensaw] Old Field." Emistisiguo denied this claim, arguing that as he understood it, the boundary was set at Major Robert Farmar's plantation.⁶⁹ Emistisiguo reiterated his earlier insistence from that summer where he affirmed the Creeks were done relinquishing new lands to the British. Citing the First Augusta Congress (1763), when the British promised they would make no more requests for land from the Creeks, Emistisiguo hoped the "whites would all go to

⁶⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, Proceedings of the Second Pensacola Congress with the Upper Creeks," October 29-31, 1771, 388-389. In an effort to underscore the importance of more land to the Creek delegation, Chester apologizes for the paucity of food at the ceremony: "I wish I had it in my power to be more Liberal to the Red Men when they come to Pensacola, but the Land about us is so poor, nothing but a barren sand." Concerning the settlers beyond the Tensaw, Chester claims they departed as per his instructions and that their discretion was an innocent mistake and, "not done with any design of Encroaching upon Your Lands, but it must be attributed to their not knowing where the Boundary Line was." According to Stuart, Governor of West Florida, Montfort Brown (1767-1770), permitted settlement above the Tensaw line. Alden, *John Stuart*, 317.

⁶⁹ The plantation in question was located on the Tensaw River. Major Robert Farmar purchased 542 acres from François Daran on June 11, 1764. It was listed in a 1780 appraisal as "the home plantation of Farm Hall on the Tensa River" and worth about \$2,500. Farmar situated his home on the boundaries of West Florida. Robert Rea tells us: "There was no settlement to the north or east of Farm Hall, though toward Mobile the land designated for British settlement; the Tensa property he secured in 1770, a few miles farther north, lay within the Indian boundary line." Robert R. Rea, *Major Robert Farmar*, 114, 124, 131. Translator Joseph Cornell, records their understanding of this in Juricek, *Treaties*, "Upper Creek Headmen to Governor Peter Chester, Replying to his Complaint over Incident at Tensaw," May 8, 1771, 381-382.

their own land.” Deputy Superintendent, Charles Stuart, promised that the line from Pensacola to Tensaw would be final and “should be like a stone wall never to be Broke.” Comparing the boundary to something akin a to mending wall, Emistisiguo contended that mutual respect for this line assured the Creeks would “hold our Brothers the White people fast as a Vine Holds a Tree, the longer the faster it holds.”⁷⁰ Stuart questioned the Upper Creek’s historical right to those lands, pointing out that until recently the occupants of Tensaw were the *petites nations* peoples (Tomés, Naniabas, and Mobilians, etc.), who had been staunch allies of the French.⁷¹ Stuart posed the question to Emistisiguo: “will you refuse us the same advantages you allowed the French, and same said Tribes?” The land was reasonably the domain of the *petites nations* before the on-going Creek-Choctaw war had driven those groups away. In light of this, the Upper Creeks eased their protests.⁷²

The following January, Stuart sent David Taitt, along with two interpreters—Joseph Cornell and Jacob Moniac—to reconnoiter Creek country, to secure a fresh assessment of those lands, search for evidence of French intrigues, deliver a series of speeches to the principal Upper and Lower headmen, and chastise the latter for entertaining Spanish notions concerning trade opportunities via Cuba.⁷³ Taitt’s mission, although political and military in nature and purpose, is profoundly illustrative of the region’s terrain and its potential in the geography of trade on the Gulf coast. Unfortunately, it is also sadly reflective of the corrosion of Creek life at the hands of the many scandalously corrupt men operating in the southern backcountry. Taitt’s journal

⁷⁰ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Upper Creek Headmen to Superintendent Stuart, Warning about Land,” July 15, 1771, 382-383.

⁷¹ John Stuart explains his line of reasoning in *DAR*, V, “John Stuart to Earl of Hillsborough,” February 6, 1772, 33-34. The *petites nations* people had apparently gone off to reside among the Chickasawhays.

⁷² The exchanges of this conference are recorded in lengthy “Proceedings of the Second Pensacola Congress with the Upper Creeks,” October 29-31, 1771, 387-401.

⁷³ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, Superintendent Stuart to the Lower Creek Headmen, Protesting Depredations,” January 20, 1772, 424-425.

explicates in vivid detail the numerous protests from headmen such as Emistisiguo concerning these men.⁷⁴

When Taitt arrived at Little Tallassee, he learned that Emistisiguo lived several miles away at a place called Hickory Ground. Taitt approached him about Stuart's request for lands paralleling the Escambia River.⁷⁵ Emistisiguo sidestepped Taitt's request for an immediate conference as he was about to go off to war with the Choctaws. He also informed Taitt that Augusta merchants promised that if the Creeks acquiesced to recent land cessions granted by the Cherokees, they would give them [the Upper Creeks] "a very good Trade." Emistisiguo dismissed these promises from the Augusta merchants as little more than "a man telling a fine storey to his Children to make them Merry at Night but in the Morning would be forgot." He then asked Taitt to provide him a letter of introduction in case he passed near the Tensaw settlements in want of food, shelter, or munitions. Taitt obliged, but only with the assurance that Emistisiguo and his party promise not to kill any cattle, molest any settlers, or take any Indian slaves.⁷⁶

In late February 1772, while in Tuckabatchee, Taitt received a message from The Mortar stating that there would be a meeting of Creek town headmen about recent British requests for more land. It was here that Taitt observed the scale of factional and inter-communal divisions

⁷⁴ One trader named Francis Lewis "a Hireling of Mr. Golphins [Galphin]" kept some (according to Taitt) thirty kegs of rum at this house that he in turn used to keep an entire Creek town "Continually Drunk." Taitt posits that type of behavior was common in the Creek towns and that these men preferred trading horses for rum above all else. These backwoodsmen permeated nearly every stop along Taitt's journey. Beyond taking advantage of their Creek clients, a one William Simory, was inexplicably spreading the false rumor that the British, under Charles Stuart, were amassing a force to "take their wives and Children [sic]." Hugh Simpson told Taitt flatly that he would not accede anything from the governor or superintendent and only answered to his employer. But their employers were not immune either. Taitt details the pervasive frontier scam where traders used company resources to steal horses from whites and Indians only to sell those same animals back at higher prices. Mereness, *Travels*, "Journal of David Taitt," 512, 525.

⁷⁵ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Superintendent Stuart to the Upper Creeks Headmen, Again Requesting Escambia Cession," January 20, 1772, 423-424.

⁷⁶ Mereness, *Travels*, "Journal of David Taitt," 508-509.

then existing among the Upper Creeks and the growing resentment building against Emistisiguo and his relationship with Stuart.⁷⁷ Later that spring, Taitt learned that the Gun Merchant—acting as the elected spokesman for the Upper Creeks—had vetoed all past and future British requests for land. Lands “as far as the Old Spanish Cowpen (the Escambia River)” were lent the British, but nothing more.⁷⁸ Violence against Anglo-American settlers and traders continued unabated over the succeeding months without, according to the British, proportionate justice exacted against the Creek perpetrators.⁷⁹ By 1774, to stave off what seemed like an inevitable war, the British tightened trade exports to Creek country.⁸⁰ But rather than bringing discordant groups together in a greater recognition of the value of the British trade, the policy led Creek faction leaders to explore other avenues to outside resource centers, hoping to once again ignite playoff strategies on an international level. Contributing to this percolating crisis for the British was evidence of Spanish intrigues among the Lower Creeks.⁸¹

Hedging his bets on the trade embargo that seemed likely to spring from the escalating border tensions with Georgia, The Mortar hoped to utilize blossoming Lower Creek diplomatic connections with the Spanish and proposed a meeting where the two halves of the Creek nation

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 524.

⁷⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Upper Creeks to Superintendent Stuart, Rejecting any Further Cession,” April, 19, 1772, 427. Taitt records this message while in the northern Upper Creek town of Okchai. The Gun Merchant’s reasoning is plain enough. Trader abuses and British land lust were corrosive to Creek life. The Creeks were tired of broken promises.

⁷⁹ A series of high-profile murders occurred between the Goodwin-Davis murders in September 1766 and the White-Sherrill murders in 1774. Governor Johnstone estimated (as a rationale for war against the Upper Creeks) that by his calculations the British had suffered 138 unavenged Creek-inspired murders. Stuart disputed these figures as reflective of total slain throughout the entire colonial period, and even then certainly exaggerated. Alden, *John Stuart*, 226; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Superintendent Stuart to Governor Johnstone, Urging Restraint Toward the Creeks,” December 13, 1766, 319.

⁸⁰ *DAR*, VIII, “John Stuart to the Earl of Dartmouth,” May 6, 1774, 110.

⁸¹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Emistisiguo to Superintendent Stuart, Reporting Spanish Overtures via Lower Creeks,” September 28, 1773, 121-122. Emistisiguo remained in the British interest and dissuaded talks and gifts from the Spanish. Though, it is interesting when he explains to Taitt that if the Spanish sent him, “Six Large Ships Loaded with Ammunition” he would most likely accept. He assures Taitt of his continued friendship and loyalty, but shrewdly informs him that others were aggressively vying for Creek affections, then asks for anticipated gifts.

could synchronize foreign policy in an effort to curb British commercial control over their towns. The meeting proved abortive in the end, however,⁸² but the alarm it raised proved effective enough to concern colonial administrators like Stuart. Emistisiguo hoped to resolve the crisis by reminding the superintendent of Creek poverty and dependence on the British trade, but most of all, Stuart's role as the Alabama King.⁸³ Stuart personified the trade between the two peoples, so Emistisiguo harkened back to more peaceful times in an effort to forestall the growing rift between the his people and the British. He implored Stuart to remember their earlier talks with respect to trade and once again stressed the importance of an open path from Mobile and Pensacola as a solution to the growing crisis. "Formerly Pensacola and Mobbille [sic] belonged to different People but now they belong to the King of England, and they are all English people, and you all know what I mean by the Old [Augusta] path." He stressed the danger of traveling along the road to Augusta, blaming the Lower Creeks for the escalation of frontier mayhem: "The Cowetas who are the Front Part seem to want to bring us who are the back Part into poverty by their doings." While the northern Upper Creek (Abeikas) towns had not sanctioned his efforts, he was certain they would support his proposition for a more consistent and dependable trade from Mobile and Pensacola. "Pensacola and Mobbille [sic] which are the safest Paths ... are the Kings people and we would be glad to have a Supply from thence, as there are two paths one to Pensacola and one to Mobbille." The Okfuskees and Lower Creek peoples might disagree, "but these two Rivers here would be glad of a supply from thence." Emistisiguo did not "want large

⁸² Emistisiguo attended this meeting seen in Juricek, *Ibid*. The Mortar was laboring to consolidate a pan-Indian confederacy against the British, as well as utilizing a budding relationship between the Lower Creeks and the Spanish. John Stuart writes that the Lower Creeks were also interacting with the Spanish via fishing vessels "which frequent the point of Florida from the Havannah [sic] ... This intercourse certainly furnishes the Spaniards with an opportunity of carrying any bad design they may have formed with respect to those Indians into execution, and will render the management of the Creek nation (one of the most turbulent upon the continent) more difficult and expensive." *DAR*, VI, "John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth," December 21, 1773, 257-258.

⁸³ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Upper Creek "Great Talk" to Superintendent Stuart, Seeking Georgia-Lower Creek Recognition," February 4, 1774.

Cargoes but just enough to supply out Wants.”⁸⁴ Despite Stuart’s honorific titles the trade was sequestered anyway.

Undaunted, and unwilling to rely on the erratic Lower Creeks and their tenuous Cuban connections, The Mortar sought to reorient the geography of trade through more dependable avenues. Omitting Augusta, St. Augustine, Mobile and Pensacola all together, The Mortar pivoted westward towards Spanish Louisiane, hoping once again to reignite play-off strategies meant to offset British commercial prowess. Although the French had officially evacuated the territory in 1766, it was still heavily populated with French émigrés and officers in key political and military positions, no doubt still eager to disrupt British imperial agendas in the region. The Mortar apparently believed the Creeks could once again receive support from France through these men. Traveling to New Orleans in late 1774 at the head of some eighty warriors to effect this arrangement, a smaller party of Choctaws ambushed The Mortar on the Alabama River somewhere above Mobile. The Creeks quickly routed their attackers and pursued them to Mobile trader William Struthers’s house. The Choctaws evicted the family and fortified themselves inside the main house and outbuildings. A three-day battle ensued before the house and surrounding buildings were set on fire, forcing the small party of Choctaws to take refuge in a nearby fenced pen. In the act of finishing off their quarry, The Mortar was fatally wounded. Distraught at having lost their leader, the remaining Creeks returned home. When some one hundred Lower Creeks passing through Pensacola to accompany The Mortar to New Orleans received news of his death, they too abandoned their mission.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Emistisiguo to Superintendent Stuart, Proposing Redirection of Upper Creek Trade toward Pensacola and Mobile,” February 4, 1774, 441.

⁸⁵ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, “Taitt to Superintendent Stuart,” December 29, 1774, 165-166; “Superintendent Stuart to General Gage,” January 18, 1775, 166-167. Stuart in a latter document records: “Their [The Mortar] Object was to begg the good offices and mediation of the French Officers in the Spanish services to

The Mortar's death and the advent of the American Revolution did not diminish factional divisions over trade direction, and in many ways, the Americans actually amplified the debate. Early in the war the Americans controlled paths to Georgia and South Carolina, while Mobile and Pensacola remained British.⁸⁶ Indian agents such as George Galphin sided with the Patriots and pressed for Creek neutrality, but the backcountry Georgians actively subverted his efforts when possible and largely prevented the Creeks from exercising a modicum of control over trade direction from Augusta.⁸⁷ In a message to the Creeks, Governor of East Florida, Colonel Patrick Tonyn, esteemed the American rebels as nothing more than liars and thieves. He warned the Creek headmen that "If they [rebels] had it in their power, they would kill and destroy, all the Great Kings good people, and although they pretend to love and be friends to the Red people, they would kill and destroy them afterwards." Whatever the rebels were able to supply the Creeks, Tonyn assured, it was stolen from Superintendent Stuart and his commissaries. "The Great King and people of England, will never alter in Affection for the Red people, but love them as the mother loves the Child lusing [sic] at the Nipple."⁸⁸ Eventually, most Upper Creek towns became decidedly pro-British.⁸⁹ Despite this reality and the difficulty of trade from Augusta, however, northern Upper Creek towns continued to stubbornly shun the Mobile and Pensacola paths.

make a peace with the Chactaws, and to prevail upon them if possible privately to solicit the King of France to take them under his Protection and to assist them in driving the English and Spaniards out of this Land."

⁸⁶ Savannah fell to the British in December 1778, Augusta in January 1779, and Charlestown in May 1780.

⁸⁷ "George Galphin to Henry Laurens," in *The Papers of Henry Laurens, Volume Twelve: November 1, 1777-March 15, 1782*, ed. David R. Chesnutt and C. James Taylor (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000) 525-527.

⁸⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Governor Tonyn's Speech to Lower Creeks at Cowford, with Kaligie's Reply," December 6-7 1775, 495-497.

⁸⁹ Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 45.

For the British, the American Revolution underscored the strategic importance of the paths from Mobile and Pensacola into Creek country.⁹⁰ This did not go unnoticed by the Americans. Galphin discusses an incident in the summer of 1778 when two British or Loyalist traders were brutally slain and mutilated on the path to Pensacola by pro-American, northern Upper Creeks. The traders' dismembered bodies festooned the surrounding trees overlooking the road, acting as a poignant reminder to all who passed that the path's control was far from settled.⁹¹ American sympathizers gleefully reported murders and robberies committed against British traders moving along the paths from Mobile and Pensacola.⁹² Additionally, the violent symbolism inherent in these acts sullied any conceptions headmen like Emistisiguo had about the road remaining a "white" and a peaceful alternative for commercial discourse. Northern Upper Creek towns still preferred goods from Georgia and South Carolina in the late 1770s, regardless of who temporarily held the reigns of power there. As long as they were supplied from this direction, Galphin argued, they could be counted on as peaceful and quiet.⁹³

The Revolutionary era inaugurated new challenges for Creek country, but it also underscored how the cultural arrangements that connected them to the outside capitalist world were amendable under the right circumstances. Through a discussion of how the geography of trade transformed Creek leadership moieties as defined through individual town autonomy into broader territorial ranges with designs aimed at collective negotiation (such as treaties granting

⁹⁰ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, "Superintendent Stuart to Lower and Upper Creek Chiefs," August 15, 1775, 169-170.

⁹¹ "George Galphin to Henry Laurens," in *The Papers of Henry Laurens, Volume Fifteen: December 11, 1778-August 31, 1782*, ed. Chesnutt and Taylor, 19-20; Piker also highlights the significance of this incident in his article: "'White & Clean' & Contested," 330. Piker makes the observation about the perpetrators originating from the northern Upper Creek towns. The symbolism of the act seems apparent considering Emistisiguo's line of argument about the path as both a peaceful alternative to the road from Augusta, and as a reliable means of moving goods into Creek country.

⁹² "John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens," November 3, 1777, in *The Papers of Henry Laurens, Volume Twelve: November 1, 1777-March 15, 1782*, 13-18.

⁹³ "George Galphin to Henry Laurens," in *The Papers of Henry Laurens, Volume Twelve: November 1, 1777-March 15, 1782*, 525-527.

large tracts of land), one can begin to understand how paths played a role in creating shared experiences. Spatial and geographic trading structures and shared memories of past economic arrangements (vis-à-vis *The Mortar's* assessment of the ancestral value of the Upper and Lower paths to Augusta and Charlestown), reveal economic capabilities rooted in local people's prior experiences with a globalized market economy. Cultural identity was then shaped through participation in niche markets (i.e. the slave and deerskin trade) with those physical locations. Trade is then foregrounded as a cultural component in the so-called Creek policy of neutrality. Neutrality could not exist without a sufficient colonial presence for it to operate. External rivalries fueled an integral cultural element like factionalism, shaping it as a self-preserving mechanism through divided town and factional loyalties. Alliances came through necessity. As dependably loyal to the British as someone like Emistisiguo was, he was not averse to invoking payoff strategies. As anti-British as *The Mortar* seemed, he was not against entertaining notions of invoking traditional commercial arrangements to maintain access to resource-rich peripheries. The Creeks would continue to prove that they were not naïve or vulnerable by consistently adapting trade strategies to fit new cultural paradigms.

CHAPTER 7

COMMERCE WITHOUT COMMITMENT: NEW MEN, OLD DIRECTIONS, AND CREEK PERSISTENCE IN A NEW WORLD

Geography mattered to Creek communities. Access to goods and communication channels through trade networks assured their security and autonomy. Material culture serves as a useful medium in frontier studies of the Creeks and their efforts to shape regional developments through trade and diplomacy. But the creolization of individuals is also a useful means in charting the cultural transformation and persistence of Creek communities as they sought to improve or guarantee access to material resources. The interethnic interactions that arose from commercial and diplomatic encounters created an emergent métis leadership after mid century that also represented an adaptive strategy with regional impact.

This chapter will examine the leadership of Alexander McGillivray and how he constructed, negotiated, and manipulated his Creek identity within a specific cultural and geographic framework meant to preserve territory, communal sovereignty, and his lineal responsibilities. McGillivray's success at utilizing the southern corridor to Spanish and British trade firms on the Gulf coast via Little Tallassee and family-operated cattle pens near the confluence of the Alabama-Tombigbee rivers worried American officials at federal and state levels. His willingness to accept bribes, pensions, and promises from the Americans likewise disconcerted Spanish and British trade partners in Mobile and Pensacola. Representing a sizable faction of northern Upper Creeks, McGillivray understood the importance of community, lineage, and how identities transcend traditional boundaries and could preserve Creek neutrality.

The percussion of geopolitical events in Creek country was nothing new. Factional divisions among Anglo-Americans in the 1770s unleashed aggressive efforts to court Creek alliances through trade—reminiscent of earlier imperial contests in the region. Despite the intentions of traders and colonial officials to preserve the deerskin trade via Augusta, tensions with Georgia only worsened after 1773. Frontier violence between the Lower Creeks and Georgia backcountry settlers (largely unaffiliated with the deerskin trade) escalated in response to the “New Purchase” treaty that year. When veteran traders like George Galphin and Robert Rae convinced leading Cherokee headmen to cede some two million acres north and west of Augusta—offsetting irreparable Cherokee debts incurred from the deerskin trade—Lower Creek headmen demurred. Just as the Choctaws presumptively ceded contested Upper Creek lands in the Mobile-Tensaw delta the previous decade, the Cherokees with the “New Purchase” tract invalidated Lower Creek claims by relinquishing the territory to Anglo-American settlement. Augusta merchants hoped the sale of the new western lands might resolve their own growing debts to low country creditors.¹ The Georgian’s effrontery coupled with the looming events of the American Revolution and effectuated the ascendancy of a new ethnically diverse, multifaceted leadership figure in Alexander McGillivray.

Diminished deer herds, extravagant lifestyle and business choices, and competition from

¹ Twice a year British traders travelled from Indian country to settle their accounts with the company merchants. These transactions were usually paid in deerskins and other furs they collected from inland nations like the Creeks. The stores thereby reconciled their accounts to firms in Charlestown and Savannah, who in turn paid backers in London with the same commodities. The best quality deerskins were sent to Britain and Germany. The lowest quality skins were sold in British North America. Licensed traders often belonged to a company and did not operate independently. The layers of commercial interaction and commission based incentives sufficiently drove up the cost of trade. The expense of doing business was passed from London, to colonial importer, to inland storekeeper, to trader in the field, and lastly to Indian hunter. References to the number of trips these men likely made can be gleaned from John Alden’s account in, *John Stuart*, 16-18. Alden further provides a gentle breakdown of the cost of the trade and how these expenses were passed down to the Indians. Exposure and involvement in this network had its costs for everyone involved. Making issues even more difficult to regulate was the fact that individual colonies and companies were in constant competition with one another. For an exhaustive overview of the deerskin trade and this process see: Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 61-102.

new British trade posts along the Gulf coast, all contributed to mounting financial pressures on the Augusta merchant elite. Lower Creek headmen led attacks against settlers entering the “New Purchase” tract, accelerating existing tensions between the Georgia backcountry and the colonial administration under Governor James Wright. Increased population mobility and fragile political and legal institutions unique to the Carolina and Georgia frontier merged with growing prewar discontent, transforming into savage partisanship between Whigs and Tories by 1780.² These developments confounded dependable commercial intercourse from the East and deepened Creek factional divisions as the consequence of trade direction increasingly mattered.

Creek headmen sought reliable avenues of supply for their towns as part of a need to create stability in a dynamic social and cultural environment. Geography was constituent to the persistence of Creek communities and their needs as much as it was for the vitality of competing colonial regimes in the region. Emistisiguo was troubled and perplexed when John Stuart fled rebel forces in Savannah for the safety of faraway British East Florida. An illness further delayed Stuart’s return to Pensacola, inciting fears in the Little Tallassee headman that the superintendent’s stay in St. Augustine was more permanent. The great distance might jeopardize regular commercial arrangements to his town on the Coosa River and compromise the interpersonal and inter-communal relations he had painstakingly cultivated with British ports along the Gulf coast. Emistisiguo was glad to hear of Stuart’s safety from escalating events and

² Royal officials held contempt for these invasive itinerant “crackers” from Virginia and the Carolinas. Their presence aggravated existing tensions between the colony and its indigenous neighbors. These settlers moved onto Creek lands as early as the First Augusta Congress in 1763. By 1772 there may have been as many as three thousand living across agreed-upon boundaries separating Creek/Cherokee lands and Georgia. In many instances, it seems Governor Wright preferred the Indians to these backcountry folk. Surviving petitions indicate not only the well-documented political divisions between the backcountry and Savannah, but also between these settlers and Indian traders. For this see: Edward J. Cashin, “‘But Brothers, It Is Our Land We Are Talking About’: Winners and Losers in the Georgia Backcountry,” in Ronald Hoffman, Thad Tate, and Peter Albert, ed. *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985) 240-275; For an account of Georgia’s Revolutionary political morass see: Harvey H. Jackson, “The Rise of the Western Members: Revolutionary Politics and the Georgia Backcountry,” 276-320 and W. W. Abbot, “Lowcountry, Backcountry: A View of Georgia in the American Revolution,” in *An Uncivil War* 321-332.

hoped the Anglo-Americans might soon resolve their problems, but he expressed his dismay at not having enough horses available to make the long journey to St. Augustine. He reminded Stuart that the best roads to his town led from Augusta and Pensacola, not St. Augustine. Emistisiguo stressed Stuart's obligations as the Alabama King and softly rebuked the superintendent: "We did not Expect that you was at St. Augustine but expected you to be at Pensacola where we made you a King and where you promised to take Care of the red people." Emistisiguo and the other southern Upper Creek headmen were under the impression that all meetings after 1771 would be held at Pensacola. Discouraged by the distance and hoping to convince Stuart to return to the Gulf coast, Emistisiguo concluded, "St. Augustine is not so far from Pensacola, but you [Stuart] can come [in] a ship there ... we will meet you in Pensacola but Cannot at St. Augustine it being so far-off."³ The role of the town leader became more important after midcentury.⁴ Surviving accounts of treaties and personal correspondences attest to the significance administrators like John Stuart placed on the interpersonal relationships they shared with individual leaders like Emistisiguo.⁵

As the British attempted to control and manipulate the southeastern geography of trade during and after the interwar period (1763-1775), the sociopolitical rigors of managing a region populated with unpredictability required efficient, streamlined communication between highly skilled interpreters and cultural mediators. Throughout the colonial period, these men proved adept at navigating both the physical and cultural geography of the Southeast, and as war once

³ Emistisiguo refers to Stuart as the Alabama King six times during his message. Juricek, "Emistisiguo's Reply to Superintendent Stuart's Talk of August 15," September 20, 1775, 174-175.

⁴ The slow process of centralization into a "politico-military alliance network" of town leaders was evolutionary, according to Vernon J. Knight Jr., in "The Formation of the Creeks," in Charles Hudson's *The Forgotten Centuries*, 388-390.

⁵ Stuart was supremely confident in his knowledge of the mood of the Creek towns and in the relationships he had built with prominent town leaders. Stitt, *EAID* XIV, "Superintendent Stuart to the Earl of Dartmouth about the Allegiance of the Creeks," October 25, 1775, 380-381; *Ibid.*, "Superintendent Stuart's Instructions to Cameron (Secret and Confidential)," December 16, 1775, 388-389.

again loomed in North America in 1775, they labored to determine the direction of Creek sympathies. British agents like George Galphin and Robert Rae, exercised considerable influence among the Lower Creeks, while David Taitt ably served Stuart from West Florida, concentrating his efforts among the Upper Creeks. But the trials of war proved costly as frontier violence along the Georgia-Creek corridor merged with the events of the American Revolution, claimed the lives of trusted Creek leaders, exacerbated factional tensions, and divided the allegiances of British agents. The outcome of these events created a tremendous power vacuum and presented new opportunities for the sons of European men and Creek women.

For the Southeast's indigenous inhabitants, some level of involvement in the escalating Anglo-American conflict was an unavoidable consequence of maintaining trade alliances. The Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks generally favored neutrality with a few factions among these nations offering moderate assistance to one side or another.⁶ This cooperation always came with the understanding that trade, not words and promises guaranteed either friendship or animus.⁷ Creek headmen continued to use the path metaphor in private messages and public conferences, conveying their openness to trade from any source, much to the chagrin of men such as David Taitt, who would eventually be employed in the task of trying to coordinate Creek assaults against backcountry Patriots.⁸ By 1780, inconsistent trade from all directions created internal, rival factions with most Lower and northern Upper Creek towns mildly sympathizing with the Americans (represented by the Augustan traders George Galphin and Robert Rae) or expressing

⁶ James H. O'Donnell III, *Southern Indians in the American Revolution* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973) 72, 143. Other than the nominal assistance offered by the Creeks and Choctaws at the siege of Pensacola from March to May 1781, Indian military assistance to either side was relatively weak and rarely predicated on grand strategic goals. John Stuart hoped the Choctaws and Chickasaws would act as a rear guard to rebel raids across the Southeast by monitoring the Tennessee and Mississippi rivers. Captain James Willing's rebel assault on Manchac (Near New Orleans) in February 1778 proved the inefficacy of this plan.

⁷ British colonial deputy to the Choctaws, Farquhar Bethune, remarked, "Reason and Rhetoric will fall to the Ground unless supported by Strouds and Duffells [sic]." O'Donnell III, *Southern Indians*, 101.

⁸ Juricek, "Superintendent Stuart to Taitt," December 15, 1775, 179.

a collective disinterestedness in the conflict. Meanwhile, southern Upper Creek towns, led by Emistisiguo, more passionately favored John Stuart's assurances of trade from Pensacola and Mobile. Because of Emistisiguo's continued advocacy for a Gulf coast trade, British influence in Creek country increasingly emanated from his town of Little Tallassee.⁹ Despite competition for Indian affections, which certainly escalated by war's end, American and British agents in the field generally agreed that divided Creek commitments worked as well as noncommitment.¹⁰

Growing political and economic turbulence along the Georgia-Creek corridor penetrated the heart of Creek country in the form of violence, population dispersal, continued commercial challenges and trade shortfalls—each development underscoring the reach and influence of the Atlantic world economy on its many diverse and constituent parts. The Creeks, like their indigenous equivalents throughout much of eastern North America, were integral to the dynamic events rippling across the continent during the late eighteenth century. And while they did not play a significant role in the conflict militarily, an understanding of the internal kinetics of Creek society during and immediately following the American Revolution, illustrates how inextricably linked they were with expanding market forces. Their involvement in the market economy as slavers, consumers of manufactured goods, or extensions of imperial/state contest exposed them to the same or similar economic pressures confronting the rest of the Atlantic world. And just as the thirteen British colonies sought a measure of economic and constitutional security after 1775, the Creeks, too, strove for reliable commercial alternatives to protect them from the coercive

⁹ Juricek, "Emistisiguo to Superintendent Stuart," March 2, 1776, 180. It seems counterintuitive that Galphin and Rae, who had great investments in the deerskin trade, would have supported the backcountry Whigs—the principal adversaries of the Creeks and Cherokees. Cashin argues that it was Galphin's acceptance of the commissionership of Indian affairs by the provincial congress of South Carolina that convinced him to support the rebels. In this capacity, he could prevent a worsening of frontier mayhem by keeping the Creeks neutral by any means necessary. Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 289.

¹⁰ Stitt, *EAID* XIV, "William Henry Drayton to the Cherokees about the 'Causes of the Quarrell' with the King," August 21, 1775, 375-376; "Continental Congress to the Indian Nations about the Conflict with the British," July 13, 1775, 369-373.

affects of outside markets.¹¹

Colonial protest expressed in nonimportation agreements combined with Britain's tighter jurisdictional control of shipments of guns and munitions to the colonies, severely hampered the Creek town economy and ability to effectively wage war against the Choctaws. As colonial participation in the boycotts became manifest, pack trains into Creek country from Augusta and Charlestown dwindled. The century-old trade paths from Georgia and the Carolinas transformed into avenues for armies and raiding parties throughout the remainder of the war.¹² Trade from the Gulf coast became important as Stuart attempted to consolidate commercial efforts from the South via British East and West Florida.¹³ British and American strategies focused on controlling trade paths into the indigenous Southeast, assuring either measured Indian involvement or disinterested neutrality.¹⁴ Providing a dependable supply of munitions and manufactures complicated this goal, especially as the geopolitical situation became more critical in 1775.¹⁵

¹¹ Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and diversity in Native American communities* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995) xi-xvi, 1-25

¹² Paulett, *An Empire of Small Places*, 171.

¹³ Stuart long recognized that the most convenient access points to the Creeks originated in the Floridas. Juricek, "Superintendent Stuart to Lower and Upper Creek Chiefs," August 15, 1775, 169-170. Stuart informs the assembled Upper and Lower Creek headmen that "There is an unhappy Dispute between the People of England and the white People of America, which however cannot affect you, as you can be supplied with Necessaries from Pensacola and Mobile [sic] and this [St. Augustine] place—where the people live like Brothers and enjoy Peace..."

¹⁴ Both sides feared direct Indian involvement. The Continental Congress pragmatically instructed the Six Nations to remain neutral comparing it to a "family quarrel between us and ... You Indians are not concerned in it." Stitt, *EAID*, XIV, "Continental Congress to the Indian Nations about the Conflict with the British," July 13, 1775, 369-373; George Galphin sought to replace Stuart as superintendent to the Creeks. In June 1775, Galphin informed the Lower Creeks that it was destined Stuart should die and he intended to "fill the Superintendent's place in the Nation." Galphin, and the other congressionally appointed Indian commissioners, also beseeched the Creeks to remain neutral likening the conflict to a family feud. See: *EAID*, XIV, "Talk from the Rebel Commissioners to the Creeks about Their Loyalty in the Conflict with the British," November 13, 1775, 384-385 and Juricek, "Report to Stuart on Galphin's Rebellious Talk to the Lower Creeks and the Cussita King's Reply," August 1775, 168-169. The Continental Congress chose prominent Augusta merchants to lead the newly established southern Indian department. George Galphin and Robert Rae managed the Creeks for the Americans. It is important to note that Galphin and Rae's influence rested almost exclusively with the Lower Creeks. Martha Condray Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest in the American Revolution, 1776-1778* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1985) 18-19.

¹⁵ The patriots recognized the significance of the traditional paths and sought to either close or control them. *CRSG*, 38: pt 1, 600; *DAR*, XI 169. Ammunition was crucial to Creek hunter-warriors. And while both armies vied for Creek affections through this commodity trade, the British had a clearer logistical advantage over their American counterparts. Patriot leaders sought to curb the immense resources of the British Empire through purposeful raids. In

The mechanics of the deerskin trade in Creek country remained largely unchanged, however. The war occasionally disrupted regular supply shipments from Europe, but overland paths, river courses, and trade houses still functioned as conduits of market activity. Creek hunters continued delivering their annual yields in skins, but the direction of their trade dramatically shifted from Augusta to the Gulf coast in response to frontier violence in the East. What had been a gradual process in the expansion of commercial trade interests via Mobile and Pensacola immediately following the French and Indian War, emerged as the only reliable option for maintaining the old economic order. This became especially true as Patriots and Loyalists turned Augusta into contested space. By war's end, Augusta was the new capital of the state of Georgia, and political vision shifted from the deerskin trade (with attention to protecting the interests of those involved) to policies reflecting the anti-Indian sympathies common among backcountry settlers.¹⁶ This new political order heralded an expanding socioeconomic caste, eager to reshape the geography of the Southeast—one populated by planters, plantations, and

July 1775 rebel forces captured a large ammunition train traveling from Augusta. The spoils were split between Georgia and South Carolina and proved a great boon to patriot gift-giving initiatives among the Creeks. More worrisome, however, was the seeming confirmation the supply train signified—that Stuart and Governor Wright were orchestrating a violent plot against the backcountry settlements. Despite Stuart showing his “letter book” to detractors, “their threats against [him] were renewed, and as he had reason to apprehend a design was formed to seize his person he withdrew to St. Augustine, which retreat was held as confirmation of his Guilt and it was pretended put the matter out of all doubt.” *EAID* XIV, “Governor Campbell to the Earl of Dartmouth about Stuart’s Departure,” August 31, 1775, 376-377. Stuart aided these suspicions when mounting patriot pressure forced him to abandon his family and property and flee Savannah to the safety of St. Augustine in the summer of 1775. *EAID* XIV, “Superintendent Stuart to the Earl of Dartmouth about his Departure to St. Augustine,” July 21, 1775, 373-375; “Governor Campbell to the Earl of Dartmouth about Stuart’s Departure,” August 31, 1775, 376-377. Suspicions about Stuart were further corroborated when a letter between him and General Thomas Gage surfaced in the fall of 1775. This letter confirmed Gage and Stuart’s private intentions to use loyal Indians against patriot homesteads. South Carolinian Whigs argued that the ammunition discovery proved “the British Administration [sought], by the hands of Indians, to deluge our frontiers with the blood of our fellow-citizens.” *Ibid.*, “Declaration of the Provincial Congress of South Carolina about the Supply of Ammunition to the Indians,” November 19, 1775, 385-387. This episode is mentioned again in *Ibid.*, “Superintendent Stuart to the Earl of Dartmouth about the Allegiance of the Creeks,” October 25, 1775, 380-381. Here Stuart recognizes Galphin’s supreme influence among the Lower Creeks (Coweta) and the potential challenges that might present for the British. Stuart also expressed a desire to mediate peace between the Creeks and Choctaws. Stuart reasoned that detaching the Creeks from this abstraction would permit them to “engage in distressing the Rebels.”

¹⁶ Alden T. Vaughan and Deborah A. Rosen, *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789 Vol. XVI Carolina and Georgia Laws* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America) “Law to Encourage Settlement of Land,” January 23, 1780.

African slaves.¹⁷

The rapid commercialization and monopolization of the deerskin trade after the war altered older customs and patterns through the further erosion of gift-giving practices and increased proliferation of the liquor trade in native towns. Lowering prices for skins, along with rising debts commiserate with a decrease in deer populations and hunting ranges, exposed native societies like the Creeks to increasing pressures to surrender more land for white settlement. Where the Creeks prospered under earlier, less organized and comprehensive colonial trade and diplomatic schemes, after the American Revolution, a new order complicated traditional economic arrangements that increasingly focused on plantation-produced commodities for export.¹⁸

Combating this new order for the Creeks came through the pursuance of sociopolitical strategies that enhanced access to material resources. An abundance of archaeological and anthropological literature confirms how material culture facilitated and broadcast an individual's participation with a particular group identity. Goods, and access to those goods, were oftentimes vested with political meaning. This could be true for both native and Euro-American alike. For the Creeks though, factional leadership competed internally for new social and political affiliations that best advertised their own privileged statuses with outside markets. Additionally, access to these markets may have expedited the creation of more "than simple blends of colonial and native life ways, but rather the construction of new identities, life ways, and worldviews." Just as lower class Scots (and other ethnic groups) found advantages in upward mobility through aligning themselves with the deerskin trade during the colonial period, the offspring of Euro-

¹⁷ Robert Paulett charts this process throughout: *An Empire of Small Places: Mapping the Southeastern Anglo-Indian Trade, 1732-1795* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2012). Paulett provides special attention to Augusta and the changing politics of the deerskin trade.

¹⁸ Much of this evolution is discussed in Daniel Usner's *Indian, Settlers, and Slaves*, 276-286.

American/Creek intermarriages utilized their multiethnic backgrounds to intersect social networks and create new identities in frontier conditions.¹⁹

Creek history is largely a testament to contest and compromise on the physical and cultural plane shared with Euro-Americans. In this sense, spatial metaphors—borderlands, middle grounds, frontiers, margins, etc.—often assist ethnographers in conceptualizing human interactions and cultural encounters. These geographic terms are not limited to concepts involving trade, war, and diplomacy, however, and can also be employed in conversations related to the emergence of a new generation of mixed-raced, multiethnic Creek leadership able to successfully navigate and balance the increasingly complex, social, political, and ancestral terrain of the post-Revolution South in an attempt to determine the direction of change and degree of self-determination for their respective communities.²⁰

Much like commercial, interpersonal, and inter-communal relationships, intermarriage was part of the social fluidity that existed in North American borderland regions of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While intermarriage has been addressed in earlier chapters, it is important to illustrate its role in the twin spheres of economics and diplomacy. Cross-cultural interactions of this nature functioned within the geography of encounter to reveal a landscape not only where people traded and fought, but coexisted. There are numerous geographical interpretations that transcend physical space. Ethnohistorians have recently discovered layered meanings in cultural landscapes—imagined in oral traditions and origin

¹⁹ Kent G. Lightfoot and Antoinette Martinez, “Frontiers and Boundaries in Archaeological Perspective,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 485-486.

²⁰ For specifics about the Creeks see: Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 170; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 274. For a more general interpretation of these themes see: Jeremy Alderman and Stephen Aron, “Borders to Borderlands: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History,” *The American Historical Review* 104 (June, 1999): 814-841 and James Taylor Carson, “Ethnogeography and the Native American Past,” *Ethnohistory* 49 (Fall 2002): 769-788. Carson’s essay explores the previous work and future needs in cross-disciplinary analysis between ethnohistorians and geographers.

myths and forged through interpersonal and inter-communal relations—and employ geographic metaphors to discuss how native peoples viewed and interacted with their world. Therefore, the challenge is to explore how space characterized cultural ideals and charted change and self-determination in a variety of ways. Through the more illusive fictive adoption rituals like fanimingo, or the well-documented cases related to southeastern métissage, the creation of new geographies through encounter, interaction, and conflict developed a process of mutual adaptation and accommodation in Creek country. Geographies of encounter existed as more than places for trade and war, but also as spaces of intimacy where relationships provided order in a rapidly changing world.²¹

Through much of the early colonial period, intermarriage functioned largely as a means of softening the cultural collision between different clans and outsider groups. Ethnic diversity undergirded Creek life and functioned as an adaptation strategy with antecedents reaching back to the shattering events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²² Even as late as the 1770s, this openness to outsiders proved crucial for thousands of loyalist refugees pouring into Creek

²¹ Tracy Neal Leavelle, “Geographies of Encounter: Religion and Contested Spaces in Colonial North America,” *American Quarterly* 56 (December 2004): 913-943. Leavelle’s focus is primarily on the transformative effects of cross-cultural religious practices, but she posits some interesting questions about how a broader geographic perspective allows for interpretations to include the rise of a métis/mestizo class of leadership. The interaction of places and cultures produced an intercultural narrative of mixing and accommodation. For a sampling of the ever-evolving literature devoted to the geography of encounter and this discussion see: James Taylor Carson, “Ethnogeography and the Native American Past,” 49 (Fall 2002): 769-788; Jeremy Aldeman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History,” *The American Historical Review* (June 1999): 814-841; Jennifer Reid, *Myth, Symbol, and Colonial Encounter: British and Mi’kmaq in Acadia, 1700-1867* (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1995); Gregory H. Nobles, *American Frontiers: Colonial Encounters and Continental Conquest* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998) 19-98; Bedrock studies on these themes include: Richard White, *The Middle Ground*; James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Daniel Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves*.

²² Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005) 24. Of course, traces of this logic are found throughout Ethridge and Shuck-Hall’s comprehensive work: *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, and elsewhere. See especially these essays from that volume: Ned J. Jenkins, “Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050-1700 CE,” 188-249; Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, “Alabama and Coushatta Diaspora and Coalescence in the Mississippian Shatter Zone,” 250-271; George Edward Milne, “Picking up the Pieces: Natchez Coalescence in the Shatter Zone,” 388-417.

towns from Georgia and the Carolinas.²³ Since the Mississippian period, outsiders with needed skills and contacts with resources near coastal regions were of an inestimable value to hinterland peoples. Establishing kinship between clans or towns and other ethnic groups was a fundamental Creek organizing principle. Inter-marriage was an ingredient in this process and existed as an opportunity to extend kinship to distant places. Marriage between Creek women and Euro-American men served a symbiotic purpose by bridging cultural gaps, funneling trade to specific colonial and Indian towns, and assisting the social ascendancy of men on both sides of the cultural divide. By the time of the American Revolution, the offspring of these unions served imperial and Creek objectives alike. It is to their social fluidity that racial and cultural boundaries in the colonial and post-colonial South were oftentimes complicated and obscured.²⁴

Most métis men were employed as interpreters, factors in the deerskin trade, messengers, and guides by virtue of their ancestry and familiarity with Creek customs and extensive knowledge of the region's paths and river courses. Métis Creek men like John Galphin, (son of George Galphin) Sam Moniac, and Alexander Cornells shadowed numerous Indian conferences and accompanied diplomatic and trade missions from the Gulf coast, Georgia, and Carolina

²³ For loyalist emigration into Creek country: Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 39-41. William Bartram recorded encountering a small family of loyalist refugees fleeing Georgia with all their property. They were traveling down the Alabama River and hoped to settle somewhere north of Mobile—at the confluence of the Alabama-Tombigbee rivers. Francis Harper, *The Travels of William Bartram* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958) 280. Both the Spanish and British colonial governments after the French and Indian War encouraged immigration so as to transform and improve the economic development of the region. This migration later worked in conjunction with the exodus of thousands of loyalist refugees attempting to escape patriot depredations in Georgia and the Carolinas after 1775. English refugees, unlike the Acadians and Canary Islanders (who primarily settled in Louisiane after 1763 and 1778 respectively) brought their human and animal property with them—further contributing to the changing demographics and economic achievement of the region. Additionally, loyalist refugees were joined by truant British and American soldiers, runaway black slaves, debtors, and miscreants of every stripe. For details on the migrations of the Canary Islanders (or Isleños) and Acadians to the Gulf south see: Carl A. Brasseaux, *Founding of New Acadia: The Beginnings of Acadia Life in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1996). For an analysis of immigration to West Florida see: Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida*, 6-21.

²⁴ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 45. Saunt argues that métis/mestizo children were an important facet of southern colonial life soon after the settlement of Georgia in 1733. It was after midcentury though that they played a more crucial role in the region's political and economic development; Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 3.

trading posts to the interior Creek towns. Because these men were born into matrilineal clans, their social and kinship statuses awarded them dual Creek-Euro-American memberships that they used to benefit themselves, their families/clans, and employers. Consequently, some of these métis children were born into prominent Creek clans with strong political, social, and economic connections. Perhaps, due to their propensity to marry Euro-Americans, the Wind clan seems to have enjoyed a particularly privileged status among the Creeks.²⁵

One of the many challenges confronting scholars studying American Indian communities is measuring the transformative power of the market economy on indigenous values, customs, and identity. Through participation in the consumption of manufactured goods, the market cultivated individual agency (expressed in Creek leader's strategic diplomatic, commercial, and militarily engagement with Euro-American colonial and state powers) and enabled native communities with choices where "new cultural traits were adopted, modified, and created to fit within the underlying ideological structures of both non-European and European peoples."²⁶ Gauging how Indian communities adapted, retained, or lost certain cultural traits and identities in the face of a pervasive market economy illustrates the impact of colonial and postcolonial power structures and the many varied indigenous responses these arrangements elicited.

Métis men were in many ways the fulfillment of the transformative powers of the market economy. They existed as products of a social and cultural "middle ground" and demonstrated a keen understanding of their place in Euro-American and indigenous societies. They understood the limits, extents, and alternatives available to them in ways that permitted the pursuit of personal agendas without necessarily being coerced into completely adopting western cultural

²⁵ Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 81-84. Frank makes this suggestion about the Wind clan, but he also points out that the sources of this claim may be unreliable.

²⁶ Kent G. Lightfoot, "Culture Contact Studies: Redefining the relationship between Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology," *American Antiquity* 60 (1995): 199-217.

and ideological motifs. Instead, they understood how their unique position on the shared cultural and ideological plane with whites allowed competition with Euro-Americans in ways that did not compromise their Indian identity or their familial and town responsibilities.²⁷ It is also important to note that “colonialism’s culture” was not imposed on native communities, but rather, negotiated or conditioned over time and generations. This is not meant to suggest that colonialism was not destructive or culturally scaring. It was both creative and destructive simultaneously. Frontiers were environments where indigenous peoples resisted, endured, but never acculturated. The Creeks sought to strategically survive in a colonial world and those that did “buoyed themselves up by means of social and cultural constructions that drew upon the new as well as the old.”²⁸

The increasingly manifest role of acquisitive métis men in Creek life after midcentury, however, has typically been interpreted by historians as anathema to traditional indigenous values and customs. Claudio Saunt’s, *A New Order of Things* (1999), perhaps best articulates this position for the Creeks. Saunt argues that concepts of “power and property” among métis men in the years after the American Revolution radically altered Creek life. Before the American Revolution: “the Creeks did not strive to accumulate significant amounts of material possessions or to protect and defend their belongings from their neighbors. Yet by the 1810s, a few people had thousands of dollars and hundreds of cattle and slaves. The kind as well as the quantity of these new possessions reshaped the lives of Creeks.”²⁹ But Saunt’s view is suited to a broad

²⁷ Lance Greene and Mark R. Plane, *American Indians and the Market Economy, 1775-1850* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010) 8-9.

²⁸ The quote is from William S. Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620-1984* (Hanover, N.H. University Press of New England, 1986) 261. Many of these themes concerning cultural persistence expressed in the adoption of material culture items and the practices of memory in identity formation are found in Stephen W. Silliman, “Change in Continuity, Practice in Memory: Native American Persistence in Colonial New England,” *American Antiquity* 74 (April 2009): 211-230.

²⁹ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 1-2.

understanding of the stark contrasts between western and Creek economic structures (non-stratified, corporate kin-groups with reciprocal gift-giving requirements common among Indian societies versus the more individualistic and competitive pursuits of property as seen in Western economies) and he fails to consider how individual agency within a métis group permitted the adoption of Euro-American culture and goods without necessarily compromising or losing an Indian identity. For Saunt, the meteoric rise of one métis man in particular, Alexander McGillivray, “signaled thirty years of dramatic change” for the Creek people.³⁰

Alexander McGillivray’s extended family and close business and diplomatic associations, according to Saunt, divided his loyalties in such a way as to corrupt his integrity and interfere with his responsibilities as a town and clan leader for his own self-interest. Creek cultural and historical identities were not static, however, and while McGillivray’s actions and accumulation of material wealth seemed incompatible with traditional values regarding corporate kinship, reciprocity and redistribution, a carefully constructed understanding of how goods, places, actions, and relationships were incorporated and inscribed with a variety of meanings throughout the colonial and post-colonial eras illustrates an important concept in Indian identity formation. The consumption of goods and linkages to marketplaces involved political and economic considerations as well as elements of human agency. Therefore, it is sufficient to suggest that McGillivray’s behavior, while certainly more conspicuous than that of his Creek and métis contemporaries, was consistent with earlier strategic usages of trade and cultural geography, and the adoption and modification of new materials and resources to fit within traditional survival techniques against an expanding market economy.³¹

³⁰ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 69.

³¹ These thoughts were developed after reading, “Introduction,” in Greene and Plane, *American Indians and the Market Economy*, 1-18.

Alexander McGillivray's trade interests and diplomatic maneuvering dominates Creek history in the decade following the American Revolution.³² Born at Little Tallassee in 1750, Alexander was the son of the industrious and aspiring Scots Indian trader, Lachlan McGillivray. The elder McGillivray was born in Strathearn, in Invernesshire, Scotland in 1719 and migrated to the newly established colony of Georgia with other young Scots Highlanders in 1736. Under the tutelage of his uncle, Archibald McGillivray, Lachlan became a licensed trader to the Upper Creeks. Archibald headed one of the largest Creek trading companies in Charlestown at the time—McGillivray and Company—and it was the clannish loyalty of the Highlanders that aided Lachlan's rise in Southeastern colonial society. The McGillivray's were steeped in family history and maintained close, steady contact with relatives in Scotland and facilitated the removal of other young clansmen to North America. These men also became heavily involved in the deerskin trade.³³ Lachlan typified most backwoodsmen of the period in that he recognized the calculated value of intermarriage with a well-connected Creek woman.

Lachlan married sixteen-year-old Sehoy Marchand, the daughter of a Creek woman named Sehoy I and French officer, Captain Jean-Baptiste Louis de Courtel Marchand, commander of the Alabama district, and consequently, Fort Toulouse for French Louisiane.³⁴

³² Historian Albert Pickett, famously called him the "Talleyrand of the Creeks." Pickett, *History of Alabama*, 432.

³³ Edward J. Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 34-36, 263. Colonial Georgia was ready-made for young Scotsmen, as Cashin points out. The early establishment of The St. Andrews Society (1729) the "Scotch" Presbyterian Church (1731), and the election of pro-Scots officials, all exemplified a society friendly to enterprising Scotsmen like Lachlan McGillivray. The aforementioned John McGillivray was one such example. He operated a successful trading company from Mobile.

³⁴ Albert Pickett surmises that Marchand was killed in the 1722 mutiny at Fort Toulouse. "Sehoy (II) Marchand whose father once commanded at Fort Toulouse, and was there killed, in 1722, by his own soldiers...." James Albert Pickett, *History of Alabama Vol. II* (Charleston: Walker and James, 1851) 32. This is a mistake, however, and ample evidence exists indicating that Marchand survived the mutiny and moved back to Mobile. For instance, he and Sierur de St. Ange, wrote a letter to Governor Étienne Périer on September 15, 1732 concerning the necessity of arming the Choctaws. For a description of the mutiny, the survival of the fort's officers, and a possible explanation of Marchand's role in Mobile and at Fort Toulouse see: Daniel Thomas, *Fort Toulouse* 19-20. It is also disputed by several scholars that Marchand was ever *stationed* at Fort Toulouse, but more likely commanded the fort's district from Mobile. Giraud suggests Marchand commanded the post in *A History of French Louisiana Vol. V*. His wording

Evidence suggests that Sehoy I (Alexander McGillivray's grandmother) was a member of the Wind clan and resident of Taskigi—a Creek (Coushatta) town less than one mile distant from Fort Toulouse.³⁵ Sehoy I also bore a son that became the influential Upper Creek headman, Red Shoes (Alexander McGillivray's uncle). Lachlan's marriage to Sehoy Marchand, therefore, provided him numerous commercial and political benefits. While it was not uncommon for traders to have multiple wives (Indian and European), McGillivray family history suggests that Lachlan was different from his contemporaries in that Sehoy Marchand was his only female companion and that he was truly committed to her. The union produced three children: Alexander, Sophia, and Jeannette McGillivray.³⁶

can also be interpreted as Marchand being in charge of the district too (365). Thomas Woodward in *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians*, (Montgomery, AL: Barrett & Wimbish, Book and General Job Printers, 1859) argues that Sehoy was never intimate with Capt. Marchand, and that Sehoy (II) was fully Indian, not métis (60). It should be noted, however, that Woodward is reflecting on oral testimony, and he is widely disputed on many instances. Cross-cultural interactions existed in the geographies of encounter. Kinship established through trade, marriage, and fictive adoption rituals linked the post and its inhabitants with the nearby Creek towns. Fort Toulouse was typical of most military outposts from the period in that it was predominantly male. Population figures are difficult to ascertain with consistent certainty, but estimates range from twenty to thirty inhabitants during the peacetime decades before 1750, and double those numbers after reinforcements were needed during the French and Indian War. Waselkov, Wood, and Herbert, *Colonization and Conquest*, 77. While a few French women and children lived at the fort as well, many men chose to take Creek wives. The lack of available priests demanded many (formal) marriages take place in Mobile—a trip via bateaux in spring when waters were highest. The sanction and opinion of marriage between whites and Indians varied from priests to sovereigns, but continued on some level even after intermarriage was officially banned by the Crown in 1728. Waselkov, "Introduction," in Daniel H. Thomas, *Fort Toulouse: The French Outpost at the Alabamas on the Coosa*, xxi-xxii. Waselkov cites King Louis XV's prohibition of the practice in 1728 and Father La Vente (leader of the Mobile parish) as being indifferent to unions between Frenchmen and Indian women in 1708. He further cites that the growth rate of the outpost was comparable to English colonial settlements in North America of the same period—around 3.4 percent (xxi). For an in-depth look at La Vente's pragmatic views on marriage with Indian girls see Charles Edwards O'Neill, *Church and State in French Colonial Louisiana: Policy and Politics to 1732* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966) 248-252; and Jennifer M. Spear, "Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in Colonial Louisiana," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 60 (January 2003): 75-98.

³⁵ Sheri Shuck-Hall, *Journey to the West*, 63.

³⁶ There is some dispute about whether Alexander or Sophia was oldest. In a letter to Albert Pickett dated June 21, 1858, genealogist/historian, Thomas Woodward claimed Sophia was older than Alexander. Woodward (whose authority on all subjects related to the McGillivray family is somewhat questionable) also maintained that Alexander McGillivray (from whom numerous letters exist) was neither educated nor literate. Family legend maintains that when Sehoy Marchand was pregnant with Alexander, she dreamed of "piles of manuscripts, of ink and paper, and heaps of books, more than her eyes had ever beheld in the fort, when, a child, she sued to visit her father. Pickett, *History of Alabama*, 344. Both Pickett and Woodward received their information about the McGillivray family from Lachlan's grandchildren and a centenarian black slave named Polly, who was employed by the family for multiple generations. Woodward recounts that "Polly lived with the McGillivray family when Sophia and Alexander were

Lachlan established himself at the Upper Creek town of Little Tallassee. A mere nine miles from Fort Toulouse, Little Tallassee was an important strategic hub near a web of communication and trade paths. He oversaw a small farm/trading post there, which permitted observations of the nearby French fort, allowed him to audit the flow of information across Creek country, and better utilize trade opportunities for his partners in Augusta.³⁷ McGillivray's keen business sense helped establish a profitable store in Augusta sometime around the start of the French and Indian War. The success of this venture was followed by another move to Savannah where he became a wealthy import merchant by the mid-1760s. The profits from his businesses facilitated investments in land, livestock, commodity crop cultivation, and African slaves. Lachlan eventually purchased two large tracts of land upriver from Savannah where he established the Vale Royal and Springfield plantations. His rise from Indian trader to planter-merchant is illustrative of Georgia's growing economic role in the Southeast in the years immediately preceding the American Revolution.³⁸

Fortune also proved beneficial for his family. While it is uncertain if Seho Marchand and her daughters followed Lachlan east from Little Tallassee, the move from Creek country brought his son Alexander to Charlestown. There, the young métis boy matriculated under his uncle Farquhar McGillivray, a Presbyterian minister.³⁹ Alexander's western education—reflected in the copious letters and documents that survived him, his usage of the Christian calendar,

born. She lived with Alexander after he was grown, and after his death Billy Panthon sold her to the half breed, Jim Perryman, and he sold her to Chehaw-Micco. When the Indians emigrated in 1836, she and old Rose were left with me, and I carried them to Arkansas Polly died in 1846, and said she was 115 years old," Woodward, 107.

³⁷ Also known as "Weetomkee Old Town," and is located near present-day Wetumka, Alabama. Edward Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 60. Superintendent Edmond Atkin suspected McGillivray's choice of location at Little Tallassee was to more easily participate in smuggling operations with the nearby French, however. His surviving letters to South Carolinian and Georgian officials detail the mood of the Creeks and behavior of the nearby French. He made two trips a year to Augusta (one in spring and fall) to sell his skins to the company stores there.

³⁸ For the most complete discussion of Lachlan McGillivray's life and times see: Edward J. Cashin's definitive, *Lachlan McGillivray*. Cashin says McGillivray "transitioned from trader to planter" in 1757, 155.

³⁹ Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 74.

proficiency in English (written and spoken), recognition of land titles, and concepts of legal sovereignty, and personal property—separated him from his Creek and métis contemporaries.⁴⁰ But while his political, material, and social life is a point of record, his motivations and actions remain subjects of bitter contention to historians.

Alexander McGillivray reappeared in Creek country by the start of the American Revolution after having served as an apprenticed in two separate Savannah-based trade firms. He assisted David Taitt in Little Tallassee—where his mother’s lineage was strongest. In September 1777, McGillivray’s clout among the Upper Creeks is credited with thwarting an assassination plot on Taitt, Emistisiguo, William McIntosh (British agent to the Lower Creeks), and Alexander Cameron (British agent to the Cherokees stationed with Taitt at Little Tallassee) by Lower Creek factions allied with George Galphin. In the fall of 1778, the British launched their southern campaign, involving regulars from New York under Lieutenant-Colonel Archibald Campbell, southern loyalists, and small bands of Cherokee and Creek warriors led by agents such as Taitt and McGillivray. But poor communication and the complexities associated with so many moving parts largely squandered the value of having Indian allies. McGillivray was involved in several minor skirmishes against Georgia militia, and assisted in the futile attempt to defend Pensacola against the Spanish siege in 1781, but was generally, and later, self-admittedly, not an experienced military leader.⁴¹

The fall of Mobile preceded Pensacola’s capture and when the rebels permanently secured Augusta in June 1781, Savannah remained as the lone coastal British access point into

⁴⁰ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 67-89.

⁴¹ For an account of McGillivray’s military service during the American Revolution see: James H. O’Donnell, “Alexander McGillivray: Training for Leadership, 1777-1783,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 49 (June 1965): 172-186. The inherent value of Pensacola to the supply needs of the Upper Creeks was evident. It was the beginning of resource lifeline to Little Tallassee. McGillivray initially secured several hundred Upper Creek warriors in the defense of Pensacola, but Campbell’s vacillating needs from these men and the unpredictable nature of the Spanish attack, produced far less than what was needed.

Creek country. When rebel forces tightened their siege on the town in 1782, several small Creek factions, who had remained persistently loyal to the British, labored in vain to break the American lines. One such effort was led by Emistisiguo. In an apparent attempt to bring horses to his British friends, the Upper Creek headman led one hundred and sixty warriors against American forces under General Anthony Wayne outside Savannah. According to accounts, Emistisiguo was killed in an attempt to bludgeon Wayne after the general fell from his horse. British forces withdrew from Savannah to St. Augustine a few weeks later.⁴²

Emistisiguo was arguably the most prominent Upper Creek headman, and when he died in the swamps near Savannah, Alexander McGillivray's path to leadership over the southern corridor via Little Tallassee seemed assured due to his familial connections to Sehoy's Marchand's people in the river bends near Fort Toulouse along with his father's along the Gulf coast through Lachlan's protégé in the deerskin trade, John McGillivray, worked in conjunction with a keen understanding of the intricacies of Atlantic commerce. His tenure in the service of the British government gave him numerous commercial and diplomatic contacts. There is break in his letters during this time that might reveal more insight into the processes of his ascendancy, but he was quickly recognized by Euro-American outsiders as the principal leader of the Upper Creeks and his intentions seem logically certain. He was the given the title of Great Beloved Man or *Isti Atcagagi Tthlacco*.⁴³ The struggle over the primacy of the southern trade corridor continued under his leadership.

The impending withdrawal of the British from the Floridas, however, clouded the collective future of the indigenous Southeast. McGillivray, like other delegations of headmen

⁴² Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *History of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co. 1857) 319; O'Donnell, 180-181. Schoolcraft refers to Emistisiguo as "Guristersigo."

⁴³ Michael D. Green, "Alexander McGillivray," in *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity*, edited by R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980) 41-63.

converging on St. Augustine in 1782, articulated the collective Creek concerns to Governor of East Florida, Patrick Tonyn. The terms of the Treaty of Paris (1783) and the eventual British exodus from the Southeast aroused feelings of abandonment and betrayal, especially among the southern Upper Creek factions, which had remained committed to preserving their privileged status via the southern path from Pensacola and Mobile.⁴⁴ When the Georgians made it clear they intended to exact retribution from the Creeks for years of frontier raids against their settlements in the form of another massive land cessation, McGillivray petitioned for British to continue trade in guns and ammunition. John Stuart's replacement, Thomas Brown, candidly informed McGillivray that while the British entertained notions of recapturing the Floridas, he and other Creek leaders should approach the Spanish for favorable trade alternatives in the meantime.⁴⁵

McGillivray's apprehensions concerning reliable trade avenues worsened in late 1783. Under due to trade shortfalls and threats from nearby Georgians (who demanded war and trade-debt reparations), several Lower Creek headmen met at Augusta in November and ceded an enormous tract of land between the Ogeechee and Oconee rivers for American settlement.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Thomas D. Watson, "The Troubled Advance of Panton, Leslie and Company into Spanish West Florida," *Eighteenth Century Florida and the Revolutionary South*, ed. by Samuel Proctor (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1978) 68-73. Several desperate Creek delegations famously requested to accompany the British in their departure. They sought asylum in the Bahamas. Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989) 166-169.

⁴⁵ Cashin, *The King's Ranger*, 166-169. The Spanish were equally concerned about American encroachments. They claimed an extended vision of West Florida that included the Natchez District and the growing Tombigbee District (32°22'). The United States disputed this claim, asserting the territory was included in the Treaty of Paris (1783). "The West Florida Controversy" remained unresolved until the Treaty of San Lorenzo (1795), which established the boundary at the 31st parallel. Isaac Joslin Cox, *The West Florida Controversy: a Study in American Diplomacy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1918). There is also some debate concerning Thomas Brown's influence in the Creek decision to ally with the Spanish. It seems likely McGillivray made this decision pragmatically. See: Cashin, *The King's Ranger*, 173, 213.

⁴⁶ A small faction of Lower Creeks was coerced into ceding an 800 square-mile tract of land from the Ogeechee to the Oconee River "as far south as the Altamaha River and nearly as far northward as present-day Athens." The legitimacy of treaties like this was complicated after the adoption of the United States Constitution in 1788. The federal government affirmed control of the treaty making process with inland nations like the Creeks. Farris W. Cadle, *Georgia Surveying History and Law* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991) 75-76. Additionally, McGillivray's sophisticated understanding of the political and economic troubles in the young Republic caused him great anxiety. He feared that in an effort to raise revenue, new taxes might drive undesirables seeking sanctuary onto

McGillivray disputed the legitimacy of the congress and its representative headmen.⁴⁷ He responded in January 1784 by formally soliciting Spanish recognition of the Creeks as a “free nation,” able to determine their own military partners and direction of resupply.⁴⁸ McGillivray’s communications and the assurances he received from a well-connected Scottish-owned trade firm (eventually organized as the Panton, Leslie and Company) assuaged his concerns about the possible necessity of trade from the old eastern paths via Augusta, Savannah, and Charlestown. Like the Spanish, he understood that British-based trade firms were better equipped to satisfy the logistics of inland trade. Though initially operating from St. Augustine and a store at St. Marks (on the St. Marks River in northwestern Florida), Panton, Leslie and Company, through drama, guile, and luck, secured a permanent trade house in Pensacola by the fall of 1785 and quickly gained control over the entire southeastern Indian trade, thus beginning an oftentimes tumultuous and uncertain residency among the Spanish. The merchants made Alexander McGillivray their agent and financial partner among the Creeks.⁴⁹

McGillivray established his primary residence at Little Tallassee—the town of his mother’s clan, a few miles from Fort Toulouse and situated on a vast array of trade and communication networks stretching across the Southeast. He remained committed to his mother’s people.⁵⁰ The Americans confiscated the properties of his loyalist father, prompting

Indian lands. Caughey, “McGillivray to O’Neill,” January 1, 1784, 65.

⁴⁷ Randolph C. Downes, “Creek-American Relations, 1782-1790,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 21 (June 1937): 145-146; John Walton Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938)

“Alexander McGillivray to Arturo O’Neill,” March 28, 1784, 73-74.

⁴⁸ Caughey, “Alexander McGillivray to Arturo O’Neill,” January 1, 1784, 64.

⁴⁹ William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola: University of West Florida Press, 1986) 49-72.

“Since I have taken a share in the interests of your house, I am determined to work with interest and integrity.” McGillivray was given a commission and personal stake in the company provided he used his influence to convince the Spanish of their value. Caughey, “McGillivray to Charles McLatchy,” October 4, 1784, 82-83.

⁵⁰ Arturo O’Neill remarks that “one must not lose sight of the fact that he [McGillivray] lives at an extremity of the nations, where as a mestizo he is a chief of a town [Little Tallassee] and one must consider that his efforts will always be directed toward the ends that he conceives to favor the Indians his tribesmen, who, as he says, consider

speculation that this accounted for his disdain towards the Georgians.⁵¹ While American officials sought a conditional economic relationship with the Creeks after the Revolution, McGillivray ultimately distrusted their motives, convinced they only wanted land, not trade. “These Americans who are a sett [sic] of crafty, cunning republicans, who avail them of every circumstance....”⁵² Though he at times negotiated with them to arouse jealousies among the Spanish, he always sought alternatives to the Americans for reliable trade. A ready outlet for Creek goods and access to higher quality British manufactures assured Creek sovereignty and he found a commercial surrogate in the Spanish at Mobile and Pensacola.

Historically the French, British, and Spanish struggled to feed the coastal settlements in the north-central Gulf coast due to a combination of metropolitan neglect and a lack of arable and developed land in their immediate vicinities.⁵³ But Pensacola was no longer the meager outpost it had been before the British occupation and it demanded resources necessary to buttress the colony and protect Mexico and vital shipping lines. Boundary restrictions established under previous Creek conferences in the 1760s and 1770s prevented, or at least limited, Euro-American access to the fertile upper reaches of the Creek-controlled Mobile-Tensaw delta where plantations might flourish. Major Farmar’s plantation marked the northern boundary of European

themselves brothers and allies of Spain only....” Caughey, “O’Neill to Sonora,” February 20, 1787, 144.

⁵¹ Like the other nearly 100,000 loyalists in North America, Lachlan flees the thirteen colonies after the war. He returned to Strathnairn, Scotland in May 1782. Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 298. One foreign observer makes the claim that it was the treatment of his father that most angered Alexander McGillivray. Georgia tried to assuage his feelings towards them by returning Lachlan’s extensive holdings as an inducement (bribe) for peace. McGillivray refused. He had no interest in directing his affairs from the east. His refusal also seems to discredit notions about his paramount ambition being the accumulation of personal property. *Archives des Affaires Etrangères* (hereafter cited as *AE*), “Le Comte de Moustier to the Comte de Montmoin,” May 11, 1788.

⁵² In a letter thanking the Spanish governor in Pensacola for his steady devotion to the Creeks, McGillivray explains how the Georgians hope to resume trade with them. McGillivray expresses his doubts as to their motives and underscores how important it is for the Spanish to keep their promises and prices fair or else it would be difficult to convince other headmen not to reestablish commercial ties with Augusta. Caughey, “McGillivray to Miró,” June 12, 1788.

⁵³ Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida*, edited by Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999) 115.

settlement in McGillivray's time just as it had during Emistisiguo's.

Previous colonial regimes relied on elements of the frontier exchange economy to provide food, trade, and defense for these marginalized provinces. As a prominent leader and spokesman of the Upper Creeks, McGillivray continued this old arrangement in exchange for a regular supply of manufactured goods and munitions from the Spanish. McGillivray divided his time between the more formidable plantation at Little Tallassee and another north of Mobile at Little River in a region vaguely identified as "Tensaw" where he and his lineage cultivated commodity crops and raised cattle for trade in a nearby coastal entrepôt to the south. The métis plantations of Tensaw supplied food (especially beef) to the Spanish posts of Mobile and Pensacola though the exclusive privileges and protections offered his trade.⁵⁴

The Spanish, always suspicious of McGillivray, applauded his decision to locate a commercial way station a few miles away from Pensacola and Mobile. They hoped these lands might "be immediately cultivated by friendly Indians and mestizos..."⁵⁵ The region abounded in easily accessible rivers and pathways. Water transport made the location especially attractive as goods and produce could be floated down river and out to sea to ports as far away St. Augustine and the Bahamas.⁵⁶ McGillivray's plantations at Little River were a community of métis farmers,

⁵⁴ The Creeks largely claimed the land north of Major Robert Farmar's plantation as their own (see previous chapter). After Farmar's death in 1778, his family abandoned the property on the Mobile/Tensaw River. The Spanish encouraged measured settlement north of Mobile and Pensacola on lands (adjacent to the Escambia, Tensaw, and Tombigbee rivers) previously coveted by the British and subject to several treaty negotiations between John Stuart and Emistisiguo as late as 1772. They were not completely vacant, however. Sparse populations of Spanish, Irish, French, and German settlers resided there in peace—as long as they took oaths of allegiance to the Spanish crown and promised to supply the coastal ports with agricultural produce. *East Florida Papers*, "Carlos Howard to Enrique O'Neill," August 31, 1787, Reel 45, Section 32; Robert Rea, *Major Robert Farmar*, 135-146. For details concerning Spanish protection of these settlers and their treaty requirements on the nearby Indian nations see: Jack D. L. Holmes, "Spanish Treaties with West Florida Indians, 1784-1802," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* (October 1969): 140-153. The best modern treatment of the social and economic dynamics of Tensaw is Karl Davis's, *"Much of the Indian Appears": Adaptation and Persistence in a Creek Community* (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2003). See especially pages 63-124.

⁵⁵ Caughey, "O'Neill to Sonora," July 11, 1787, 156-158.

⁵⁶ St. Augustine required as much as 6,000 pounds of beef in some months. "Zespedes to Gonzalo Zamorano," July

outwardly demonstrating western lifestyles through their connection to vital transportation routes that connected them to communities on the Gulf coast and institutions like the Panton, Leslie and Company. This was not a community that resembled of other Creek towns based on the talwa structure—nucleated town with adjacent communal fields. Surveys of the area show that it contained ten plantations—widely dispersed leaving room for livestock to graze freely in the surrounding canebrakes and river bottoms. This layout contrasted with the organization of the more confined talwa structure visible in the communities of the Upper Creek country. But neither was this community incompatible with indigenous values.

Special interest groups pursue collective advantages. The new political terrain after 1783 demanded certain adaptations for the Creeks, while still allowing them to maintain group cohesion and a semblance of identity. Responding to these political developments required associations and incorporations with the market economy from certain segments of Creek society that seemingly violated, among other things, traditional gift-giving strategies between themselves and colonial regimes—relationships they had enjoyed and exploited since the seventeenth century. What becomes imperative for understanding the Creek economy before, during, and after the American Revolution was that it functioned not merely as a means for the Creeks to consume goods or display statements of factional identity, but rather, exemplify relationships with outsiders that added political value to their own standing.⁵⁷ Commodity crop cultivation and the cattle trade flourished at McGillivray's Little River plantations. The consumption and exchange of this produce often involved and depended upon McGillivray's political connections and control of information through Creek country. His monopolistic efforts while restrictive and

31, 1787, "Papers of the Panton, Leslie and Co." UWF (Reel 1); "Same to Same" *Ibid.*, June 30, 1788 (Reel 1); Zespedes to Ezpeleta, *Ibid.*, January 30, 1789.

⁵⁷ Lance Greene and Mark R. Plane, *American Indians and the Market Economy*, 11-12.

occasionally divisive, led to the emergence of other Creek factions (especially among the Lower towns), which sought similar access to networks for themselves. This was illustrative of agency and adaptation.

The role of kinship was an essential component of the way the Creeks functioned economically, politically, militarily. Much like his predecessors, McGillivray sought to secure control over the lands north of Mobile and Pensacola through the extension of kinship ties with other communities through intermarriage. Acting as a clan leader, his plantations on Little River brought additional economic value through the betrothal of his sisters and other female kin to prominent Euro-American traders operating along the Gulf coast. His sister Sophia married Benjamin Durant, a French-Huguenot from South Carolina with cattle interests on the Escambia River, north of Pensacola. McGillivray's other sister, Jeannette, married French adventurer-mercenary, Louis LeClerc Milfort, who claimed to serve the direct interests of Napoleon Bonaparte and the autocrat's desire to recover Louisiane for France.⁵⁸ His half-sister, Sehoi III, eventually married trader-loyalist Charles Weatherford from Augusta, who migrated into the area in 1780.⁵⁹ Though McGillivray's sisters did not reside exclusively in the Little River settlements all their lives (Charles Weatherford and Sehoi III maintained a plantation near Coosada), these marriages benefitted commercially and politically from an association with Alexander

⁵⁸ Though it is generally accepted that Milfort exaggerated many of his claims, his accounts are nonetheless an informative insight into the private and public life of Alexander McGillivray. For the details of his marriage to McGillivray's sister Jeanette see: Louis LeClerc de Milfort, *Memoir or A Cursory Glance at My Different Travels & My Sojourn in the Creek Nation* edited by John Francis McDermott (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1956) 224-225. For his claims of being a great military leader among the Creeks and the inherent possibilities of securing Louisiane for France via Creek assistance see: Marc de Villiers du Terrage, *The Last Years of French Louisiana*, 422. French correspondence identified him as "Citizen Tastaneguy" (Creek title for leading warrior). He claimed to be (almost single-handedly) responsible for the defeat of General George Rogers Clark during the Northwest Indian war.

⁵⁹ For a brief background on these men, when the marriages likely occurred and why see: Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 39-42.

McGillivray.⁶⁰ He likewise reaped advantages of his own. Outsiders expedited the commercial acumen of the region through the utilization of Gulf coast trade opportunities. Furthermore, Creek customs dictated that since these foreign men did not have Creek ancestral relations, their accumulated wealth ultimately fell under the purview of their wives' lineage. While they enjoyed the exclusive privileges and protections of trading in Creek country due to their familial connection with McGillivray, they also understood the arrangement's conditions and limits.⁶¹ Violating Creek customs might result in banishment. McGillivray testified to this fact in a letter to the Spanish governor: "Nor Sir will I deny that I have thrown out menaces against those Settlers of the Tansaw[sic], because I have found them ungratefull[sic] and are Americans in their hearts."⁶²

Who and what encompassed the extent of the Tensaw region varies among its descriptors.⁶³ While the term is liberally used to describe lands as far east as the Lower Creek towns, the northern reaches of the Escambia River, and as far west as the Choctaws, reasonable suggestions are that its application with regard to McGillivray's purposes was confined to his family-owned plantations at the Little River settlements on the Alabama River—roughly fifty miles north of Mobile. When McGillivray first established a cattle pen on the Creek side of the boundary (north and east of Farmar's plantation) in 1783, the Spanish-controlled former British lands to the south and west were experiencing vigorous population and economic growth. Madrid's aims in the Southeast were clear: expand commerce throughout the Mississippi Valley and secure territory from American encroachments.

⁶⁰ In addition to commercial advantages, these Euro-American husbands occasionally ran afoul of either Creek customs or Spanish laws. Charles Weatherford was arrested in Pensacola for not paying a debt he owed the Panton, Leslie and Company. His connection to McGillivray eventually secured his release. Caughey, "McGillivray to O'Neill," December 3, 1786, 140-141; Caughey, "McGillivray to Miró," January 10, 1788, 166-167.

⁶¹ Karl Davis diss., "*Much of the Indian Appears*", 65-71.

⁶² Caughey, "McGillivray to O'Neill," March 1, 1788, 168-170.

⁶³ Email discussion with Gregory Waselkov, September 15, 2010.

Initial efforts to restrict colonial produce to Spanish ports and ships only stifled the economic growth of Louisiane and West Florida. After the Pensacola returned to Spanish control, colonial officials there and in New Orleans relaxed restrictive immigration policies, opened trade privileges to foreign merchants and permitted export commodities access to foreign ports in the West Indies. The Spanish also encouraged American settlement in Louisiane and West Florida, so as to further enhance the economic prosperity and security of the region. Mastery of the Alabama-Tombigbee river systems created a buffer for New Orleans and the burgeoning plantation economies along the Mississippi River. Newcomers (mostly loyalists and disgruntled backcountry men seeking opportunities away from well-entrenched land owners in the east) were encouraged to plant crops and bring African laborers in exchange for generous land grants and promises of Spanish protection.⁶⁴ The Spanish required immigrants to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown, but most of the one hundred or so families that moved into the area after the American Revolution, scorned such a stipulation. Fewer than one dozen took the oath.⁶⁵

American families residing in Spanish-controlled area known as the Tombigbee district envied the trade opportunities enjoyed by McGillivray and the inland Creeks. Panton, Leslie and Company's monopoly with the Indians did not extend universally across the region. This sharply contrasted American settlements with that of McGillivray's at Little River.⁶⁶ Their alliance with

⁶⁴ Gilbert C. Din, "Spain's Immigration Policy in Louisiana and the American Penetration, 1792-1803," *Southwestern Quarterly*, LXXVI (1972-1973), 255-276. William Coker, "The Bruins and Spanish Immigration Policy, 1787-1788 ed. John Francis McDermott, *The Spanish in the Mississippi, 1762-1804* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 70-71. Non-Indian residents in Spanish Louisiane and West Florida quickly surpassed Indian residents. By the mid-1780s, colonial population figures estimate upwards of 30,000 inhabitants (16,000 slaves, 13,000 whites, and 1,000 freedmen).

⁶⁵ Marc de Villiers du Terrage, *The Last Years of French Louisiana*, 423.

⁶⁶ The Tombigbee district consisted of settlements on the west side of the Tombigbee River on lands opened to Anglo-Americans after the Treaty of Mobile in 1765. Article 5 of the treaty stipulates and defines the territory: "And to prevent all disputes on account of encroachments, ... committed by the English inhabitants of this or any of his Majesty's provinces ... , we do hereby agree, that, for the future, the boundary be settled by a line extended from

the Creeks superseded concerns of a few frontier farmers. The Spanish vetoed attempts by company officials in Mobile to grant them similar trade privileges similar to those enjoyed by the Creeks, prompting occasional forays of squatters across the boundary into Creek country.

Trade conventions between the Creeks and the Spanish were formerly established at Pensacola between May and June 1784, when McGillivray represented the southern Upper Creek towns and factions as their spokesman and chief negotiator. Spanish authorities abandoned their exclusivist policy with respect to foreign trade firms by permitting the Panton, Leslie and Company a monopoly over the southeastern Indian trade. The 1784 Pensacola Congress established a defensive alliance between the Creeks and the Spanish that was ideally suited to check westward American advancement. Both parties affirmed friendship and mutual respect with an explicit understanding that the regular transfer of goods served the underlying purpose of creating a buffer against future American encroachments. For his efforts and promised securities, the Spanish gave McGillivray official deference by the Spanish and British agents, a yearly (personal) stipend, and a ceremonial rank by the Spanish government. In accordance with custom, different classes of medals were then distributed to the other presiding Creek headmen.

Grosse Pointe on Mon Louis Island, then up the western coast of Mobile Bay, then up the Mobile River (considered part of the "Tombebee" River) to the confluence of Alibamont (Alabama) and Tombebee (Tombigbee) rivers, and from thence, along the western bank of Alibamont River to the Chickianoce River (near modern-day Choctaw Bluff in Clarke County, Alabama), and from the confluence of the Chickianoce and Alibamont rivers followed a straight line westward to the confluence of the Bance (Jackson Creek in Clarke County, Alabama) and Alibamont rivers; by the course of the western coast of Mobile Bay, to the mouth of the eastern branch of Tombebee River, and north by the course of said river, to the confluence of Alibamont and Tombebee rivers, and afterwards along the western bank of Alibamont River to the mouth of Chickianoce River, and from the confluence of Chickianoce and Alibamont Rivers, a straight line to the confluence of Bance and Tombebee Rivers ; from thence by a line along the western bank of Bance River, till its confluence with the Tallatukpe River (Tattilaba Creek); from thence, by a straight line to Tombebee River, opposite to Atchalikpe (Hatchatigbee Bluff); and from Atchallikpe, by a straight line, to the most northerly part of Buckatanne River (modern-day Wayne County, Mississippi), and down the course of Buckatanne River to its confluence with the river Pascagoula, and down by the course of the Pascagoula, within twelve leagues of the seacoast (36 miles); and thence, by a due west line, as far as the Choctaw Nation have a right to grant. The treaty also stated that "none of his Majesty's white subjects should be permitted to settle on the Tombebee River to the northward of the rivulet called Centebonck" (Santa Bogue Creek in Washington County, Alabama). Peter Joseph Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile: An Historical Study on the Alabama-Tombigbee Basin and the Old South West from the Discovery of Spiritu Sancto in 1519 until the Destruction of Fort Charlotte in 1821* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910) 184-185.

The Creeks additionally received powder, rum, and other sundry articles for the ten-day return trip to their towns upriver.⁶⁷

The Congress confirmed McGillivray as a man of consequence. Though the acrimonious nature of geopolitical events and internal factionalism in the decade following the Pensacola meeting gradually diminished his image and eroded his political clout, McGillivray's well-documented success at employing traditional Creek play-off strategies against state, federal, and European governments, provided him several years of unrivaled jurisdictional control over the southern Upper Creeks.⁶⁸ Despite his exaggerated claims of being the principal spokesman for all the Creek towns and people, McGillivray's influence was largely confined to the Upper Creeks (Abeikas and Tallapoosas). Simple geography prevented his having much influence among the Lower Creeks or the far-too-distant Seminoles.⁶⁹ His appearance, mannerisms, and command of the English language inspired awe and consideration in Euro-American leaders, but these traits, while seemingly unconventional for a headman, did not come at the expense of Creek traditions. Like his predecessors (Emistisiguo, The Mortar, and Emperor Brims) McGillivray advantageously courted trade and alliances in geographically specific ways, exploited rivalries and weaknesses among outsiders, and unconditionally demanded Creek sovereignty at treaty

⁶⁷ His rank was as a Spanish commissary. For details of the conference see: Caughey, *McGillivray*, "Treaty of Pensacola," June 1, 1784, 75-77; William S. Coker, *Mississippi Provincial Archives Spanish Dominion, 1759-1820, Volume II* (Pensacola: University of West Florida Press, 1978) 170-183, 186-192. For an account of McGillivray's appointment and role at the conference, and the inherent challenges in locating the Panton, Leslie and Company in Pensacola see: Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Borderlands*, 49-72; William S. Coker and G. Douglas Inglis, *The Spanish Census of Pensacola, 1784-1820* (Pensacola: Perdido Bay Press, 1980) 3.

⁶⁸ Braund sensibly uses the anxiety over the White-Sherrill crisis to illustrate this point: "The White-Sherrill crisis had generated a meeting of twenty-six Creek towns. McGillivray was never able to do better." *Deerskins and Duffels*, 171. McGillivray arguably reached his height in power at the New York treaty negotiations with the United States in 1790. See: J. Leitch Wright Jr., "Creek-American Treaty of 1790: Alexander McGillivray and the Diplomacy of the Old Southwest," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 51 (1967): 379-400.

⁶⁹ Brent Richards Weisman, *Like Beads on a String: A Culture History of the Seminole Indians in Northern Peninsular Florida* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1989) 82, 129.

time.⁷⁰

His position as a prominent Creek leader was buttressed by the favors he garnered at such conferences. The treaty with the Spanish at Pensacola essentially allowed him regulatory control over trade to the Upper Creeks. The salaries he received from the Spanish, and later the United States, worked in conjunction with profits shares from the Panton, Leslie and Company, permitting an impressive accumulation of personal property. He regularly distributed trade items from coastal ports in the South to trusted factional and familial supporters, further securing his prestige. He was by all accounts “wealthy” in land, cattle, and African slaves. He employed a white overseer named Abraham Walker and branded his cattle—an unmistakably symbolic gesture of ownership. His residences at Little River and Little Tallassee were permanent dwellings, more exemplary of homes seen in Euro-American rather than Creek towns. They were built with hewn lumber, dormer windows, wood floors, and stone chimneys, not the traditional Creek wattle-and-daub structures common among his neighbors. He practiced race-based slavery, collected books on natural history, and cultivated commodity crops for distant markets. He was ideally suited to represent the new multiethnic leader, a product of cultural and economic frontier syncretization.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Three good summaries of Alexander McGillivray’s political life and rise to leadership are found in: Thomas D. Watson, “Strivings for Sovereignty: Alexander McGillivray, Creek Warfare, and Diplomacy, 1783-1790,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 58 (April 1980): 400-414; Arthur Preston Whitaker, “Alexander McGillivray, 1789-1793,” 5 (April 1928): 289-309; Michael D. Green, “Alexander McGillivray,” 41-63.

⁷¹ Walker seems to have endured a precarious existence on McGillivray’s plantation. Colonel Caleb Swan visited McGillivray in 1791 and records Walker’s presence as an overseer instead of trader was a point of tension with the surrounding Creeks. Walker was benefitting from living under the Creek leader without providing reciprocal benefits to the wider community. Caleb Swan, “State of Arts and Manufactures, with the Creek Indian, in 1791,” in *Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, ed. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (New York: Paladine Press, 1855) 5:692. That these characteristics distinguished Alexander McGillivray from his Creek neighbors is certain. But Claudio Saunt argues that it was his conspicuous accumulation of property and self-interestedness that antagonized other prominent Creek headmen. For Saunt, McGillivray existed as an agent of acculturation. It is important to remember the varied backgrounds and motivations of individual frontier-setting participants. McGillivray was an active part of the negotiation of an evolving Creek identity between colonized and colonizer. In these settings, it was common for individual actors to manipulate a group identity

McGillivray afforded these accommodations through his keen manipulation of territorial pressures and threats. For McGillivray, the Spanish and British-trade firms were preferable to the Georgian alternative. However, simply resisting and protesting land depredations in the East (specifically, the fraudulent cessation of Creek lands in 1783, and the subsequent land treaties of Galphinton and Shoulderbone Creek in 1786), while cozying up with the Spanish in the South and West could not guarantee against similar exploitation from Pensacola and New Orleans in the form of trade shortfalls or restrictions on his partners at the Panton, Leslie and Company. McGillivray's cardinal disposition was securing Creek sovereignty through a secure port of trade. His understanding of geopolitics and the history of the north-central Gulf coast, assured him that the Spanish posed no real territorial threat and would generally honor agreements restricting settlement beyond specific boundaries. As long as the Creeks and McGillivray remained manageable, the Spanish believed their arrangement discouraged possible American designs in the region. But McGillivray saw Creek interests as being separate from the grand colonial schemes of the Spanish and used their own fears of an American invasion as invaluable leverage.

The Spanish frequently warned McGillivray about tempering his encouragement of frontier raids against American settlements. The escalating war along the Georgian corridor was a disconcerting prospect for Spanish officials. It was no secret to American officials that Spanish and Loyalist agents actively traded guns and ammunition to the Creeks and possibly encouraged them to resist American expansion. Enforcing treaty obligations and punishing the increasing

through the process of creolization—"the creation, transformation, and syncretization of new cultural constructs on the frontier." Just as grave and trash middens reveal layered meanings in political alignment near Fort Toulouse in the years before 1763, the possession of manufactured items in the post-Revolutionary era among métis Creeks "is critical to understand how indigenous peoples translate colonial policies and practices into their worldview; to examine the different contexts in which colonial and indigenous interactions take place; and to consider various strategies that may be implemented by newcomers and natives, especially in light of factional politics that underlie multiethnic communities." Lightfoot and Martinez, "Frontiers and Boundaries in Archaeological Perspective" 474.

numbers of encroaching Georgian “fugitive banditti” was acceptable to the Spanish Governor of West Florida, Arturo O’Neill, but prosecuting a comprehensive, prolonged war against the new Republic was potentially dangerous for the Spanish outposts if it sparked an American invasion.⁷² If the Creeks were defeated in battle or weakened through factional strife, a large-scale American offensive into Spanish territory might enkindle a costly international war. As tensions along the eastern corridor escalated, Governor of Louisiane, Esteban Rodríguez Miró, shifted from endorsing McGillivray’s supported raids against the Georgians to condemning them outright. Writing from New Orleans, Miró threatened McGillivray with trade reductions if the Americans launched an invasion. He pressured the métis headman in the cause of peace.⁷³

McGillivray largely ignored these overtures and used his influence to urge other Creek headmen to boycott meetings with Federal and state officials and continue their campaign of frontier harassment against the American trespassers. McGillivray reasoned that there was little reason for the Creeks to fear an organized counter attack from the disorganized young Republic. In early February 1784 he explained to Arturo O’Neill: “The whole Continent is in Confusion. Before long I expect to hear that the three kings [Spain, Great Britain, and France] must Settle the matter by dividing America between them.”⁷⁴

The weaknesses of the new government under the Articles of Confederation were glaringly apparent to McGillivray. The former colonies were disorganized and lacked a national political authority necessary to manage domestic and international affairs. Georgia bitterly opposed intervention from Congress in its dealings with the Creeks, highlighting a persistent regional challenge to the perceived authority of the national government by the new states still

⁷² “McGillivray to O’Neill,” January 1, 1784, “Panton, Leslie and Company Papers,” University of West Florida Papers, (Reel 1); Caughey, “McGillivray to O’Neill,” November 8, 1785, 99; “McGillivray to O’Neill,” November 20, 1784, “Panton, Leslie and Company Papers,” UWF, (Reel 1).

⁷³ Caughey, “Miró to O’Neill,” March 24, 1787, 146-146.

⁷⁴ Caughey, “McGillivray to O’Neill,” February 5, 1784, 68.

operating under the earlier provisions of the Articles that permitted independent negotiations with indigenous nations. When a convention assembled in 1786 to revise the Articles, delegates decided to write an entirely new governing document in the Constitution—focusing on how best to effectively concentrate power with the cooperation of the states in matters of the domestic economy, international diplomacy, and treaty making. Georgia resented surrendering its perceived authority over lands in the West to the Federal government and continued dealing with the Creeks as it always had—a near constant alternating spate of controversial treaties and warfare.⁷⁵

McGillivray exploited the ambiguity of the division of power between Federal and state authorities with regard to western lands and treaty making. The condition of Georgian finances prevented a protracted war with the Creeks, leaving them vulnerable.⁷⁶ For the Georgians, another treaty with the Creeks was necessary to buy time until a more concerted push into western lands was possible. In November 1786, Georgian officials again tried to exact retribution for past crimes by gaining confirmation of recent land cessions with the Creeks and a further atonement of blood through McGillivray's capture and execution.⁷⁷ But the harshness of the treaty at Shoulderbone Creek strengthened factions loyal to McGillivray and necessitated congressional involvement for resolution.

In April 1787, Congress sent the newly appointed southern Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Dr. James White, to meet privately with McGillivray and discuss the ongoing struggle against the Georgians. McGillivray related the history of events, recognized the authority of

⁷⁵ Duane Champagne, *Social Change and Cultural Continuity among Native Americans* (New York: Altamira Press, 2007) 69-70.

⁷⁶ *Senate Executive Journal and related documents*, edited by Linda De Pauw (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1974) 180-182; Downs, "Creek-American Relations," 154-157.

⁷⁷ "Alexander McGillivray to Thomas Pinckney," February 26, 1789, *American State Paper: Indian Affairs* (hereafter cited as *ASPIA*) 1:19-20; Caughey, "McGillivray to O'Neill," April 18, 1787, 149-151.

Congress as a mediator in the dispute, and acknowledged the United States as “our most natural allies.” McGillivray assured Federal commissioners that while the Creeks were geographically encircled by other nations, they maintained close ties with Spain—their only recourse to the South where they received regular trade deliveries and support in the event of war.⁷⁸

Superintendent White reported his findings to Secretary of War, Henry Knox. White concluded that McGillivray’s chief animus was towards the state of Georgia, not the United States. The Creeks made a distinction, considering Georgia a sovereign third party with motives independent of the other states. If Congress interceded on the Creek’s behalf by halting Georgia’s recent claim to lands on the Altamaha River, McGillivray promised to take an oath of allegiance to the new Republic and convince other headmen to do the same. He would also relinquish claims to disputed tracts on the Oconee. McGillivray agreed to a peace until August 1787, allowing Congress time for deliberation on his proposal.⁷⁹

Peace was tenuous, however, and when a resolution to the crisis failed to surface by McGillivray’s stated deadline, Creek hostilities along the Georgia corridor commenced in earnest, continuing throughout 1788. Still unable to adequately defend itself from these assaults, Georgia again asked Congress to intervene with yet another peace commission. McGillivray stubbornly resisted any attempt by these peace commissioners to negotiate the surrender of the Oconee lands ceded during the “New Purchase” tract in 1783 until more could be done to curb what he viewed as Georgian aggressions. He made it clear that an abdication of Creek

⁷⁸ *ASPIA* 1:19-20, “Alexander McGillivray to Thomas Pinckney,” February 26, 1789. McGillivray relays much of these proceedings a couple years later to Governor Thomas Pinckney. He poignantly reminds Pinckney about the Creek’s relationship with the Spanish near the end of the letter: “[I]f ‘tis determined, as I suspect it is the case, to attempt at a conquest of our country (jointly by the United States and Georgia), we will be found as determined to oppose it. Spain is bound by treaty to protect and support us in our claims and properties; we shant want for means of defense, but I still hope, for I honestly desire, that your influence and power will be used to set every matter to rights in a peaceable manner, rather than to exercise the calamities of war.”

⁷⁹ *ASPIA* 1:21-22. “Dr. James White to Henry Knox,” May 24, 1787; “McGillivray to O’Neill,” April 15, 1788, “Papers of the Panton, Leslie and Company,” Microfilm, Reel 3, Pace Library, University of West Florida.

sovereignty was nonnegotiable and that the earlier treaty (1783) was unsanctioned and invalid. Negotiations with the commissioners stalled as they awaited orders from the new government forming in Philadelphia.⁸⁰ But persistent Spanish trade and diplomatic pressures on McGillivray and his partners in the Panton, Leslie and Company forced him to consider other alternatives for resupply.⁸¹

McGillivray was also not immune to pressures from rival Creek factions. A combination of his having less influence among the Lower Creeks along with a decrease in the amount of commercial traffic into Creek country, ushered in new competitors bent on challenging his authority to speak for all the towns. The Tame King (Hoboithle Micco) of Tallassee and the Fat King (Neha Micco) of Cusseta were the most prominent Lower Creek headmen that opposed McGillivray's efforts to reverse the treaties at Augusta (1783), Galphinton (1785), and Shoulderbone Creek (1786). No doubt vying for opportunities all their own through a renewed Augusta trade, these headmen persistently undermined McGillivray by denying his racial legitimacy, welcoming Georgian bribes, and blindly accepting promises of mutual territorial respect.⁸²

McGillivray's correspondence indicates that he viewed Lower Creek factions as little more than annoyances. He rationalized their behavior as self-serving, foolish, and cowardly. He reasoned they were simply taking advantage of his great distance from their towns and allowing

⁸⁰ Caughey, "McGillivray to Miró," September 20, 1788, 199-202.

⁸¹ The Spanish learned of his activities with the Americans. Miró claimed McGillivray's behavior was "strange and incriminating." He was suspicious of McGillivray's behavior with the Americans not so much for fear of a rival alliance to the one he had made with the Spanish in 1784, but a desire to establish competing commercial ties in the east via Savannah and Charlestown. It is clear from this letter that Miró understands McGillivray might be punishing the Spanish for chastising him in his war with the Georgians. Caughey, "Miró to Ezpeleta," July 28, 1788, 191.

⁸² For McGillivray's comments on the Lower Creeks having been "always" friendly to the American interest see: Caughey, "McGillivray to Favrot," November 8, 1786, 135-136. McGillivray considered the Tame King's faction "very small" and little more than a band of "worthless beggars." Caughey, "McGillivray to Panton," January 12, 1780, 214-215. McGillivray considered those factions undermining his efforts "traitors" against all the Creek towns, Caughey, "McGillivray to Zespedes," November 15, 1786, 138-140.

American officials to coerce over them with empty threats and shows of force.⁸³ McGillivray's principal fear was Georgia's knowledge of his present trade predicament and growing rift with the Spanish.⁸⁴ But the curious appearance of the Maryland-born adventurer, privateer, and former regimental Loyalist captain, William Augustus Bowles, during the summer of 1788 seemingly improved his mood and fortunes. Claiming he had the support of King George III, and Governor of the Bahamas, John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, Bowles offered McGillivray and the Creeks a contingent of soldiers and ample munitions from his Bahamian benefactors to counter Georgian incursions. The implication was clear—Bowles wanted to replace both the Spanish and Panton, Leslie and Company and become the Creek's primary sponsor and connection to Atlantic commerce.⁸⁵

McGillivray wasted no time using Bowles's arrival as leverage against the Spanish, writing to governor Miró that his decision to entertain the adventurer was nothing more than a means of seeking assurance that the Creeks remained "an Independent Nation" and that he was not in violation of the Treaty of Pensacola (1784).⁸⁶ To what degree he believed Bowles's promises of a renewed southern trade corridor are uncertain, but he agreed to meet the man at the Lower Creek town of Coweta and discuss the adventurer's exact purposes. Soon afterwards, McGillivray wrote his Scottish merchant friend, John Leslie, a brief account of the conversation and Bowles's proposition of opening a southern trade via "a port in one of the many channels or bays with which the [West Florida] coast abounds...." Though it was also clear he considered

⁸³ The show of force at Shoulderbone Creek was meant to be especially intimidating. Georgian commissioners were conspicuously accompanied by 1,500 militiamen. Downes, "Creek-American Relations," 154-157.

⁸⁴ Caughey, "McGillivray to Miró," September 20, 1788, 199-202.

⁸⁵ For a complete look at William Augustus Bowles and his beginnings see: J. Leitch Wright, *William Augustus Bowles: Director General of the Creek Nation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010) 1-18. In actuality, Bowles represented something of a Bahamian political syndicate with a vested interest in supplanting the Panton, Leslie and Company.

⁸⁶ Caughey, "McGillivray to Miró," August 12, 1788, 194.

Bowles something of a fraud and troublemaker, McGillivray permitted him to remain among the Lower Creeks—utilizing his presence as a source of constant irritation to the Spanish.⁸⁷

Spanish-Creek relations also worsened as a result of Alabama-Coushatta warriors attacking and raiding Euro-American settlements in the Tombigbee district. The Spanish believed McGillivray was responsible, but he vociferously denied any culpability, touching off a series of heated exchanges between himself and the Spanish commandant of Mobile, Juan Vicente Folch y Juan (or simply Folch). McGillivray rationalized the aggression as the fault of the American settlers in that district, who unlawfully transcended agreed-upon boundaries. But he ultimately denied having any control or influence among the Alabama-Coushattas, likening them to a different people from the Upper and Lower towns falsely claiming “to be the Masters of the Mobile River.” Failing to attend the Pensacola Congress in 1784, the Alabama-Coushattas “are a people Insignificant in Numbers or Consequence. So being out of our reach they Commit disorders on the river.”⁸⁸

The timing of the attacks was poor, as tensions with Georgia escalated that year. Violence along the southern corridor not only sullied relations with the Spanish, but undermined McGillivray’s command of those southern trade channels. Miró believed in McGillivray’s innocence, but urged the headman to reach out to the disgruntled Alabama-Coushatta warriors or

⁸⁷ It is clear from this letter McGillivray started having doubts about Bowles legitimacy and inability to keep his promises. Caughey, “McGillivray to Leslie,” February 8, 1789, 222-223. McGillivray argued that St. Marks legally belonged to the Creeks. The British allegedly transferred control of the area back to the Creeks before the Spanish invaded. Caughey, “McGillivray to Miró,” August 12, 1788, 193-194; Wright *William Augustus Bowles*, 38-40.

⁸⁸ Caughey, McGillivray to O’Neill,” March 1, 1788, 168-170; McGillivray states that the Indians “have real reason to complain. Last winter the Indain hunters drove away three whites who were marking line ten miles from this village and the Coosadas. These whites said that the came from the Tombigbee River and that they intended to establish themselves on the land they were marking and to build a trading house there. Caughey, “McGillivray to Folch,” April 22, 1789, 226-228. The Alabamas-Coushattas did not share the same language with their Upper and Lower Creek neighbors. So in addition to their not joining Upper and Lower towns at treaty congresses or council deliberations, as claimed by McGillivray, there seems to have been a real divide between them and other Creek towns by this time (1788). James Crawford illustrates this division as primarily based on linguistic differences with Upper and Lower Creeks referring to the Alabamas-Coushattas as “stinkards.” James Crawford, *The Mobilian Trade Language* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978) 34, 54, 100.

else trade from the Spanish would be further suppressed. McGillivray eventually agreed to meet with Alabama-Coushatta leaders and convince them to cease assaults against the Tombigbee settlements.⁸⁹ Events shifted in McGillivray's favor though as Congressional peace commissioners organized another attempt to satisfy his ultimate desires for a secure, privileged trade corridor.

While Bowles's early designs came to nothing, McGillivray's embrace of another source of resupply on the Gulf coast along with persistent American efforts to court him caused Governor of West Florida, Arturo O'Neill, considerable consternation. Bowles's mischief in the backcountry, along with McGillivray-ally William Pantón's reasoned arguments concerning Georgia's manifest abuses, eventually brought the métis headman back into Spanish good graces. The Spanish promised him a renewed trade from Pensacola by 1789.⁹⁰ This affirmation strengthened McGillivray's position during negotiations with the Americans at Rock Landing on the Oconee River in the fall of that year. When George Washington's peace commission insisted Georgia's earlier treaty claims be honored, as well as failing to guarantee the Creeks a free port via the Altamaha or St. Mary's rivers, McGillivray felt secure enough in his relationship with the Spanish to abruptly denounce the committee's findings and left the meeting without a formal settlement.⁹¹

McGillivray's position in Creek country rested on his ability to procure valuable manufactures and munitions. The recent trouble along the southern paths and river courses with

⁸⁹ "McGillivray to Folch," May 25, 1789, "Panton, Leslie, and Company Papers," University of West Florida Papers, (Microcopy) Reel 5.

⁹⁰ Caughey, "McGillivray to O'Neill," July 14, 1788, 190.

⁹¹ McGillivray feigned an illness, the desire of his fellow headmen to return for seasonal hunts, and the need to find better pastures to feed their horses to delay proceedings and provide an opening for his eventual removal from the Congress altogether. De Pauw, *Senate Executive Journal*, "Indian Relations – Southern," 226-230. The commissioners reported that McGillivray's faction demanded a conditional peace. Creek sovereignty, discarding the recent treaties with the Georgians, and the opening of a free trade corridor were necessary items for a lasting peace.

the Alabamas-Coushattas underscored his precarious position. Factions among the Lower Creeks continued undermining his schemes to redirect trade away from Augusta. The future of the Panton, Leslie and Company in Pensacola always seemed uncertain, and with worsening Spanish-British relations in 1789, the certitude of that trade was in serious doubt. Additionally, Bowles's enduring efforts abroad gained momentum.⁹² The adventurer increasingly sought to supplant not only the Panton, Leslie and Company as a reliable commercial alternative to the United States, but also McGillivray himself.

To counter growing threats, McGillivray entertained the unthinkable—the southern corridor via Pensacola and Mobile by itself might not maintain either his political position or Creek sovereignty, neither being mutually exclusive in his mind. Another southern port through Georgia was necessary, possibly even at the cost of the treasured Oconee lands ceded during the “New Purchase” treaty in 1783.⁹³ In an effort to renegotiate with the leading Upper and Lower factions, Washington and Henry Knox sent another emissary to McGillivray in the spring of 1790, asking him to reconsider. The Americans assured the Creeks that peace and trade were their only agendas, not new land cessations.⁹⁴

After a three week overland journey to New York in the summer of 1790, the Upper and Lower factional leadership began a grueling adjudication process where McGillivray took center stage in a drama that not only pitted the Creek's against the United States, but also involved rival Lower Creek factional leadership, and agents (secret and public) from Georgia, Great Britain, and Spain. The Americans ultimately wanted exclusive control of the Creek trade. McGillivray

⁹² After leaving Creek country, Bowles and his Creek followers briefly visited Quebec and then London in the fall of 1790 where they hoped to play a role in worsening Anglo-Spanish relations resulting from the Nootka Sound crisis. Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 41-48.

⁹³ *ASPIA* I: 366-367, “Henry Knox to James Seagrove,” September 16, 1793.

⁹⁴ Colonel William Marinus Willet was sent by Washington to carry this message to the Creeks and McGillivray. See: *A Narrative of the Military Actions of Colonel Marinus Willet, Taken Chiefly from His Own Manuscript* (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1831) 94-110.

understood this compromised the earlier Pensacola treaty in 1784 and threatened Creek sovereignty. An agreement to the Americans' terms might result in the Spanish retracting, their own earlier privileges. Once again McGillivray abstained from negotiations, just as he had done at Rock Landing. Recognizing that the trade he enjoyed via Pensacola and Mobile "was one of his principle sources of ... power," the Americans agreed to provide comparable privileges to McGillivray were he to use his resources to convince a sizeable number of the other Creek factional leaders to acquiesce.⁹⁵

When this too failed, Washington sought Senate approval for a series of confidential arrangements not explicitly stated in the treaty, guaranteeing McGillivray and his faction a monopoly over Creek trade through a new duty-free port in Georgia, a ranked commission, and an annual pension of some 1,200 dollars. Other headmen assenting to these terms would also be rewarded with a pension of 100 dollars annually. For the Senate ratifying the treaty, the free port was less of an issue than McGillivray's secret commission as leader of a trade cartel. Washington's "secret clause" simply stated that "it shall be lawful for such persons as the President of the United States shall designate to introduce into and transport through the territory of the United States to the country of the said Creek nation ... wares and merchandise not exceeding in value in any one year sixty thousand dollars."⁹⁶ The implication was that, no man would get this appointment without McGillivray's assent. In exchange, the Creeks would relinquish their claims to the disputed Oconee tract. While the treaty seemingly assured Creek trade in the event of a war between Britain and Spain, and finally brought a measure of peace on the Georgia frontier, it ultimately weakened McGillivray's stature and undermined his credibility

⁹⁵ Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. XVII (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950) 288.

⁹⁶ The provision guaranteed a free commercial outlet that needed renewal every two years. "Secret Articles," in Hunter Miller, ed. *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America* Vol. II (Washington, D.C. Department of State, 1931) 344; Caughey, "McGillivray to Howard," August 11, 1790, 273-276;

with rival Lower Creek factions and his trade partners on the Gulf coast.

Just as McGillivray had asserted the illegitimacy of the 1783 “New Purchase” cessation, the Lower Creeks bemoaned the results of the New York treaty. Of the thirty Creek headmen who accompanied McGillivray to New York, four refused to sign. It is likely those four were Lower Creeks, no doubt angry over McGillivray’s claim to speak for their towns while he ceded the Oconee lands to the Americans.⁹⁷ The Spanish too felt betrayed. As a result, Bowles’s, prestige grew as the British and Spanish governments openly courted him as a possible successor to the Little Tallessee headman. Meanwhile, McGillivray profusely denied abandoning the spirit of earlier treaties with the Spanish or Creek sovereignty during negotiations with Knox.⁹⁸ In his reasoning, he had acted in a traditional way while in New York despite commissions, monopolies, titles, and other bribes—the goals for resupply, security for his lineage and factional support base, and the saliency of his community interests remained forefront. With brewing tensions abroad threatening a dependable trade from the Gulf, the Georgians would surely renew hostilities, perhaps coercing away even more land than what had been taken in previous treaties.

When Bowles reemerged in Creek in country the following year (1791), he used the commissions and land cessations granted at New York as evidence of McGillivray’s duplicity and self-interestedness. He promised new trade from his Bahaman connections, redirected through two new duty free ports: one on the Indian River for the Seminoles and another on the Apalachicola River for both the Upper and Lower Creeks. The increased factional strife in the wake of the New York meeting made these propositions all the more necessary. McGillivray initially understood Bowles’s return as another attempt to simply replace the Panton, Leslie and Company for the sake of his Bahaman cabal. When he learned Bowles intended not only to

⁹⁷ Willett, *Narrative*, 110-112.

⁹⁸ Caughey, “McGillivray to Miró,” February 26, 1791 288-291.

remove the company, but also expel him and usurp his authority among the Upper and Lower factions, McGillivray sent three assassins from his own clan to silence the Anglo-adventurer forever. But when news arrived that his trusted clansmen joined Bowles's growing faction among the Lower Creeks instead, McGillivray collapsed in despair.⁹⁹ Plagued with illnesses most of his adult life, he found it difficult to counter the escalating opposition stemming from his efforts in New York. McGillivray resigned to leave the Creeks altogether lamenting: "I am firmly resolved to move myself, family, & negroes down this [Alabama] River to Little River; I am absolutely worn down with the Life I have lived for ten years past..."¹⁰⁰

When McGillivray died from an unknown illness at the home of his friend, William Panton, in Pensacola on February 17, 1793, Spanish and company officials agonized over his replacement. They feared the Americans would inevitably seize the opportunity presented by McGillivray's death and secure a factional leader of their own choosing.¹⁰¹ Replacing someone as adept at dealing with the changing circumstances facing the Creek people on the eve of the nineteenth century, however, was no easy task and both parties ultimately failed in the end. While McGillivray maneuvered new material realms and practices, he never stopped being Creek—instead he persisted as a Creek métis in a new world by drawing on the past and present material context in which he lived. He simultaneously engaged in and resisted the market economy through his lineally-owned and operated plantations at Little River and bound the burgeoning plantation economy of Georgia behind the old boundaries of earlier treaties. He resisted American expansion of the Tombigbee district north and east of Farmar's plantation, assuring a competitive commercial edge for commodity exchange and political leverage against

⁹⁹ Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 58-60; D.C. Corbitt, trans. and ed. "Papers Relating to the Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1784-1899" in *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 22, (June 1939): 189-190.

¹⁰⁰ Caughey, "McGillivray to Panton," October 28, 1791, 298-300.

¹⁰¹ Caughey, "Panton to Carondelet," February 20, 1793, 354; "Forbes to Durnford," February 23, 1793, 354-355.

rivals foreign and domestic. He also nurtured and manipulated social networks to avoid the impact of the market and political economy of the day. But focusing on individuals can often obscure the many cultural dimensions they inhabited. Individuals such as McGillivray, while certainly instrumental in the process of cultural transformation, did not create social change among the Creeks. They were merely characters in a broader narrative.

Members of McGillivray's prominent lineage continued the contest for control of the southern corridor long after his death. Nephews such as William Weatherford, David Tate, Peter McQueen, and Josiah Francis challenged outside authorities in unique, albeit local ways. They never exercised the political reach of their primogenitor, but each employed strategies to manipulate and direct trade from the South via Mobile and Pensacola, thereby elevating their own prestige through these commercial channels. The matrilineages that linked these new métis men to McGillivray's Tensaw plantations would provide for a brutal, self-destructive fratricidal contest in the very near future.

CHAPTER 8

UNCERTAIN BOUNDARIES AND THE PRICE OF CULTURE: THE EMERGENCE OF THE TENSAW MÉTIS

The métis-operated cattle pens and homesteads at Little River in Tensaw country (modern-day north Baldwin County, Alabama) exemplified fluidity and complexity as the community's members sought to strategically survive and navigate the transformative challenges of a colonial world. Alexander McGillivray and his métis decedents successfully melded traditional Creek property concepts and interests that privileged matrilineal gender norms, with the economic values of neighboring American and Spanish settlements to the West and South. The Little River plantations of Tensaw (hereafter known simply as the Tensaw métis) maintained kinship ties between their community and the southern Upper Creek towns of the interior. Constant social and economic interaction with nearby Euro-American populations capitalized and expanded upon existing inter-communal and interpersonal relationships established decades earlier between older hinterland talwas and coastal markets on the Gulf coast. But more than a collection of innovative Creeks, this neighborhood symbolized a kind of cultural arbitration rather than a faithless accommodation to western social and economic mores. Kinship was a source of strength for this community and allowed its members to reconstitute and reinterpret cultural practices, helping them make sense of "others," while also suiting their own interests.

Competition for trade access (determined through proximity to overland paths and watercourses) determined the location and efficacy of Creek communities. When opportunities became available, entire populations might physically move nearer resource centers—as seen

with the “Ochese Creeks” at the end of the seventeenth century. But this was a rare occurrence and ultimately proved unnecessary after the French arrived and provided a needed counterweight to Carolinian factors in the East. The more common practices of intermarriage and ritualistic adoption extended kinship lines to resource rich peripheries, enhancing hinterland communities in the process. Gaining access to these resources not only brought needed supplies to Creek towns, but also secured the political positions of individuals and their families.

Evidence that factionalism increased among the Creeks as a result of resource/trade scarcity is pervasive in archaeological and historical studies. Creek sectorial groups oftentimes went to extraordinary lengths to circumvent opposing factions for the sake of their towns and lineage. But rather than acting as a divisive force in Creek life, factionalism proved to be an adaptive response to internal and external pressures and an inherent part of social change. The Creeks, perhaps more than any other Southeastern indigenous nation, embodied those changes through their long-term diplomatic successes and internal structural flexibility. This often involved stacking loyalties (quite comfortably) within the same community or individual and recognizing how cultural differences could be simultaneously porous, fluid, and contested.¹

Cross-cutting ethnic boundaries promoted a variety of cultural transformations throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods. Creek towns encouraged commercial outposts and the presence of trade specialists to facilitate intercultural exchanges ranging from the utilitarian to the intimate. The Alabamas’ advocacy for the placement of Fort Toulouse nearest their towns illustrates a willingness to engage market opportunities on their own terms and

¹ Although this is a general summary of earlier chapters, many of these thoughts were shaped after consulting: Kent G. Lightfoot and Antoinette Marinez, “Frontiers and Boundaries in Archaeological Perspective,” in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 471-492; Stephen W. Silliman, “Change and Continuity, Practice and Memory: Native American Persistence in Colonial New England” in *American Antiquity*, 211-230; Mark A. Tveskov, “Social Identity and Culture Change on the Southern Northwest Coast” in *American Anthropologist*, 431-441.

establish equilibrium to British price and military hegemony. The struggle for northern and southern Upper Creek leaders to define the nature of the relationship between their communities and the new British posts along the Gulf coast after the French and Indian War demonstrated a need to reconstitute previous economic and political realities no longer available after the departure of the French. Alexander McGillivray's attempts after 1783 to reassert control over trade alternatives in West Florida and Louisiane through skillful political maneuvering, manipulation, and the use of his mother's town and lineage briefly revived an earlier balance that assured, not only the saliency of his community and family's wellbeing, but also southern Upper Creek territorial and commercial integrity. All of these examples illustrate adaptive responses and are byproducts of internal competition and external pressures that produced hybridized zones of interaction.

Creek communities were fully integrated into the market economy both as places for consumption, production, and (occasionally) extensions of state-authored military will—whether against other Euro-Americans or indigenous nations. Creek leaders adeptly utilized colonial rivalries to their advantage. But outsiders exploited divisions within Creek society, too. Understanding how towns and individuals related to one another and the outside world in this scheme reveals the importance of factional competition in the transformation of Creek life. Factionalism exacerbated cultural transformations as different ethnic groups came into contact with one another through trade, war, and intimacy. Conduits for these types of exchanges could be trading posts, military garrisons, or the deliberate positioning of communities at junctions along principal roads and watercourses. Access to goods through these channels brought certain advantages and opportunities for native and colonial communities alike. Although rare, moving or establishing communities to accommodate favored economic and social linkages ultimately

produced populations of cultural innovators where leaders and towns could enhance their own personal and familial prestige through access to material resources. Creek notions of kinship acted as extensions of these processes.

The métis homesteads of Tensaw country were created for such a purpose. With support from the Spanish, Alexander McGillivray recognized the region's socioeconomic possibilities immediately after the American Revolution.² The established demarcation line separating Creek lands at the "cut-off" (above Major Robert Farnar's abandoned plantation in the Mobile-Tensaw delta), coupled with generous Spanish trade allowances, promised that the largely unsettled territory could supply the needs of Creek towns of the interior and concurrently enhance the status of McGillivray and his family.³ Despite almost constant exposure to market values and other facets of Euro-American culture though, the Tensaw Creeks remained devotedly "Indian." They selectively adopted western cultural traits and practices when it served their purposes to do so, but also maintained strong ties and identities with the older, more culturally homogenous Alabama and Coushatta towns of their matriarch Sehoy I—Coosada and Taskigi.⁴

The Tensaw métis do not appear to have composed a Creek town in the conventional sense. There was no governing micco or local headman, nor was there a town square with a nucleated collection of buildings. The community seems to have been primarily governed by kinship obligations and mutual respect for Creek customs. McGillivray only occasionally resided there. Visitors reported that he spent the summers on his plantation at Little Tallassee and wintered "on the sea coast among the Spaniards leaving his wife, servants and horses at a plantation he has near the Tensaw."⁵ His sisters, too, held multiple residences, choosing to live

² Caughey, "McGillivray to Miró," May 26, 1789, 234-235.

³ Caughey, "McGillivray to O'Neill," February 5, 1785, 99.

⁴ Caughey, "O'Neill to Ezpeleta," October 19, 1783, 62-63; Waselkov, *Conquering Spirit*, 48.

⁵ "Report of Caleb Swan," in Henry R. Schoolcraft, *History of the Indian Tribes of the United States Volume. 5*, 252.

between Tensaw and the interior Alabama towns.⁶ Only his second wife, Elise Moniac, and the couple's three children appear to have lived there on a permanent basis.

Tensaw was a remarkably diverse coterie of innovative Creeks more resemblant of a *talofa*, or daughter town, than the mature talwas of the interior. Splintering of Creek communities was nothing new. Talofas varied in size and number depending on when and where they generated. Historically, these smaller communities might result from overpopulation, declining local resources, factional strife or better trade opportunities elsewhere. Traditional talwas (defined as centralized square-ground townships) often maintained familial connections with these satellite communities over great distances. Talofas might reside a few miles away from the parent talwa or several days travel. However, once a talofa built a town square, it appears it matured into a separate talwa. Regardless, familial ties still linked the two communities.⁷

The Tensaw métis were such an ancillary unit, but never constructed a town square—existing as a collection of dispersed farms and cattle ranches with vested commercial interests in the south and familial ties to towns in the north near the confluence of Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers. Interestingly though, the Tensaw métis occasionally broke with protocol and resisted direct administration from lineal towns of the interior. But much of the friction that resulted from this behavior occurred with the added stresses of American expansionism near the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century.⁸ The Tensaw métis enjoyed the benefits and protections afforded them from family connections in the North, but occasionally resented the subjugated

⁶ Hawkins finds Sophia Durant and Sehoi III (McGillivray's half sister) at towns along the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers. Foster, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 37s, 39s-40s. This seems consistent with their having kinship ties to these towns.

⁷ Speculation as to why this occurred varies. See: Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 95-96.

⁸ In March 1809, Tourculla or "Captain Isaacs" from Coosada tried to exact financial tribute from a Tensaw métis named Dixon Bailey, who operated a successful ferry on the Alabama River. Isaacs demanded Bailey pay him 100.00 dollars, treating him as he would a foreigner living in the Creek nation. Bailey refused to pay inciting a violent altercation between Bailey and the warriors assisting Isaacs. Albert J. Pickett Papers, "Pickett Family Papers," (1779-1904), LPR185, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama, Box 2, Folder 12. The story with quotes is recounted with quotes in Karl Davis, "*Much of the Indian Appears*," 140-141.

status as a daughter community. By the turn of the nineteenth century, an economic rivalry characterized much of the factional competition between these interrelated two groups of southern Upper Creeks.⁹ As products of frontier syncretization, the Tensaw métis increasingly exercised a confident independence in economic and social matters through the incorporation of outsiders and adoption of western market values.

Exclusive trade privileges cannot alone account for the region's rapid prosperity.. Selective marriages between acculturated métis families, the careful incorporation/adoption of foreigners into their community, and insistences that these newcomers honor Creek protocol at the risk of banishment or worse, all contributed to a consolidation of wealth within a relatively limited social circle. A survey of the prominent family names among them attests to the strong relationships and personal wealth built through inter-marital bonds. Names such as Weatherford, Durant, Tate, Moniac, Bailey, Stiggins, Randon, and McGirth pervade histories of the ensuing Creek War (1813-1814) as well as Removal era court documents and contested land titles in the 1820s and 1830s.¹⁰

McGillivray's purposeful location of familial-owned and operated plantations at the southwest corner of the Creek Nation (nearer Mobile and Pensacola than any other Creek town) gave his primary residence at Little Tallassee control over trade and diplomacy via the southern corridor to the Gulf coast. This community's commitment to indigenous gender norms through

⁹ For Waselkov, this tension to escape the oversight of the talwa largely accounts for the irrepressible events leading to the Creek War in 1813. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 53-55.

¹⁰ Early histories include: Thomas Woodward, *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indian* (Montgomery, AL: Barrett & Wimbish, Book and General Job Printers, 1859); H. S. Halbert and T. H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813-1814* (Chicago: Donohue & Henneberry, 1895); T. H. Ball, *A Glance into the Great South-east: Or, Clarke County, Alabama and Its Surroundings from 1540 to 1877*; Albert J. Pickett, *History of Alabama*, 342-588; Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 16-55; Claudio Saunt, "Taking Account of Property," 450-452; Karl Davis, "Much of the Indian Appears," 162-202.

clan governance was its most distinct feature.¹¹ Not only did matrilineal kinship ties link Tensaw's inhabitants with the southern Upper towns, but women cultivated crops in the customary Creek way, fields were vested in matrilineages, and female relatives stubbornly reserved their rights to property and familial descent. Meanwhile, men occupied the traditional spheres of trade, diplomacy, and war. McGillivray encouraged his female relatives to wed savvy Euro-American outsiders willing to obey Creek customs and extend the community's connections with distant markets through their own commercial acumen. Marriages anchored McGillivray's familial position in the area north of Mobile and Pensacola, guaranteeing the perpetuation of a métis leadership coalition able to strategically engage and suppress rival factional interests and larger threats to Creek sovereignty through the command of geographic trade corridors. These couples were married according to conventional Creek laws, beyond the purview of Christian doctrine.¹² While Creek families closely regulated the behavior of their Euro-American husbands, these men also benefitted from the protection provided by McGillivray's clan and the attendant commercial indulgences brought through his extensive

¹¹ An anti-Redstick Natchez métis, George Stiggins, who lived among the Tensaw Creeks remarked that "the strongest link in their political and social standing as a nation is in their clanship or families by their observance of it they are so untied that there is no part of the nation detached from the other, but are all linked harmonized and consolidated as one large connected family." Theron Nunez Jr. "Creek Nativism and the Creek War of 1813-1814. Part 2" (Stiggins Narrative Continued) *Ethnohistory* 5 (Spring 1958): 132-133. Critical of Creek men and their unwillingness to adopt sedentary farming practices, Hawkins remarked: "they [Creek men] view with surprize[sic] their great beloved friend and father the agent of the four nations offering them cotton and flax seed, ploughs, spinning wheels, cards and looms, with instructions in the useful branches of mechanics and agriculture. They were extremely jealous of their women, who are slaves and destined to every office of labor and fatigue. They will not suffer the least intercourse with them, fearing that by being able to cloathe themselves, they will attempt to break the chains which degrade them." Foster, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810*, edited by Thomas Foster II (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2003) 57.

¹² This custom was described by agent Benjamin Hawkins in *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 73s. There was a Catholic mission located at Fort San Esteban/St. Stephens by 1789. Lorenzo Dow was likely the first Protestant minister to serve the Tensaw-Tombigbee settlements when he passed through in 1803. The region's inhabitants were generally viewed as irreligious though he remarked that the settlements "will one day become the glory of the southern part of the United States...the inhabitants are English, but are like sheep without a shepherd...since it fell to us, seems to be in a hopeful way, and there is still room for great amendment." Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite or the Writings of the Reverend Lorenzo Dow* (Cincinnati: Applegate, 1854) 161-164.

diplomatic campaigns waged largely on their behalf.¹³

McGillivray's command of the territory was not unrivaled though. External threats from Anglo-American settlers in the Tombigbee district occasionally encroached on Creek lands—defying his authority, Creek territorial sovereignty, and the dictums of Spanish law that ideally prevented them from trespassing. Liberal Spanish settlement inducements brought scores of Anglo-Americans to the Tombigbee district after the American Revolution. McGillivray initially supported these measures, believing restless Anglo-American settlers might check conceited Spanish pretensions with regard to the Creeks. He quickly reversed his position, however, as border violence and squatter impudence jeopardized his delicate political and economic arrangements. McGillivray, complained to Spanish Governor, Arturo O'Neill in 1785, that there were "settlers enough already" in the Tombigbee district.¹⁴

Other Creeks from rival towns and factions also openly defied McGillivray's presumptive control over the southern trade corridors and borderlands. Groups such as the Alabamas wantonly attacked and raided Anglo-American settlements, evoking their perceived claim to the region and its boundaries.¹⁵ Their mischief temporarily darkened relations between the Spanish and McGillivray, threatening a commercial embargo on the Creeks. Accounts of savage acts of murder and banditry along the southern paths and river courses to Mobile and Pensacola abound in documents from the period. When crimes against individuals allegedly traveling and trading under McGillivray's protection occurred, retribution was swift, symbolic, and executed by

¹³ Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 39-42; Caughey, "McGillivray to O'Neill," December 3, 1786, 140-141; Caughey, "McGillivray to Miró," January 10, 1788, 166-167. McGillivray worried his sisters might fall prey to unscrupulous outsiders and labored to protect them from abuse. Caughey, "McGillivray to O'Neill," March 1, 1788, 170.

¹⁴ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Borderlands*, 122-123; Caughey, "McGillivray to O'Neill," November 8, 1785, 99.

¹⁵ Caughey, "McGillivray to Folch," April 22, 1789, 226-228; "Miró to McGillivray," May 11, 1789, 228-230; "McGillivray to Folch," May 14, 1789, 230-232; "Miró to McGillivray," May 22, 1789, 232-233.

relatives with familial obligations. United States agent to the Creeks, Benjamin Hawkins, related one such incident where a Loyalist named Colonel Kirkland (a friend of McGillivray's), the man's nephew, and other assorted "gentlemen" departed McGillivray's home at Little Tallassee for Pensacola. The party traveled under the protection of a trusted, well-known black slave of McGillivray's that "would assure the Indians that they were friends." When the party reached a small stream in Tensaw country aptly named Murder Creek (modern-day Conecuh County, Alabama), they encountered another group heading north along the same path from Pensacola. The north-bound party consisted of a Creek man named Istillacha (known as the Manslayer) from Hillabee town, a fugitive American named John Catt, and "a blood-thirsty negro, named Bob." Kirkland's party was later slaughtered by the north-bound group as they slept near their encampments.

When news of the incident reached Little Tallassee, McGillivray quickly exercised familial obligations for restoration of order and dispatched his French brother-in-law, Louis LeClerc Milfort, and maternal uncle Red Shoes to apprehend those responsible. It is unclear why, but only the American fugitive John Catt was pursued and captured. After conferring with McGillivray, Milfort took Catt back to the scene of the crime some "10 miles over the old English line, and hung him on the first convenient limb over the path" in sight of the other still decomposing victims. When Catt's corpse was eventually cut down after more than a week, the murderer was left to rot and fester alongside the murdered—a statement of retributive justice underscoring McGillivray's authority over those with business on the Gulf coast.¹⁶

As a métis community that remained committed to matrilineal customs, the Tensaw settlements also cross-cut numerous colonial-indigenous cultural boundaries, embracing their place at the front lines of frontier syncretization in the Southeast. The community was ideally

¹⁶ Foster, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 79-81; Pickett, *Alabama*, 383-384.

suiting for ranching and cutting-edge agricultural practices for the time. The presence of cattle in Creek country was a direct consequence to the much-documented, decades-long contracting deerskin trade.¹⁷ Only wealthy, well-connected Creek/métis leaders could afford large grazing herds of livestock.¹⁸ By the end of the American Revolution, travelers occasionally recorded seeing cattle and other domesticated animals among the Creeks. Surveyor Bernard Romans observed numbers of “small cattle, hogs, turkeys, ducks, and dunghill fowls [poultry]” as he traveled through the Lower Creek towns.¹⁹

Agent Benjamin Hawkins often noted with satisfaction the growing industriousness of his Creek clients with regard to animal husbandry in general. But perhaps nothing was more transformative to the traditional arrangement of the Creek town than large-scale cattle herding. However, roaming bovine risked incurring the wrath of local matrilineages as they trampled and consumed fields of subsistence crops necessary for the town’s survival. Herds (when kept) were, therefore, located far from town centers where they could freely graze in the open forests and canebrakes of the region’s numerous river basins.²⁰

On his travels throughout Creek country, Hawkins often noted the anxiety cattle-raising caused Creek populations of the interior. On a visit to the home of Anglo-trader Richard Bailey in the southern Upper Creek town of Autossee in 1796, Hawkins encountered a family who seemingly represented the ideal in acculturated Creek families. During a dinner conversation with the family, Hawkins later noted that several years previous, Bailey and his wife Mary “were

¹⁷ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 178-188; Ethridge, 137-139. Creek agent Benjamin Hawkins believed the declining deerskin trade would assist his assimilationist agenda and consummate a more centralized governing structure over the Creeks in the form of the National Council: “the skin and fur trade is on the decline, and the wants of the Indians are increasing. I believe I shall find no difficulty in establishing a national council, to meet once a year, at the town of my residence.” “Hawkins to the Secretary of War,” in Foster, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 56-57.

¹⁸ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 49.

¹⁹ Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History*, 92-93.

²⁰ For a description on the grazing ranges and the nature of cattle and changing settlement patterns among the Creeks see: Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 164-165.

under the necessity to move to Tensaw, on account of their [cattle] stock, and the ill nature of the Indians, who always have had fences are in the habit of distroying [sic] hogs and cattle whenever they trespass on the fields under cultivation. By this removal the town was three years without a trader and the Indians sent several messages to them to return, but Mrs. Bailey said she would not unless their stock could be secure, and it should be left to Mr. Bailey to choose his place of residence near the town. The Indians sent their king to confirm this agreement, which they adhere to with some little murmuring at the largeness and increase of his stock.”²¹ The residents of McGillivray’s dispersed settlements in the Mobile-Tensaw delta were ideally suited for raising large numbers of livestock and the Baileys’ time there accommodated those purposes

While the cattle trade served as the initial economic catalyst for formalized Creek settlement in Tensaw by the late 1770s, commodity crop cultivation flourished there by 1800, affording its métis inhabitants an enviable accumulation of propertied wealth.²² Soon after the turn of the century, New Englander John Pierce further demonstrated Tensaw’s distinction when he established the region’s first school for the “high-blood descendents of Lachlan McGillivray.” Jewish resident, Abram Mordecai, underscored the latent economic potential of the Tensaw community when he brought the first cotton gin in 1802. These western innovations, however, only came with official sanction from the Upper Creek talwas. Outsiders violated the governance of the towns at their own risk. When Mordecai broke Creek law by having an affair with a married Creek woman, Coosada headman, Tourculla (popularly known as Captain Isaacs), exacted appropriate justice when he and twelve other warriors converged on the trader’s house and “knocked him down, thrashed him about with poles, cut off his ear, and left him to the care

²¹ C. L. Grant, *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1980), December 25, 1796, 1:28.

²² Claudio Saunt, “Taking Account of Property: Stratification among the Creek Indians in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (October 2000): 450-452.

of his wife.” They then turned their aggression towards his source of economic security when they “broke up his boat, and burned down his [cotton] gin-house.”²³

The Anglo-Americans who settled on the west side of the Mobile-Tensaw delta offered a sharp contrast to their métis counterparts. On his special mission to serve as the Mississippi Territory’s first Superior Court Judge in May 1804, New Englander Ephraim Kirby noted the distinction: “This settlement [Tensaw and Tombigbee] may be computed at about two hundred families; fifty or sixty of which are on the east side of the Mobile [River], called the Tensaw settlement, and extends upwards to a place called the cut off [at Farmar’s plantation] about eight miles above the confluence of the Alabama and the Tombigbee. This is much the most opulent and respectable settlement in the country.” Meanwhile, the disparity of the Anglo-American settlements “has long afforded an asylum to those who prefer voluntary exile to the punishments ordained by law for heinous offenses. The present inhabitants (with very exceptions) are illiterate, wild and savage, or depraved morals, unworthy of public confidence or private esteem; litigious, disunited, and knowing each other, universally distrustful of each other.” Kirby’s illustrations further segment the Tombigbee district as consisting of a small number of resident French émigrés, Loyalist refugees, fugitives from justice, and itinerant debtors.²⁴

The Tombigbee settlements had neither school nor the economic privileges necessary for

²³ Karl Davis, *Much of the Indian Appears*, PhD Diss., 88-124; Albert J. Pickett, *History of Alabama*, 469. Pickett describes the composition of the community at the end of the eighteenth century as a thriving, innovative, and multiethnic: “There [Tensaw] the high-blood descendents of Lachlan McGillivray, the Taits, Weatherfords and Durants, the aristocratic Linders, the wealthy Mims’s were strangely mixed in blood, and their color was of every hue.” Pickett in an interview with Mordecai: Pickett, *History of Alabama*, 470.

²⁴ Clarence Edwin Carter, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, The Territory of Mississippi, 1798-1817* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937-1938) “Ephraim Kirby to President Thomas Jefferson,” 5:322-326. For Jefferson’s views on the region and its economic potential see: Frank L. Owsley Jr. and Gene A. Smith, “to Conquer without War”: The Philosophy of Jeffersonian Expansion,” in *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997) 16-31.

the export of their marketable commodities.²⁵ Kirby further observed that Spanish officials in Mobile required duties as high as twelve and half percent on American goods sent downriver for export. Additionally frustrating was the reality that the Tombigbee settlements were politically and geographically isolated. Without access to a viable river, American farmers were forced to carry their produce overland to New Orleans or Natchez at great financial and personal risk. Kirby confessed to President Thomas Jefferson that “it must become of the greatest importance to the Government and all the commercial towns of the U.S. that there be a road opened [to these settlements] so as to render communication as speedy as possible.”²⁶

On his official mission to survey the 31° parallel after the signing of the Treaty of San Lorenzo in 1803, Andrew Ellicott underscored the potential value in the region when he stated that “Notwithstanding the favourable situation of those cities [Mobile and Pensacola], they can never be of much consequence but from the settlement of the country north of the boundary, which has greatly the advantage in point of soil and climate.” Left alienated from the rest of the nation, however, and the settlements were of little consequence to anyone. With the proper attention, conventional thinking argued that the Tensaw district was “of immense consequence when viewed as possessing all the avenues of commerce to, and from a large productive country ... because that power, which holds the avenues of commerce, may give a tone to the measures of another, should it be unfriendly to liberty, and a public happiness.”²⁷

Spanish imperial ambitions in the region, however, depended on strong, exclusive commercial and diplomatic ties with the Creeks. This certainly came at the expense of the

²⁵ John Forbes (the Panton, Leslie and Company’s Mobile store director) asked Spanish officials for permission to export corn and lumber from the American settlers of the Tombigbee district in exchange for needed salt deliveries from the Turks and Caicos Islands. Governor Miró disapproved of the suggestion, not wanting to infringe on the arrangement he had with the Creeks. “Miró to Folch,” November 2, 1790, *Archivo General de Indias, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba* (hereafter cited as *AGI PC*), legajos 7, Library of Congress; “Panton to Miró,” August 6, 1790, *AGI PC*, leg., 203, Library of Congress.

²⁶ Carter, *The Territorial Papers*, “Ephraim Kirby to President Thomas Jefferson,” 5:317-318.

²⁷ Andrew Ellicott, *The Journal of Andrew Ellicott* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962) 237-238.

conveniently close Anglo-American farmers north of Mobile. McGillivray's political acuity secured these lucrative trade concessions for the Creeks through a Spanish surrogate in the Panton, Leslie and Company.²⁸ His silent partnership with the Scottish firm and his recognition of the inherent geographic benefits of the paths and river courses leading to Mobile and Pensacola from Creek towns of the interior made the decision to locate commercial operations at the confluence of the Alabama-Tombigbee rivers decidedly simple.

Tensaw household dynamics also reflected a unique blend of frontier syncretization. Examining daily practices reveals underlying values and belief systems reflected in how these people organized their daily lives. Hawkins encountered a marvelous, Tensaw-influenced cultural hybridity at the home of trader Richard Bailey. The Creek women of the home engaged in enterprising work. Bailey's wife, Mary, a member of the Wind clan, was described as "neat, cleanly, prudent and economical, as careful of her family concerns as a white woman." Hawkins believed these women might serve his broader "civilization" purposes through their influence on other Creek men. "Mrs. Bailey shares in all the toils of her husband when there was a necessity for it. She attended the pack horses to market, swam rivers to facilitate the transportation of their goods, is careful of the interest of her family and resolute in support of it." When Hawkins asked her about the possibility of replicating her family's example on other Creeks in the area, Mary replied that she was "uncertain" and that "her daughters had learnt to spin [cotton] among the white women, at Tensaw, were cleanly, neat and industrious. That many of the Indian women were industrious, but not cleanly, nor so provident and careful as the white women." Hawkins concluded that her response "might be owing to want of information, and the means of helping themselves," choosing to accept a unidirectional model of acculturation for lifestyles among the

²⁸ John Forbes effectively took over the company after William Panton death in February 1801. "John Forbes to Marqués de Casa Calvo," April 29, 1801, *AGI PC*, leg., 203, Library of Congress.

Creeks. He failed to appreciate how Mary Bailey's adoption of certain cultural practices and values were creatively modified by encounters with others.²⁹

When news arrived that Alexander McGillivray had succumbed to an illness as he traveled the southern path to Pensacola from his cow pens in Little River to visit his friend and merchant-partner William Panton, his sisters quickly divided his property among themselves and their families, according to Creek custom. Much to the chagrin of Panton, McGillivray died in considerable debt to the company. Despite possessing sixty-six slaves, three hundred head of cattle and numerous horses, the métis leader's debts totaled more than \$9,000.³⁰ With years of experience dealing with the Creeks, Panton must have known exacting arrears of this magnitude would not be easy. Desirous of payment and duty-bound to communicate the details surrounding McGillivray's death, Panton wrote Lachlan McGillivray (still living in a self-imposed exile amongst his clan in Scotland), revealing a tender affection for his deceased friend and his now virtually destitute métis children.³¹ Panton hoped Lachlan might assist in compensating for the company's financial losses, but mostly wanted to inform the former Scots trader that his grandson, Alexander "Aleck" McGillivray II, was of school age and needed an education. "The boy, Aleck is old enough to be sent to Scotland to school, which I intend to do next year, and then you will see him." But his letter also caustically chided the behavior of Lachlan's métis daughters: Sophia, Jeannette, and Sehoi III (Alexander's maternal half-sister). The sisters ignored their brother's last will and testament which, according to Panton, provided for his

²⁹ Foster, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 31s, 39-40; Martha R. Severens and Kathleen Staples, "Benjamin Hawkins and the Creek Indians: A Study in Jefferson's Assimilation Policy," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 29 (Winter 2003): 27-28. For context on Hawkins's many visits to the Upper Creek towns, see Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 69; Kent G. Lightfoot, Antoinette Martinez and Ann M. Schiff, "Daily Practice and Material Culture in Pluralistic Social Settings: An Archaeological Study of Culture Change and Persistence from Fort Ross, California," *American Antiquity*, 2 (April 1998): 199-222; Lance Greene, "Identity in a Post-Removal Cherokee Household, 1838-1850," in Plane and Greene, *American Indians and the Market Economy, 1775-1850*, 53-66.

³⁰ Albert J. Pickett, "Pickett Manuscript," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, 1 (1930): 146.

³¹ Caughey, "William Panton to Lachlan McGillivray," April 10, 1794, 362-363.

children (a son and two daughters) above all else. While he considered the sister's behavior "unjust and cruel in the extreme," Panton reserved the greatest scorn for "the Villany[sic] of [Benjamin] Durant and [Charles] Weatherford who are their husbands."³² Either unfamiliar with matrilineal customs (which is unlikely), or perhaps hoping to settle his own accounts and provide for his deceased friend's children, Panton asked for Lachlan's intervention. Apparently no reply survives. Nothing proves Lachlan compensated Panton for his financial losses or made contact with his grandson Aleck once he attended the nearby boarding school at Banff in Aberdeenshire. McGillivray's second wife, Elise Moniac, who resided at Little River in Tensaw, died within a year of her husband. She left the two young métis daughters under the care of their maternal uncle, Sam Moniac.³³

In the years immediately after McGillivray's death, two stark prospects governed conventional thinking regarding the future of indigenous civilizations east of the Mississippi River: removal and assimilation. Outright removal was unthinkable for most Creeks living in the years before the Creek War (1813-1814), though migrations among them were not uncommon. Waves of Alabamas had voluntarily removed themselves west into modern-day eastern Texas and Louisiana after the French vacated Fort Toulouse in late 1763.³⁴ The Seminoles migrated to Spanish Florida during the mid-eighteenth century, forming independent polities there. With American settlements increasingly encircling Creek country, a declining market for and availability of deerskins, made other options for subsistence more attractive.

³² Pickett, "Pickett Manuscript," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 1 (1930): 146-147.

³³ Alexander McGillivray II or "Aleck" traveled to Banff, Scotland in 1795 for formal education. He was accompanied by David Tate—his Tensaw métis cousin. Historian Amos J. Wright reasons that Lachlan's avoidance of his métis grandson was likely rooted in a desire to restrict the boy's access to his Scottish-family's estate. Panton paid for the boy's education and living expenses. When Panton died in 1801, his partner, John Leslie, assumed responsibility. "Aleck" died of tuberculosis in 1802. Amos J. Wright, *The McGillivray and McIntosh Traders: on the Old Southwest Frontier, 1716-1815* (Montgomery: NewSouth Books, 2001) 237, 270-271.

³⁴ Sheri Shuck-Hall, *Journey to the West*, 106-125, 133-136.

Hawkins happily recorded in his journals and letters numerous requests from Creek leaders for various tools and farming implements. In a letter to Secretary of War, Henry Dearborn, Hawkins wrote: “I have never known the [Creek Nation] generally better disposed towards us than they are now, nor near so much occupied as they are at present in procuring food and clothing by their industry. Among the Lower Creeks particularly, the determination is general to try the wheel [spinning wheel], the Loom and the plough.”³⁵ Somewhat isolated from the market influences of Hawkins’s agency and European ports on the Gulf coast, Upper Creek towns remained reticent to this type of experimentation. Town headmen redistributed farming implements and other subsidy items exclusively among kin and factional patrons, worsening an already growing disparity between the affluent and impoverished extant in Creek country in the years after the American Revolution. As an avid assimilationist and disciple of the Enlightenment, Hawkins naturally believed that through this equipment and a dedication to western property concepts, the Creeks might acculturate to American society and prove docile and governable. Of course, the more sinister premise underlying the so-called “civilization plan” was ultimately to replace Creek hunting habits with farming ones, alleviating their need for vast tracts of territory.

Mastery of paths and river courses had historically strengthened and empowered Creek communities and leadership figures. By the early nineteenth century, however, these same

³⁵ Hawkins’s agency headquarters moved at various times, but stayed almost exclusively among the Lower Creek towns in the Chattahoochee River Valley. Nearness to the agency certainly exposed those adjacent to cultural transformations similar to those adopted by the Tensaw Creeks. The Lower towns seemed more willing to adopt Western farming and property concepts than their Upper town counterparts. This is seemingly reflected in the ensuing Creek War. Traditionalist-Red Stick factional leaders found far less support among the Lower Creeks (many of whom fought alongside the Americans in numerous battles throughout the war) than the Upper Creeks. Quote found at: Grant, *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, “Hawkins to Dearborn,” January 7, 1809, 2:548. For more on this apparent disparity see: Ross Hassig, “Internal Conflict in the Creek War of 1813-1814,” 21 (Summer 1974): 251-271; When discussing the diluted Red Stick influence in the Lower towns, Hawkins wrote: “The fanatical fright [of the prophets] seems to subside a little among the Lower Creeks, and all of them, apparently are again friendly.” Grant, *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, “Hawkins to Armstrong,” July 13, 1813, 2:646.

avenues created a catalogue of strains, fissures, and threats to Creek sovereignty. The Southeast's ever-changing geopolitical circumstances inaugurated a volatile first decade of the nineteenth century that imperiled the continuity of traditional arrangements. New treaties established new boundaries. New roads bore through Creek country carrying populations eager to appropriate opportunities for themselves and their families. Through cultural adoption, borrowing, and adjustment, the Creeks mostly reacted and resisted as they had for over two centuries. But these developments also deepened factional tensions among a new generation of Creek leaders, desperate to assert themselves in creatively masculine ways.

The pervasiveness of Anglo-American settlement worked in conjunction with a weakening Spanish presence along the Gulf coast, undermining Creek play-off strategies.³⁶ After finally luring the crafty William Augustus Bowles out in the open in 1803, a joint Spanish-American taskforce captured the adventurer near the remnants of Fort Toulouse, where he was briefly imprisoned awaiting armed transport downriver to Mobile. His consequent final departure from the Southeast and eventual death while imprisoned in Havana, Cuba may have removed the final asset for Creek headmen hoping to capitalize on the disruption his schemes caused.³⁷ Soon after Bowles's arrest, merchant John Forbes enacted an aggressive land seizure to settle years of uncollected debts between the Creeks and the former Panton, Leslie and Company, soon-to-be John Forbes Company.³⁸

Policing the disputed borders between the United States and Spanish West Florida was costly and potentially dangerous as Spain approached war with Great Britain. Still hoping to avoid confrontation with the United States and prevent a possible Anglo-American alliance

³⁶ Ellicott, *The Journal of Andrew Ellicott*, 237. Ellicott notices the declining deerskin trade and remarks that this must account for the waning statuses of Mobile and Pensacola in the years after the American Revolution.

³⁷ Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 166-171.

³⁸ For a detailed account of the measures taken by Forbes see: Coker and Watson, "Resolution of the Indian Debts," *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Borderlands*, 243-272.

against Spain, officials in Madrid opened negotiations for settlement of the contentious border issues dividing the two countries. The subsequent Treaty of San Lorenzo (1795) formally established the boundary issue between the two countries at the 31° north latitude, constituting the present-day state line separating Georgia and Florida.³⁹ The treaty also opened the Mississippi River to American commercial traffic and stipulated mutual jurisdiction over the Southeastern nations so as to prevent intrigues and sponsored Indian attacks across the frontier. The following year, the Treaty of Colerain (signed near the St. Mary's River in Georgia) reaffirmed the earlier McGillivray-approved Treaty of New York (1790). The accord established a formal boundary between the United States and the Creeks. More alarmingly to William Panton though was the treaty's provision permitting the United States to organize a potentially competitive trade factory system in the Southeast, principally with his client the Creeks. Expressing doubts about his long-term prospects in Pensacola, Panton informed Spanish officials that his business must "either submit to absolute ruin or bow our knees to those whom we have much offended and endeavor to soften their resentment in the best manner we Can."⁴⁰ Panton momentarily considered defecting to the United States by petitioning Congress in New York to either save his business with a buyout or his citizenship.⁴¹

With the organization of the Mississippi Territory (1798) and subsequent Louisiana Purchase (1803), the establishment of roads connecting older eastern states with new western lands promised national prosperity and security and would open what one visionary would later

³⁹ Arthur Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier: The Westward Movement and the Spanish Retreat from the Mississippi Valley* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927) 204-205. For an account of the mission see: Andrew Ellicott, *The Journal of Andrew Ellicott*.

⁴⁰ The Anglo-Spanish War encumbered Panton's trade more than the American factory system. American prices were higher and they discouraged bribing headmen for trade concessions, or extending lines of credit. D.C. Corbitt, trans. and ed. "Papers Relating to the Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1784-1799" in *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 24 (June 1939): 262-263.

⁴¹ Forbes Papers, "Panton to Robert Leslie," July 18, 1796, Mobile Public Library.

write: “a vast emporium of commerce” in the Southeast.⁴² Developing lands and obtaining a southern trade corridor to the Gulf of Mexico was a national enterprise that promised to relieve American anxiety about coordinated British and Spanish intrigues, as well as eliminate a safe haven for escaping African slaves. But concessions with the principal leaders of the Southeast were necessary to obtain these goals. Roads were marquee'd as neutral spaces for communication and settlement purposes in lands west of Creek country. Proponents of the new roads argued that travelers would harmlessly pass through, but if they were harassed in any way or tolls extorted from them during their journey by “bad Creeks,” punishments would follow. Federal officials argued that travelers using existent Indian paths and trails created confusion and conflict. New roads promised to safely and quickly carry Anglo-American settlers, their commerce, and communication through Indian country without incident.⁴³ The Chickasaws, Cherokees, and Choctaws (respectively) granted permission to build what would be known as the Natchez Trace through their country in 1801.

As an added inducement for Creek support of the internal improvement project, President Thomas Jefferson assured an assembly of headmen on an official visit to the new capital city at Washington D.C., that the roads offered special opportunities for enterprising Creeks willing to establish stops and other conveyances (hostelries, taverns, and ferries) along the way. Under the guidance and influence of new métis leadership figures such as William McIntosh (of the Lower Creek town of Coweta), the Creeks eventually and reluctantly acquiesced to the construction of a road through their territory in 1805. McIntosh was quick to warn Jefferson of the potential pitfalls attendant with such a radical change in the regional geography. “We are fully acquainted with the dispositions of our Bad People—we fear it would be attended with bad consequences to

⁴² “The Following Sketch...,” from the Nashville *Clarion*, in *Niles' Weekly Register* (September 26, 1812): 52-53.

⁴³ “Talk of President Jefferson and Creek Indians,” November 3, 1805, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Microfilm M-15, reel 2, 75-76.

our nation, owing to the hostile acts that might be committed by ungovernable people.” He urged Jefferson contentment with American’s using the already existent Indians paths until he could muster enough support for the road from other headmen.⁴⁴

Originally designated as a postal route through the Indian frontier, the Federal Road became a dynamic feature in the geography of the Southeast. Like previous frontier roads in places like Kentucky, the Federal Road through Creek country ushered a new era of national expansion, communication, and exploitation of indigenous inhabitants.⁴⁵ Métis Creek leaders, such as McIntosh—reared in the years after the American Revolution—signed controversial treaties with federal officials for large tracts of contested lands. The treaties of Fort Wilkinson (1802) and Fort Washington (1805) transferred ancestral lands in the forks of the Ocmulgee and Oconee rivers to Georgia, providing the necessary impetus for state and federal officials to construct a road directly from Augusta to American lands north and west of Mobile. Proponents of the controversial road promised that Creek towns in its vicinity would see economic benefits from travelers. In April 1806, Congress appropriated \$6,400 to build a postal road through Creek country, linking Athens, Georgia to Fort Stoddert in the Tombigbee district. Since part of the road followed the famed-Lower Path, Postmaster General Gideon Granger employed Benjamin Hawkins to recruit Creek guides to assist surveyors and insure talwa cooperation with the effort.

⁴⁴ “Talk of President Jefferson and Creek Indians,” November 3, 1805, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Microfilm M-15, reel 2, 75-76. McIntosh would eventually operate a very profitable stop Lockchau Talofau (in modern-day Carroll County Georgia) on the Federal Road. See: Benjamin Griffith, *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991) 60.

⁴⁵ Thomas Jefferson lobbied to build the road through Creek country, recognizing that the future of southern commerce depended on easy access to the port of New Orleans. Congress passed enabling legislation giving the president power to establish lines of communication to the new territory. Comprehending the importance of such a project, postmaster general, Gideon Granger, petitioned Congress in November 1803 for funds to construct a postal road connecting New Orleans with the eastern cities of Charleston, South Carolina; Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Up until this time, travelers used a series of Indian routes to transport messages through the backcountry of what was then the Mississippi Territory, which included the present-day state of Alabama. When completed, the post road would connect Washington and New Orleans over a distance of some 1,100 miles—300 miles shorter than the existing Natchez Trace. See: Henry de Leon Southerland Jr. and Jerry Elijah Brown, *The Federal Road through Georgia, the Creek Nation and Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1990) 17-21.

Headmen such as McIntosh continually worried that as more travelers entered Creek country the likelihood of dangerous confrontations increased, resulting in collective punishments from the Americans and counter-reprisals from factional leadership angry over their encroachments.⁴⁶

The Tensaw Creeks consistently responded to these developments through innovative ways. Through the maintenance of ferries and recreational stops along the postal/military road crossing their land, the Tensaw métis found methods to protect the collective economic future of their lineage well into the nineteenth century. Still insisting that foreigners honor Creek conventions, they continued embracing change within the broad contours of ancient cultural traditions. As a community, the Tensaw Creeks were empowered by specific lineages to resist change without compromising their cultural integrity. Kinship was a source of communal strength, allowing flexibility through complex social processes that undergirded multiethnic interactions across the southeastern frontier. But as new American settlers destined for the Tombigbee district and West Florida increasingly ignored long-established natural barriers separating their domain from the ancestral claims of Sehay's lineage, Creek towns of the interior (with a familial connection to Tensaw), felt obligated to enforce a perceived authority over the region and its inhabitants.

Upper Creek leaders likely perceived the Tensaw métis as too conciliatory, unwilling to sufficiently regulate foreigners passing through their lands or chasten squatters building homesteads across the American boundary from Tombigbee, choosing instead to profit from them. Hawkins wrote that "Unlicensed settlements have been made on those waters [north of Mobile]; they are now thinly scattered along the western banks of the Mobile and Tombigbee for more than seventy miles, and extend nearly twenty-five miles upon the eastern borders of the

⁴⁶ Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*, 55.

Mobile and Alabama.”⁴⁷ The southern Upper Creek towns sought to assert themselves independently in the affairs of life north of Mobile and Pensacola. “Some Chiefs of the upper towns have lately taken upon themselves to give laws to the [Creek] nation ... Individuals coming into the nation on lawful business will be safe. Property passing through will not be safe. I find the Indians are much opposed to settlements being made on the waters of the Mobile above our line.”⁴⁸

Despite injunctions from federal officials not to do so, some enterprising young Creeks assessed tolls on travelers as a way to embrace market opportunities for themselves that did not involve growing crops and raising cattle.⁴⁹ Outright robbery was more common though. Hawkins warned one group of surveyors that they “must travel light with as little baggage as possible that in case you are dismounted by a thieving party you will not be inconvenienced with baggage.”⁵⁰ Accounts of roadside depredations are plentiful in histories of the period and region, but more than isolated acts of banditry, seizing property from outsiders was a means to empowerment by marginalized elements of Creek society and was certainly not confined to roads or paths. Access to Creek country was not confined to dry land. In 1811, President James Madison pressured Upper Creek leaders to permit Tennesseans usage of the Coosa and Alabama rivers for commercial purposes. In a talk to the Upper Creeks, Madison reasoned: “Rivers & Water courses are made by the Great Spirit to be used by the Nations to and thro’ which they run.”⁵¹ Boundaries also became zones for “profit and protest.” Whereas earlier generations might have simply

⁴⁷ Foster, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 411.

⁴⁸ Grant, *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, “Hawkins to Edward Price,” April 16, 1798, 2:182.

⁴⁹ “Talk of President Jefferson and Creek Indians,” November 3, 1805, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Microfilm M-15, reel 2, 75-76.

⁵⁰ Grant, *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, “Hawkins to Timothy Barnard,” May 30, 1804, 2:467.

⁵¹ Hawkins had been pressured as early as 1808 to induce the Upper Creeks to sanction this traffic. James Madison, “Talk to the Chiefs of the Creek Nation,” January 14, 1811, National Archives, Washington, D.C., RG75 75.2; “Secretary of War to Hawkins,” June 27, 1811 and July 20, 1811, National Archives, Microfilm, M-15, Reel 13, 56-57, 59.

destroyed wayward livestock, young Creek men eager to assert their masculinity in the waning years of the deerskin trade routinely stole American cattle that wandered across territorial boundaries. With only specific town headmen invited to lucrative treaty talks (primarily pro-American factions politically and economically aligned to traders and agents) that often resulted in enormous payouts and bribes to be redistributed exclusively among family and factional support bases, those Creeks alienated from this process fashioned new opportunities for themselves.⁵²

Alexander McGillivray's presence offered at least a semblance of security in the decade after the American Revolution through his manipulation of alternative trade corridors and insistence on Creek sovereignty during treaty negotiations. After his death though, individual headmen fell prey to enticing annuity payments from the federal government for the sale of ancestral lands. Land sales and treaties presaged roads and formalized settlement, spreading plantation agriculture and slavery across new regions. The corrosive effects of alcoholism, indebtedness, a growing wealth disparity between common Creeks and a precious few (mostly métis elites), and the added stresses of non-traditional lifestyles, all contributed to a heightened state of dissatisfaction and desperation.

New metaphorical paths promised to alleviate Creek societal tensions. A political revitalization movement came to the fore near the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century that offered such a course. This nativist faction was inspired by the Shawnee leader Tecumseh and his brother, Tenskwatawa (or known simply as The Prophet). Through mystical powers and assurances of spiritual renewal, the Shawnee missionaries promised their Indian audiences a return to better times. Their many prophecies were fraught with vivid imagery depicting roads to alternate futures and great journeys to spiritual places to visit the tormented

⁵² Hudson terms this as a form of "profit and protest" in *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*, 86-87.

souls of acculturated Indians. Listeners were asked to abandon western farming techniques and customs, abstain from drinking alcohol, and resist the corrupting temptations of materialism that had shackled their nations in an inescapable cycle of debt peonage. Indian women were implored to leave their Euro-American husbands and rejoin “their people.”

That The Prophet’s message was a direct assault on the adopted lifestyles of the Tensaw métis was clear. The Shawnee troupe was not unlike itinerant ministers of the Second Great Awakening, proselytizing their message of spiritual renewal across great distances, imparting lesser prophets along the way. When Tecumseh traveled among the Creeks in the summer of 1811, he encountered a mixed reception—some openly accepting his talks others vehemently opposed. Tecumseh was maternally related to the Creeks with a familial connection to the town of Tuckabatchee. Thus his visit created a great stir and left a lasting impression. Before returning north to the Ohio country though, Tecumseh left his accompanying prophet and translator, Seekaboo, who continued to foster support among the Creeks through the recruitment of new prophets. The numbers of métis Creeks with familial links to Tensaw that filled the ranks of this movement cannot go unnoticed. Josiah Francis, Peter McQueen, Captain Isaacs, and Paddy Walsh all jockeyed for positions against one another as the rightful leader of the new religion. Their status before Tecumseh’s arrival as property holding Creeks with a vested interest in the southern corridor proves that participation in the nativist revitalization movement was more than simple superstitious catastrophism—hoping to forestall the ultimate collapse of their society. Events in the ensuing Creek War reveal theirs was a false revitalization movement, concocted for political gain over credulous and desperate Creeks.⁵³

⁵³ William G. McLoughlin, “Ghost Dance Movements: Some Thoughts on Definition Based on Cherokee History,” *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 37 (Winter, 1990) 25-44; Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press 1991); Frank L. Owsley, “Prophet of War: Josiah Francis and the Creek War,” *American Indian Quarterly* 9 (Summer 1985):273-293.

The fratricidal conflict known as the Creek War (1813-14) was the culmination of decades-long internal tensions, segmented along axis related to kin, age, gender, and political and commercial affiliations. And while its causes were multifarious and its bloody outcome ultimately served the racial and imperial aspirations of the young Republic, the ethnically diverse people of the Tensaw settlement coexisted, albeit too briefly, despite the inveterate societal strains and pressures extant outside their frontier enclave. Rather than a conflict reducible to socioeconomic disparity between métis elites and ordinary Creeks, or antagonisms of the latter towards American settler culture—the Creek War represents uniquely contextual circumstances. Only when competing métis leaders emerged during the first decade of the nineteenth century (many operating under the guise of a revitalization movement) did the multiethnic social fabric of the Tensaw settlement unravel, later to collapse under the pressures of Removal era policies.⁵⁴ Unpacking the social and economic origins of this community help explain the broad implications of the resultant Creek War as well as the long-term implications from intercultural and interethnic contact in postcolonial settings.

⁵⁴ Peter A. Brannon, "Removal of Indians from Alabama," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 12 (1950): 91-117; Mary Elizabeth Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961) 73-113.

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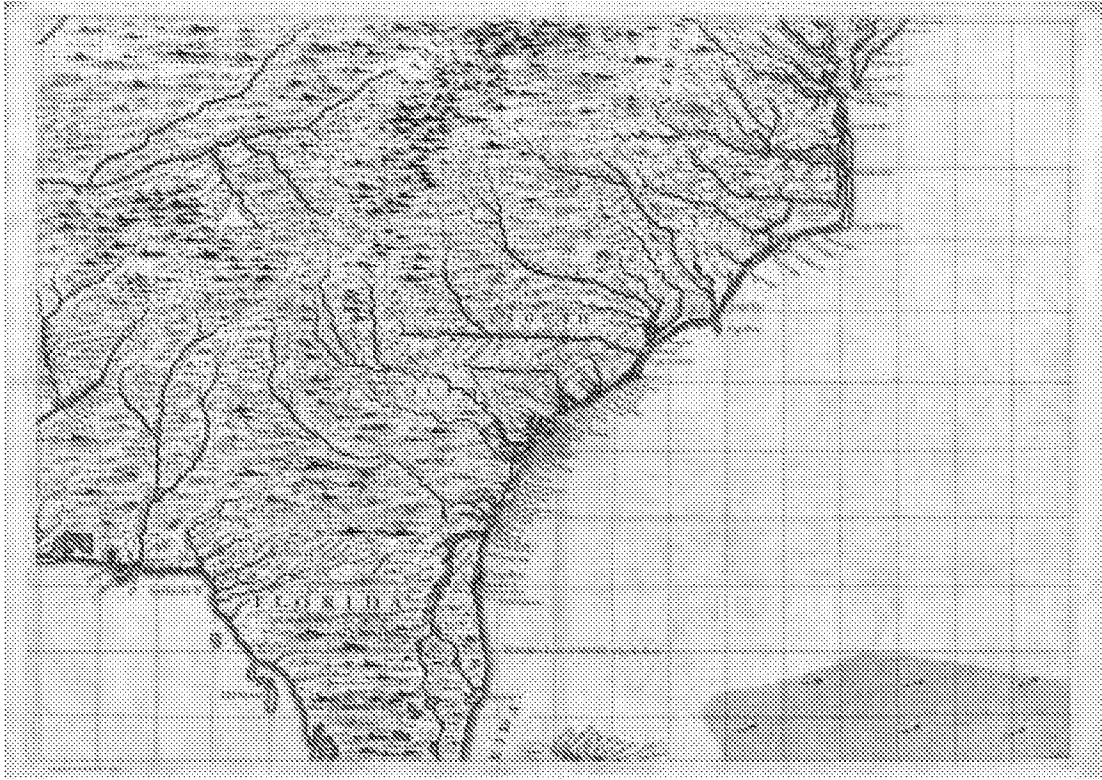
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LIST OF APPENDICES

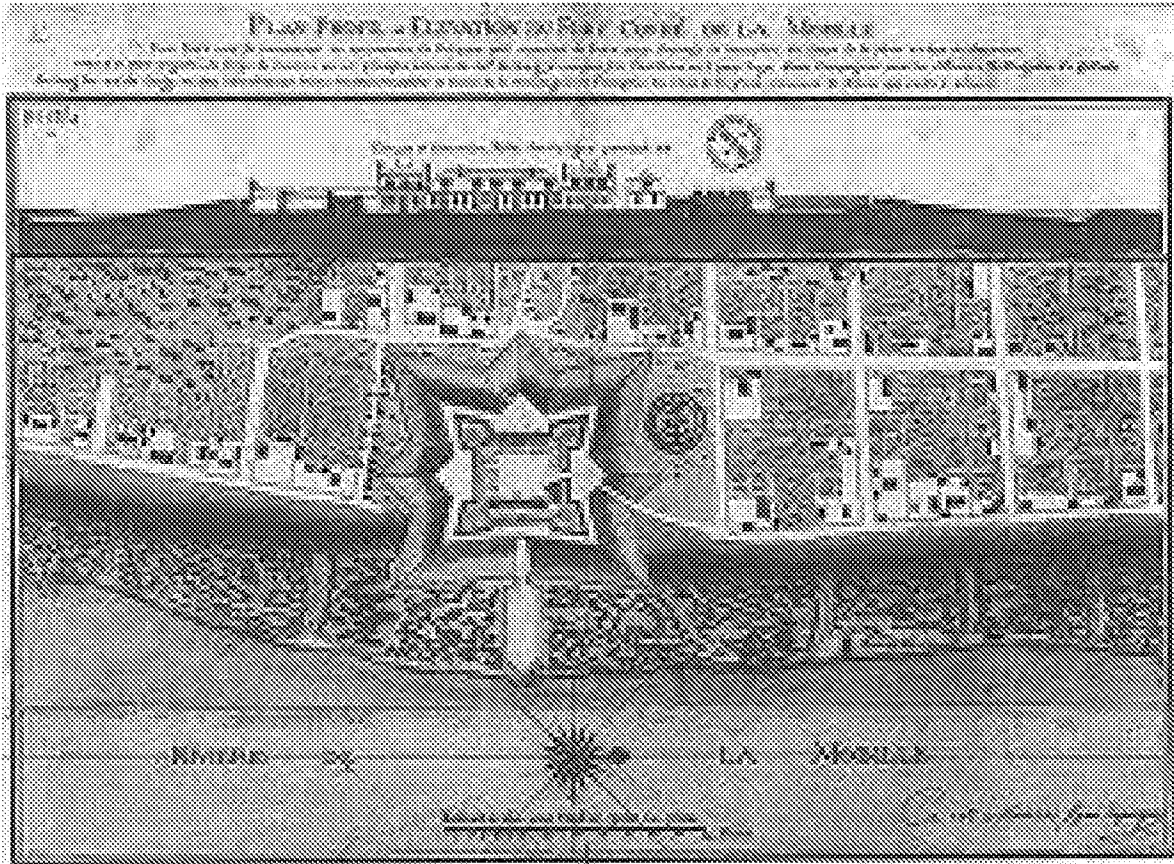
Appendix A – Guillaume Delisle (1675 – 1726) Carte de la Louisiane et du cours
du Mississippi.



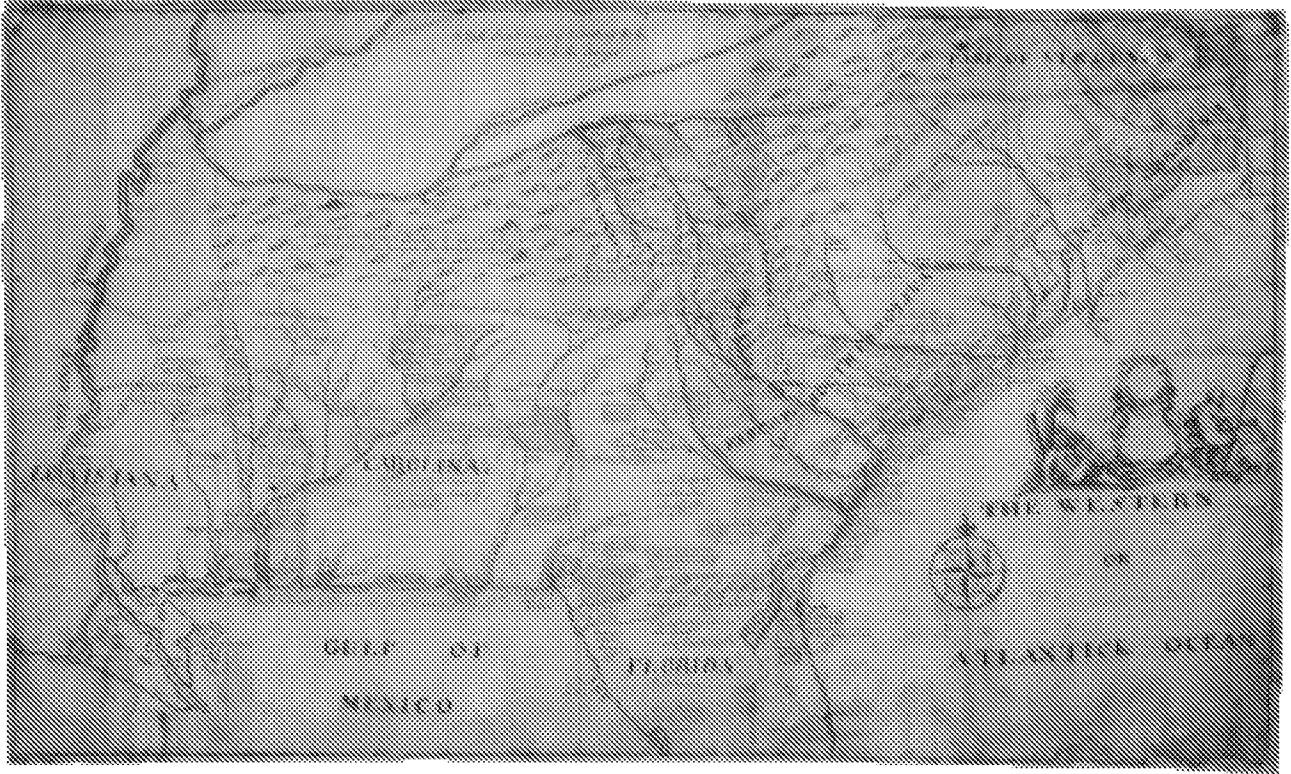
Appendix B – A Map of the British Empire in America with the French and Spanish Settlements Adjacent thereto. By Henry Popple 1733.



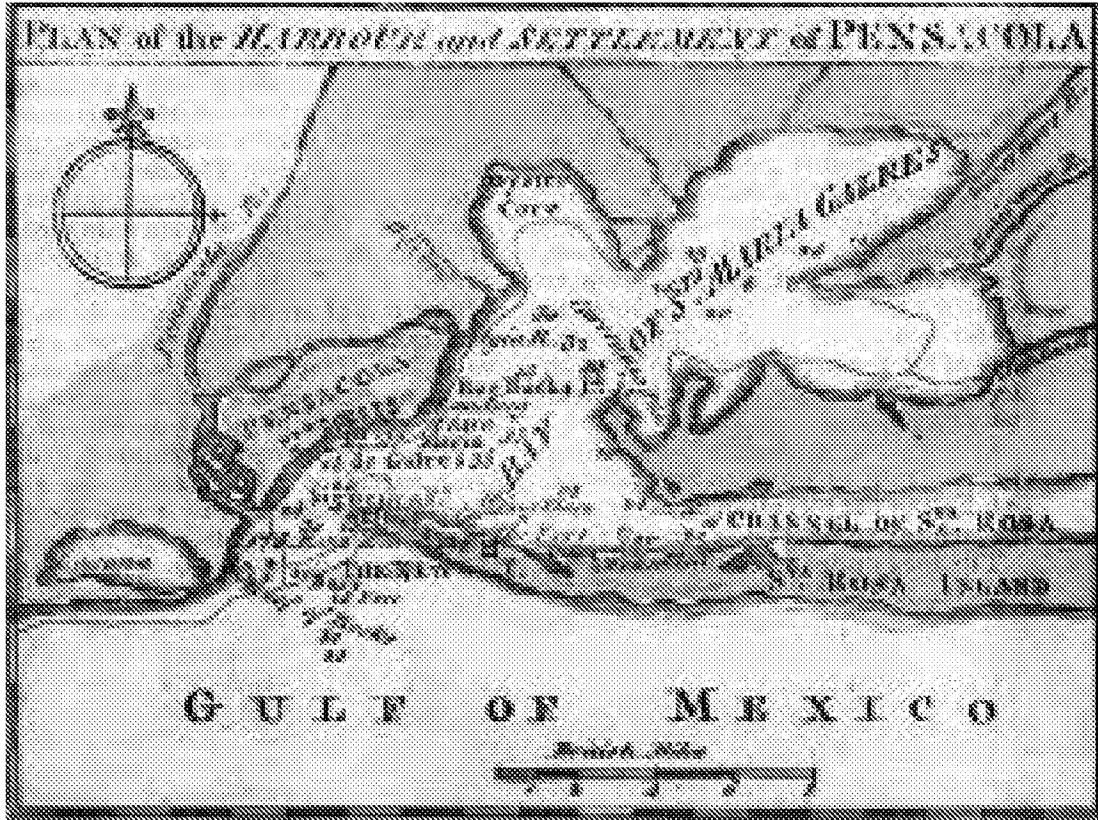
Appendix C - Fort Condé (1725)



Appendix D – Map of the Southeast Port of North America. William Hammerton
(1721).

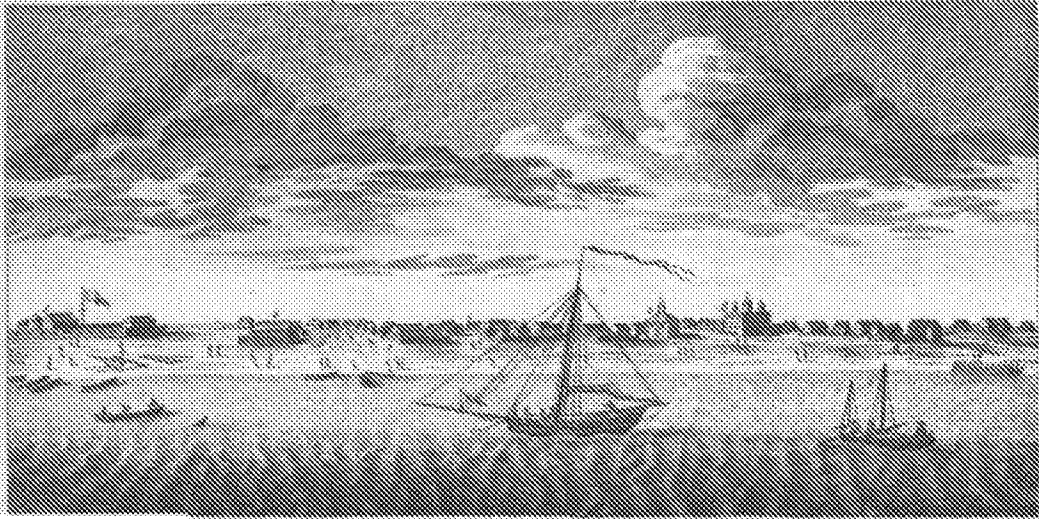


Appendix E – Map of Pensacola Bay – 1763.



Appendix F – “A Perspective View of Pensacola” by John Hinton (1764).

Designed for St. John's, Republic of Alaska, August 1887.



REPRODUCED FROM PHOTO COPY
OF THE ORIGINAL COPY
MADE BY JOHN D. HARRIS,
A perspective view of
BOSTON
1793
GILT 8943 28385

*A Perspective View of Boston
The View is from the Mouth of the Harbor, taken in the Commemorative Year of 1793, by J. H. H.*

VITA

Kevin Thomas Harrell was born on March 31, 1982 and attended Escambia Academy in Atmore, Alabama where he graduated in 2000. In 2002, he enrolled at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama and majored in history. He graduated from Auburn in 2003 with a Bachelors of Arts degree. He continued his education at Jacksonville State University in the fall of 2004, graduating in 2006 with a Masters of Arts degree. In 2007 he entered the PhD program at the University of Mississippi. He is married to Katelyn Wear Harrell.