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Making Africans and Indians: Colonialism, Identity, Racialization, and the Rise of the Nation-State in the Florida Borderlands, 1765-1837

John Paul A. Nuño

University of Texas at El Paso, jpnuno@miners.utep.edu

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Making Africans and Indians: Colonialism, Identity, Racialization, and the Rise of the Nation-
State in the Florida Borderlands, 1765-1837

John Paul A. Nuño

Department of History

APPROVED:

Jeffrey P. Shepherd, Ph.D., Chair

Cheryl E. Martin, Ph.D.

Maceo C. Dailey, Ph.D.

Yolanda C. Leyva, Ph.D.

Circe Sturm, Ph.D.

Patricia D. Witherspoon, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to mis primos Jesús and Guadalupe Flores.

MAKING AFRICANS AND INDIANS: COLONIALISM, IDENTITY, RACIALIZATION,
AND THE RISE OF THE NATION-STATE IN THE FLORIDA BORDERLANDS, 1765-1837

By

JOHN PAUL A. NUÑO, M. A., B. A.

DISSERTATION

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in agriculture and in local industry. Meanwhile my mother Irma Antuna lived with her aunt and worked in a family tortilleria. These long hours of work served to give their children educational opportunities. My father overcame many obstacles and eventually went to college to become a high school teacher. Consequently my parents taught me to appreciate and value education.

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ABSTRACT

The Florida Borderlands from 1765 to 1837 was a fluid space in which established colonial and Indigenous social, political, and economic systems were in dialogue with emerging discourses associated with the market economy, nationalism, and race. Utilizing British, Spanish, and United States government documents, diplomatic correspondence, and slave claims, this work traces the racialization of diverse Indigenous and African populations. Older colonial powers and nascent nation states sought to create political and social space between individuals within these categories in an effort to better control their labor, movement, and economic status. Consequently, Seminoles and Africans resisted and adapted, depending on the situation, to these new forms of colonialism, especially during the U.S-Seminole Wars.

This study's chronological scope facilitates a greater focus on the continuity of processes such as racialization and identity formation between the British, second Spanish Florida, and U.S. territorial eras, roughly from the 1760s to the 1830s. Historians tend to compartmentalize these respective colonial projects as they pertain to Indigenous and African peoples. Additionally, runaway African slaves are viewed as simply members of the African Diaspora and separate from their Seminole neighbors despite their multifaceted relationship. This reinforces racial categories and de-emphasizes the fluid sociocultural boundaries that these groups crossed. A transnational borderlands framework interweaves the history of these groups and reveals their impact and influence upon each other. Since Florida was located within the larger Southeastern Borderlands and Atlantic World, it was affected by early nationalist discourse, the burgeoning international market economy, and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

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INTRODUCTION

Few events of the early nineteenth century Florida Borderlands best exemplify the complex interplay of colonialism, racialization, and the power of the nation-state as the destruction of the “Negro Fort.”¹ On April 7, 1815, the Surveyor General of Spanish West Florida, Vicente Sebastián Pintado, had been anchored off the coast near the entrance to the Apalachicola River. Disembarking from his ship he was greeted by the British Captain Robert Spencer and taken to Prospect Bluff. There he met Lieutenant Colonel Edward Nicholls of the Royal Marines, who had recently returned from Mobile and the final battles in the southern theater of the War of 1812. Pintado surveyed the area and noted that 250 Africans hailing from respective United States, Spanish, and Indigenous settlements, as well as a number of native peoples, resided there.² He gathered information on the fortification and British plans to evacuate the region. He learned that they planned to relocate a segment of the Black population from West Florida while transferring the fully armed fort to Africans remaining in Apalachicola. When Pintado toured the grounds he spoke to a group of Indigenous headmen in the midst of a conference. Although Lower Creek and Seminole leaders bestowed the usual diplomatic courtesies, they instructed him to leave since they planned to resist an imposition of Spanish authority once the British retreated. While he heeded their advice, Pintado was still able to chronicle his visit for Spanish authorities eager to learn of British, Indigenous, and African activities in the area.

Pintado’s accounts are invaluable for the insight they provide on the inhabitants of the “Negro Fort.” However, his perspective simultaneously questions the standard narrative of

Spanish Florida. Pintado arrived at Prospect Bluff not simply to accumulate intelligence but to seize Pensacola owners' slaves, many of whom had escaped from their masters when the British occupied the Spanish settlement. Eventually the base attracted other runaway slaves and free Africans seeking protection in its hinterlands. This development deeply troubled Pintado. He feared the military empowerment of former Spanish slaves, especially since the imminent British evacuation meant the outpost was essentially free of European supervision. However, the meaning of Pintado's mission has been lost in light of the subsequent 1816 U.S. destruction of the "Negro Fort."

The event is usually conceptualized as one strand in the larger U.S. effort to enforce hardening racial attitudes emanating from the South.³ Borderlands scholars have generally argued that Spanish colonialism in Florida was responsible for creating a sanctuary for African slaves escaping chattel slavery.⁴ However, Spanish acquiescence in the reduction of the fort undermined their contribution to a "middle ground" for non-European groups against other colonial powers. Eventual U.S. dismantling of Prospect Bluff ended a dangerous symbol of African autonomy and served as an indicator of the broader realities of a borderlands society.

When confronted with aspects of Pintado's mission, historical narratives positing a racially fluid and accommodating Spanish Florida diametrically opposed to a racially rigid hierarchical U.S. must be problematized. In his letters to British military officials, the Spanish surveyor was perturbed not only with the loss of property, the Pensacola slaves, but also with British plans to leave a number of Africans, Seminoles, and Creeks, in charge of a fort stocked with weapons and ammunition. His views, not dissimilar to those held by American officials, saw the outpost as a threat to order and stability. U.S. leaders such as Andrew Jackson issued

statements that the continuing presence of the installation meant suffering the designs of “banditti,” pirates, slaves, savages, and others comprising the lowest levels of society.⁵ Pintado was equally adamant about the insidious nature of an African and Indigenous stronghold that would become a “Republic of Bandits that will trouble the Spanish monarch’s dominions in this part of the globe and will bring other disastrous consequences which should be stopped before they occur.”⁶ In an April 2, 1815 letter, the surveyor general took an increasingly aggressive tone with Captain Spencer accusing the British of failing to uphold their promises to return fugitive slaves.⁷ Acting as an official Spanish agent Pintado expressed his concern over the fort’s continuing existence. Writing a few weeks later, he asserted that Prospect Bluff could potentially attract “evil persons” assisted by the “Negros” and form a pirate haven that will endanger not only the province but also the entire Gulf of Mexico.⁸ His efforts frustrated, Pintado found the reclaiming of the Pensacola slaves an impossible task because they refused to return to Spanish masters despite the precariousness of their situation.

While Pintado’s account of the “Negro Fort” is well known, his objective of seizing fugitive slaves is often overlooked or dismissed as insignificant in light of the larger narrative of the Florida Borderlands. His mission is both symbolic and representative of the racialization of African and Indigenous peoples, in other words, the construction of racial categories, which inform sociopolitical hierarchies, based on supposed biological difference and that began supplanting cultural markers of identity such as religion. Although these processes were shaping European and American attitudes towards Indigenous and African peoples, the meaning of these racial categories remained contested and evolved over time.

Racialization was already discernable from the British Florida period and continued

through U.S. annexation when the full force of rigid racial ideologies had cast peoples in the borderlands as “red, black, and white.” This slow shift in racial discourse was largely due to policies that supported a plantation export economy based on African slavery and an emphasis on Indigenous alliances and trade. The Second Spanish Florida period, 1784-1821, witnessed integration into the Atlantic World economy through the British trading firm Pantón, Leslie, and Company; the abandonment of any pretense to sociocultural acculturation of Indigenous people; and the discourse of slaves as property. Florida’s location within the Greater Caribbean, the U.S. South, and the Atlantic World meant that while the territory was peripheral to colonial centers of powers, it remained simultaneously accessible to the movement of people, ideas, capital, and goods.

The late eighteenth through the first half of the nineteenth century saw hardening racial categories, nationalism, and market capitalism gain ascendancy and create deeper divisions within the different cultures and peoples of the Florida borderlands. Within the Atlantic World, trade links interconnected Europe, Africa, and the Americas while simultaneously nationalist ideology and racial discourse slowly gained currency. During the first Spanish Florida period, the province was clearly a sanctuary for African slaves. Liberal Spanish colonial policies offered Africans agency and sociopolitical space within their society due to an inclusive legal system and possible conversion to Catholicism.⁹ Spain’s return to Florida in 1784 occurred under different circumstances that forced modifications to the colonial project. During the British regime, Lower Creek groups settled in Florida and staked claims of political autonomy. African slaves from the U.S. and Spanish territories were also living among the Seminoles and both groups sought their sociopolitical independence while their identities remained fluid in light of the

shifting relationships of the Florida Borderlands. Indigenous peoples and Africans inhabited a “middle ground” and participated in a transcultural process with groups such as colonial officials, traders, and planters.¹⁰ Depending on the situation, Africans could be manumitted by their Spanish masters while Spanish governors simultaneously issued edicts restricting the rights of both free and enslaved Blacks.¹¹ No unified and consistent meaning of race characterized the Second Spanish Florida period: rather race reflected and manifested itself in myriad ways depending on the context and situation. Some scholars argue that ideas concerning biological racial difference and the categorization of peoples into separate groups only began after 1821. Importantly, this study seeks to illustrate that a measure of continuity, especially in terms of racial discourse, existed throughout British controlled Florida, the Second Spanish Florida period, and U.S. annexation of the territory. These points place this dissertation in productive debate with much of the literature on the era and region.

U.S. efforts to draw clear racial lines and enforce its political and social order were eventually successful due to its ability to project military and economic power, this being the crucial distinction between the U.S. and earlier colonial powers in Florida. For instance, Pintado echoed U.S. sentiments about the dangers of the “Negro Fort,” but the Spanish were in no position to dismantle the stronghold. Instead they appealed to British “principles” and respect of “law.” In contrast Andrew Jackson simply resorted to military force with minimum regard for international legal conventions during the 1816 intervention. Nonetheless, the Seminoles and Black Seminoles still mustered stiff resistance to removal, and in the case of the Black Seminoles, they fought against re-enslavement as well. Although a growing chorus of southern slaveholders called for the removal of the Seminoles, U.S. officials recognized their own military

limitations and obligations with Indigenous peoples, thus producing the 1823 Treaty of Moultrie Creek which stipulated that the U.S. would create a reservation for the Seminole in central Florida. U.S. authorities, including the Seminole Indian agency and Indian superintendent, attempted to spatially restrict the Seminoles and control their finances through the annual annuity. Despite the pressure, the Seminoles resisted confinement and also opposed slave claims made on the Black Seminoles. Coupled with the desire to completely remove the Seminoles because of “depredations,” their relationship with the Black Seminoles, and acquisition of further land, U.S. officials exerted pressure for a removal treaty. Seminoles and Black Seminoles launched an effective guerrilla campaign but eventually relocated to Indian Territory.¹² The complex and diverse arrangement between Africans and Seminoles is illustrated through Spanish and U.S documents. Relationships ranged from kinship, political and diplomatic alliances, and a form of Indigenous slavery distinct from chattel slavery. Nonetheless, U.S. policies sought to separate and create space between both groups in order to divide and break their resistance to facilitate removal and control over territory.

Examining the turn of the nineteenth century provides a perspective that is conducive for thematic discussions of identity, race, colonialism, and the nation-state. Until forced removal in the 1830s and 40s, the region largely remained a middle ground for Indigenous peoples, Africans, and Euro-Americans. In the interior of East Florida the Seminoles carved out space to establish their own political autonomy. Considered subsidiaries of the Lower Creek, the Seminoles slowly established their distinct social identity from former leaders that had claimed jurisdiction over them. Free and enslaved Africans lived among the Seminoles and anthropologist Terrance M. Weik argues that the Black Seminoles experienced ethnogenesis, the

“creation, change, and fissioning of distinct sociocultural groups from culture contact situations.”¹³ African, Indigenous, and Euro-American identity formation did not occur in a vacuum but was shaped by a sociopolitical milieu consisting of respective groups’ dialogue, negotiation, and adaptation to each other and with the region’s dynamic processes.

A complex interplay existed between more established Indigenous and European economic, social, and political systems with emerging sociopolitical structures. Specifically, this entailed the interaction between decentralized political groups, economies based on reciprocity, and fluid sociocultural identities encountering and negotiating with centralized political entities, plantation export economies, and clearly delineated racial hierarchies. Gradually materializing out of these exchanges, Seminoles and Africans were racialized into “Indians” and “Blacks,” an ongoing process beginning with the 1764 British Florida occupation. Eventually new racial designations displaced other markers of identity not based upon biological difference. As a consequence of the 1835 Second U.S.-Seminoles War the U.S. sought to restrict Indigenous and African peoples’ sociopolitical mobility by placing them within separate and rigidly defined racial groups. Initially they sought to undermine joint African-Indigenous resistance but this later served to maintain U.S. racial order. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the project of interrogating “how and why . . . ethno-racial categories and boundaries developed historically in the way they did, and to examine their evolving meanings.”¹⁴

Historiography

Several factors make this study primarily a Borderlands History, rather than solely a work of American Indian, African, Southern, Colonial or Florida History. It follows a chronology that

attends to transnational events and issues, analyzes a geopolitical situation that lacked the presence of a dominant political entity until the 1830s, and incorporates malleable physical and metaphorical boundaries between peoples and cultures. Indigenous peoples were the arbiters of power in the Florida Borderlands, even as they recognized their own difference and diversity. However, Seminole, Mikasuki, Apalachicola, and Lower Creek rivalries mitigated native groups' military and political potency and allowed European nations to remain relevant in the region's power dynamics. African and Indigenous peoples' agency and resistance has been emphasized by recent scholarship. This work seeks to compliment this perspective with an understanding of how colonialism and racialization functioned. It draws from and expands upon Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron's essay "From Borderlands to Borders: Empire, Nation-States and the People in between in North American History," which promotes a Borderlands framework when analyzing the interplay between local and larger forces during the colonial period.¹⁵ Although their definitions of frontiers and borderlands are problematic, primarily because of their overemphasis on European agency, their work helps us understand the eventual rise of the nation-state and its ability to draw political and territorial borders over once contested areas.

Florida's distinct colonial history and geographic position, particularly during the period of this study, has made the region difficult to seamlessly incorporate within the framework of various historical fields outside of Borderlands History. During the first Spanish Florida period, the province was politically and economically orientated towards Cuba and the Caribbean and positioned on Great Britain's North American colonial periphery. With the territory serving as a sanctuary to African slaves, it was influential in the outbreak of the 1739 Stono Rebellion and undermined plantation slavery in the Southeast. However, near the end of the American

Revolution, British Florida served as a refuge for loyalist planters from Georgia and the Carolinas, and because of this the number of slaves swelled. While adjacent colonies eventually became states, Florida retroceded to the Spanish. As a result of the 1802 Louisiana Purchase, the U.S. expanded west of the Florida territories and they were not incorporated into the United States until the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty. This meant that Florida had been bypassed by the conspicuous east to west frontier line so celebrated in Fredrick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Turner established a grand narrative based upon American exceptionalism stemming from the meeting of "civilization and savagery" that forged cherished American institutions and character traits, such as democratic ideals and rugged individualism, distinct from Europe. Florida occupied an awkward position in Turner's influential framework since U.S. history is conceptualized as "not the Atlantic coast, it is the great West."¹⁶ His only mention of Florida is to simply note that it "also furnished frontier conditions."¹⁷ Nonetheless, the area did not have "free land" in the Turnerian sense since European, specifically Spanish, institutions meant the territory was no longer the "clean slate" upon which American institutions could take root. Consequently, early Florida history fits uncomfortably among the traditional grand narrative of U.S. History.

Herbert Eugene Bolton sought to address the inadequacy of Turner's model when he set out to write about the Spanish Borderlands. He wrote that the study of Spanish colonial areas and their culture was "scarcely less conspicuous in the history of the Western world than the advance of the Anglo-American frontier."¹⁸ While Turner emphasized an East to West frontier, Bolton focused on the northern expansion of Spanish colonialism from New Spain to the Southwestern Borderlands, effectively pushing Florida to the margins as well.¹⁹ David Weber's

The Spanish Frontier in North America was more successful in integrating Florida within the larger Spanish Borderlands paradigm.²⁰ Weber was successful in re-orientating Spanish Borderlands History away from the celebratory “Spanish fantasy past” and simultaneously avoiding the demonization of Spanish colonialism associated with the “black legend.” His work integrated subordinate peoples within a “complex mestizo frontier” which better highlights the continuity between northern New Spain and contemporary U.S. Southwestern populations such as Chicana/os and native peoples.

Weber’s analytical framework is well suited for interpreting the events of the first Spanish Florida period when missions sought to acculturate Florida’s Indigenous peoples. Studies centered on Spanish and Indigenous activity, especially in the vein of the New Mission History with its emphasis on subordinate peoples, have recently increased. Edited works such as *Columbian Consequences, vol. 2: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East* and *The Spanish Missions of La Florida* enrich current research.²¹ Amy Turner Bushnell’s *Situado and Sabana: Spain’s Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida* contains a sociocultural analysis of the area’s indigenous peoples, highlights their interactions with the Spanish, and describes the decline of the mission system.²²

Among the significant scholars of the Spanish Florida Borderlands, Jane Landers’ research into Spanish archival sources and her work on the free black militia have set the standard for the field. Her emphasis on secular Spanish institutions reflects aspects of Spanish policy during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the priority given to Indigenous alliances and free Black militias. Landers’ scholarship represents recent historiographical shifts, which emphasize African and Indigenous peoples’ actions rather solely highlighting colonial

governments. In the seminal work *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, she illustrates how free blacks utilized Spanish policies and the frontier militia in order to negotiate their position in Spanish society.²³ Specifically, they had access to manumission, the courts, and property. While free blacks are central actors, Landers remains focused on Spanish institutions. Taking a cue from Frank Tannenbaum who wrote *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*, she argues that the presence of malleable Spanish institutions enabled Africans to pursue their interests.²⁴ Legal customs and Catholicism offered African slaves more opportunities and acknowledged their humanity.

As with Landers, a majority of colonial Florida scholarship has been under the rubric of Spanish Borderlands. Though important, the work in this field has proven limited in terms of providing a framework with the explanatory power to address the region's diverse and multifaceted history. The inadequacy of a model emphasizing institutions becomes even more evident during the waning years of the eighteenth century when Spanish influence is essentially relegated to St. Augustine, and as the colony's Indigenous allies already experienced a sharp demographic decline. In this vacuum, splinter groups of the Lower Creek exhibited their autonomy from the Spanish. For example, a two-decade long British reign facilitated the penetration of Scottish traders who established themselves in the region and thus linked the province with the Atlantic World. Simultaneously, U.S. planters, including a few who entered Florida, became influential in the Southeast.

For a Borderlands framework to be conceptually effective it must consider and highlight the multitude of processes occurring in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A viable model must draw from Richard White's "middle ground," a geographical and

metaphorical space where competing colonial powers were not dominant.²⁵ Concurrently, a Borderlands model must also recognize when Indigenous notions of sociopolitical organization remained dominant despite the designs of colonial powers. Juliana Barr, in *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands*, highlights how Indigenous kinship not only structured their societies but also diplomacy with the Spanish. The central role of women and gender, in foreign relations and in Indigenous economic, political, and social structures, was the “signature of Indian power in interactions with Europeans.” Nonetheless, eventual U.S. expansion and market capitalism reduced spaces of negotiation for subordinate peoples. James F. Books’ *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* outlines how a symbiotic captive raiding economy based on shared notions of honor and gender created a fluid political and metaphorical borderlands that declined in the latter half of the nineteenth century.²⁶ During this period Reginald Horsman asserts that rigid notions of racial difference based upon biological factors gained ascendancy and increasingly influenced intercultural relationships. Although in a world systems analysis Florida is considered peripheral, its geographical accessibility meant it was susceptible to larger trends affecting the Southeastern Borderlands. Consequently, a focus on Spanish colonial institutions does not provide a full understanding of the region’s history.

Various historical fields are also confronted with the difficulties of applying a narrow scope to a complex region with tremendous demographic diversity.²⁷ Embarking on a study of Florida according to Amy Turner Bushnell means being “drawn into the histories of early modern Europe, the Atlantic, the Caribbean, the Lower South, the backcountry, the Indian Southeast, and, not least, the growing field of Spanish American frontiers, encompassing border-

seas and borderlands.”²⁸ It is problematic to suggest that Indigenous and diasporic communities can be quarantined from the larger political, economic, and social milieu.

Nonetheless, traditional narratives of Florida history hold that the colony was a backwater and generally a failure. Even contemporary works acknowledge that Florida was peripheral to “core” areas. While it might not have been as central as Virginia to the South and slavery, Florida was nonetheless accessible through its maritime connections and geographic position. For this reason an Atlantic World perspective helps us understand the expansion of the market economy, African and European Diasporas, and the limitations of colonial designs and policies when confronted with Indigenous autonomy. Scholars of the Spanish Borderlands such as Bushnell and her proposal of a border-sea model, as well as Landers, who feels that work on colonial Florida plantations should “encourage other colonial historians of the wider Atlantic world to consider how Florida connected to their areas of study, because it almost certainly did,” emphasize the value of this paradigm.²⁹

Recent Atlantic World scholarship indeed provides insightful models that can be applied to Florida. In *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker write that elites viewed subordinate peoples such as the working class, sailors, and African slaves, as threats that needed to be neutralized and controlled. One case study of this larger movement is the 1741 New York Conspiracy in which thirteen fires broke out throughout the city targeting the “mercantile oligarchy.” Linebaugh and Rediker write that in New York, captured free black sailors and rumors of a Spanish invasion were important elements in driving the insurrection. More importantly, the authors argue that Africans in British North American colonies were cognizant

of the royal *cédulas* that offered freedom to slaves escaping to Spanish territory.³⁰ In 1739, the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina confirmed the disruptive influence of a slave sanctuary in Florida. Additionally the free black militia members in Fort Gracia Real Santa Teresa de Mose embodied Spain's reputation as a liberator of slaves. While this study argues that Spanish racial discourse as well as its sanctuary policy were less rigorous during the second Spanish Florida period, Linebaugh and Rediker's metaphor of the "Many-Headed Hydra" can still be applied to this later period since the presence of fugitive slaves and other subordinate peoples represented a threat that necessitated military excursions and the establishment of order.

A major component of the order elites established was associated with the slave trade, which John K. Thornton examines in *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World 1400-1800*. He illustrates how Africans were active participants in shaping their sociopolitical worlds.³¹ African languages, notions of kinship and political structure, religion, music, and other cultural traditions adapted to conditions in the Americas while influencing other groups. In addition to their studies of the African Diaspora, historians such as Thornton working in the fields of the Atlantic World and World History have shown that the beginning of the nineteenth century and the onset of the Industrial Revolution marked the point at which Europeans could more fully project their power. This narrowed Indigenous peoples' ability to negotiate and resist expansion. Florida roughly follows this pattern since Europeans did not gain effective control of the region's interior until the 1830s, when the U.S., an industrial power, could devote the necessary military resources and facilitate significant Euro-American immigration into the territory.

Existing Florida Borderlands historiography has already embraced these Atlantic World connections. In his work on the early colonial period, Paul Hoffman's *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient: The American Southeast During the Sixteenth Century* illustrates how European colonization was a haphazard and disorderly process beyond the control of the mother country.³² Spanish investors sought profitable ventures in the Americas and often lost significant capital when many settlements failed. These setbacks were attributed to actions based on Spanish myths such as New Andalusia, an agricultural paradise that never materialized. Nonetheless, Hoffman highlighted the precarious nature of both European colonialism and dominance in early trans-Atlantic interactions.

Roughly two centuries later the British trading firm of Pantón, Leslie & Company found more success with their economic ventures in the Southeast. William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson's *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Pantón, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company* chronicles how Florida became intertwined with entrepôts and markets such as Nassau, London, and Havana. Traders negotiated with Seminoles for deerskins that eventually made their way into the London market in exchange for manufactured goods including guns and ammunition. Although trade in African slaves remained limited, the firm did purchase and sell slaves who worked on their plantations. Throughout the company's operations, the movement of people and goods was constant. In *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, scholars such as Daniel L. Shafer and Susan R. Parker demonstrate that the territory, during the British and second Spanish Florida periods, was not a failure or lacking in economic activity and development. The text focuses on large planters such Francis Philip Fatio and Francisco Xavier Sánchez and their diversified economic endeavors. Especially pertinent is

James Cusick's chapter "Spanish East Florida in the Atlantic Economy of the Late Eighteenth Century" which argues "one means of understanding commerce in Spanish Florida is by fitting it into the larger regional picture of trade between the United States and the Caribbean."³³ The U.S. annexation of Florida was predated by the integration of St. Augustine with North American ports such as Charleston.

In addition to Atlantic World studies, Florida Historians have also focused their scholarly attention on African and Indigenous peoples. Larry Rivers, in *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation*, investigates the development of slavery in Florida, which, he argues, demonstrates considerable variation in racial attitudes, plantation size, and intensity of labor regimes.³⁴ He not only utilizes slave masters' records but also Work Projects Administration interviews with former slaves in order to present slaves' agency and resistance. Through his demonstration of how Florida's slaves had the power to shape their lives, Rivers seeks to build upon the work of influential scholars Herbert Aptheker and Eugene D. Genovese.³⁵ Simultaneously, texts by Michael A. Gomez and James H. Sweet are part of recent trends in African American and African Diaspora studies to trace how African cultures, especially religious beliefs, and ethnicities were resilient and adapted to conditions in the Americas. For the African Diaspora this process was instrumental in the development of a Black identity.³⁶

An emerging subfield has begun to develop around the Black Seminoles, "fugitive" slaves and free Africans who lived with and among the Seminoles. Much of the scholarship following Kenneth Wiggins Porter's seminal text, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People*, has been in the vein of African Diaspora studies.³⁷ Kevin Mulroy's *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* places

the Black Seminoles within the context of other African maroon communities.³⁸ Scholars working on the Black Seminoles have utilized different terms for the population depending on their respective conclusions concerning their identity. For instance, Mulroy's utilization of "Seminole Maroons" is illustrative of the fact that he believes "Africans and Seminoles often became close allies, to be sure, but for the most part, the two groups kept themselves to themselves and maintained a social distance."³⁹ His conclusion is keeping with recent trends in African American and African Diaspora studies which stress the continuity of respective African identities, ethnicities, and culture. These studies are in stark contrast to Stanley Elkins' thesis, which he offered in his 1959 book, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*. He argued that the brutality of slavery had limited the cultural and ethnic connections between Africa and the Americas.⁴⁰ Contemporary scholarship in the field has successfully countered Elkins by illustrating that African sociocultural systems were not extinguished by the exploitation and inhumanity of slavery. However, this focus has a tendency to emphasize ethnic and cultural continuity from Africa while limiting analysis on the transculturation between Africans and Indigenous peoples.⁴¹

American Indian Studies has undergone a similar transformation from countering Eurocentric narratives, emphasizing Indigenous agency, understanding Indigenous sociopolitical structures, and examining the wide-ranging consequences of colonialism from Indigenous peoples' perspective. After the 1960s, the New Indian History sought to confront native peoples' portrayal within U.S. historical narratives as antagonists doomed in their futile conflict against frontiersmen and western expansion. Vine Deloria Jr.'s *Custer Died For Your Sins* empathetically challenged assumptions that Indigenous groups and cultures were in a constant

state of decline and his focus on contemporary political struggles highlighted Indian resistance and survival.⁴² In the decades leading up to the twenty-first century, scholars such as James W. Covington, Brent Weisman, J. Leitch Wright Jr., and William C. Sturtevant wrote Seminole histories dealing with themes congruent with the New Indian History. They respectively examined Indigenous agency, resistance, foreign relations with rival Indian and colonial powers, cultural traditions, and Seminole ethnogenesis from Lower Creek bands. These scholars succeeded in shifting the historical focus upon the Seminoles rather situating them as peripheral to European colonialism.

Recently scholars have sought to go beyond the balanced accounts of colonial encounters and more accurate portrayals of Indigenous societies found in the New Indian History. Decolonial texts seek to privilege Indigenous peoples' projects and agendas which are cognizant of contemporary political issues, especially the drive to protect tribal sovereignty. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* advocates Indigenous scholars' research projects which present native voices and perspectives on topics deemed important to Indian communities.⁴³ Decolonial scholarship challenges Euro-American notions of "objectivity" which privilege colonial textual sources while questioning the legitimacy of Indigenous forms of knowledge such as oral histories. Susan Miller's *Coacoochee's Bones: A Seminole Saga* is a decolonial text, the work of an Indigenous scholar writing with the primary goal of presenting her people's history while not being limited by colonial materials. She seeks to affirm "the sovereignty of tribal nations and identities of tribal peoples as distinct and prior to the United States." Miller's book not only recounts the Seminole leader Coacoochee's resistance against the U.S. and relocation into Mexico but also comments on historical events such as the

relationship between the Seminoles and Black Seminoles, an issue of contemporary importance. In the year 2000 the Seminoles sought to assert their sovereignty by divesting the Freedmen descendants of citizenship rights in the Seminole Nation. Leaders argued that the Black Seminoles were not Seminoles by blood and could be expelled. Consequently Miller has argued that the Black Seminoles maintained social and political space from the Seminoles and had no historical claim to their position within the nation. As a result of the focus on Indigenous nationalism, discussions of cultural fluidity, hybridity, and both biological and fictive kinship between Seminoles, neighboring Indigenous peoples, and Africans are effectively minimized. Due to U.S. policies, Indigenous peoples seeking to defend their status as autonomous nations must conform to Eurocentric definitions of nationhood, which includes a discourse espousing an homogenous race and shared culture.

Efforts to demarcate Indigenous nations as racially and culturally exclusive entities have not deterred recent authors from tracing the connections between native peoples and other groups. Studies by anthropologist Circe Sturm and sociologist Eva Marie Garrouette address the complexity surrounding Indigenous nationalism and tribal membership. Building upon the work of previous scholars such as Theda Purdue, Sturm in *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* analyzes how Euro-American colonialism and encroachment upon Cherokee autonomy and land led elites to adopt aspects of U.S. nation building in order to resist. Part of this project was a cultivation of a homogenous racial identity that would lend the new nation legitimacy and political currency in the eyes of Euro-Americans.⁴⁴ Later U.S. policies, in particular the 1887 Dawes Act, were influential in the conflation between blood, race, identity, and culture. Individuals classified as “full-bloods” were

deemed “real Indians” and culturally authentic while “half-bloods” were perceived to have lost some of their Indianness. Consequently the U.S. implemented the Dawes Act with policies that protected the land allotments for “full-bloods” but not “half-bloods” on the assumption that the former needed more paternalistic protections because they remained pristine Indians lacking the intellectual astuteness to conduct economic transactions. Garrouette in *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* examines the construction of Indian identity in the twentieth century. She illustrates how the utilization of blood quantum has become a primary factor in bestowing tribal and national membership. These standards have deeply divided Indigenous communities and have socially and economically marginalized individuals unable to gain a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood. Garrouette proposes a re-conceptualization of how identity is constructed, which she terms Radical Indigenism, through an understanding of tribal philosophy in order to find “robust” yet “flexible” definitions of group memberships.⁴⁵

Due to the legacy of Euro-American colonialism, contemporary U.S. policies, and recent Indigenous nationalist movements, native peoples have been portrayed as culturally and racially insular. Nonetheless scholars such as William Loren Katz and Daniel Littlefield examined the shared histories of Indigenous peoples and Africans in their resistance against similar colonial processes. Simultaneously they highlighted the interaction and intermarriage between both groups and consequently individuals with multi-racial backgrounds. More recently scholars have expanded upon this earlier work by focusing on African and Indigenous kinship, identity formation, hybrid cultures, and how both groups’ relationship challenged the emergent racial order. A sampling of this work can be found in the *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America*, a collection of essays from authors such as Claudio Saunt

and Tiya Miles. James F. Brooks calls on scholars to problematize racial categories and “engage carefully with the cross-cutting tensions and ambiguities of dynamic cultural hybridity and to do so as much as possible from the standpoint of these mixed-and-multiple descended peoples themselves - to confound the color line.”⁴⁶ Following this line of thinking, Eric Meeks in *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* illustrates how ethnic and racial designations such as Mexican and Indian fail to encapsulate the “complex reality of people’s experiences and identities.”⁴⁷ Serving as a model for this study, the author highlights the various processes involved in subordinate peoples’ identity formation. He examines both the expansion of the nation-state, market capitalism, and the hardening of sociocultural borders as well as Mexican and native peoples’ continuing ability to contest these developments and maintain agency in defining their own identities. Equally significant, Meeks argues, “the relationships that these groups formed with one other and with the political economy substantially influenced how they identified themselves over time.”⁴⁸ Saunt has shown that this was also the case in the Southeastern Borderlands since the Seminoles’ relationship with Africans living among their settlements helped shape their distinct identity from the Creeks.⁴⁹

Due to Florida’s geography, various colonial administrations, and presence of Indigenous, African and European peoples, scholars of various fields and subfields have been attracted to region’s history. Works emanating from Spanish Borderlands History, Atlantic World History, African American Studies, and American Indian History are influenced by recent trends in their respective fields. For instance, Spanish Borderlands studies are still anchored, to some extent, on Spanish policies and actions, Atlantic World texts stress trade and Diaspora, and both American Indian and African American texts largely focus on sociocultural continuity

within their respective communities. The abovementioned fields continue to make valuable contributions but naturally focus on themes, groups, and processes indicative of their traditions. This study seeks to enrich previous historiography by demonstrating that Borderlands, as a conceptual framework, because of its elasticity, transnational perspective, and ability to incorporate other fields, is the most applicable for studying Florida during the 1763-1835 period.

A Borderlands model is well suited to Florida because its ability to holistically examine the demographic and sociopolitical variation that characterized the region at the turn of the nineteenth century. Due to the depth of Indigenous, African, and European mobility, interaction, and influence, a separate scholarly treatment of each group threatens to present only a partial perspective of a broader analytical vantage point. This is especially pertinent when considering that Florida existed in a geographical nexus between the Southeast, Caribbean, and the Atlantic World, areas experiencing increasing economic integration. Within this physical space, Seminoles, Lower Creeks, Africans, Spanish agents, Euro-American planters, and British traders traversed sociocultural boundaries during daily and sometimes frequent contact. This work seeks to examine not only each specific group but also the impact they had upon each other. A Borderlands framework is not limited to geographical and physical spaces but is also capable of illuminating the metaphorical borders that various individuals crossed, especially groups with a hybrid culture such as the Black Seminoles. Although the extent of intermarriage and transculturation between groups within Florida is debated, undoubtedly a significant number people had lives shaped in some form by cross-cultural interaction. A Borderlands perspective has the conceptual elasticity to understand a region exhibiting diverse demographics, sociocultural processes, and political structures.

However, a “Spanish” Borderlands perspective is limiting because of the emphasis placed upon the Spanish. This study’s purview is not restricted to periods of Spanish occupation or interaction with Indigenous and African groups. A Borderlands model, not anchored by Spanish colonialism, can effectively examine Florida during periods when the Seminoles, Mikasuki, Lower Creek, Spanish, British, and the U.S. negotiated and contested power. This project takes its cues from James Brooks and Juliana Barr’s respective works which utilize Spanish sources while centering their narratives in areas where Indigenous peoples either shared power with the Spanish or were the dominant power.⁵⁰

A broader understanding of Borderlands within this study also facilitates a discussion of Florida as part of the Southeast. Consequently, Saunt, Purdue, and Miles’ respective scholarship emphasizing the region’s Indigenous peoples, racial discourse, and gender systems, are especially pertinent. This work utilizes Saunt’s concept of the “new order,” which simultaneously refers to political centralization, Euro-American notions of property, chattel slavery, and rigid notions of race. He argues that these developments were becoming more prevalent in the early nineteenth century Southeast, especially among the Creek.⁵¹ Purdue highlights similar processes in her text, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866*, describing how Cherokee political, economic and social structures slowly adapted to European colonialism, particularly the eventual utilization of chattel as opposed to more traditional Indigenous slavery. The latter never stigmatized slaves as inherently inferior and offered them possible social mobility since slavery was never vital to the Cherokee economy until elites began accumulating private property. Consequently by the late eighteenth century Cherokees were aware of racial differences and recognized other groups through racial

designations based on skin color.⁵² Nonetheless, Cherokee sociopolitical structures such as matrilineal based clan identities persisted despite changes initiated by Euro-American colonialism, specifically the establishment of trade networks and plantations.⁵³ Saunt and Miles have also undertaken micro-histories focused on respective Creek and Cherokee families and individuals whose lives demonstrated how the processes mentioned above manifested themselves on a local level.⁵⁴ These studies represent recent examples of scholars seeking to understand the ways Indigenous peoples dealt with the important transformations occurring at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Utilizing Borderlands as a conceptual base enables this study to make several contributions to current historiography. Chronologically speaking, this work focuses on continuity between British, Spanish, and U.S. governments in Florida. Typically these regimes are treated separately and rarely have scholars discussed the influence each entity exerted over the other. In particular, scholars have argued that racial discourse operated differently under each colonial power. Discussions of race have generally been the domain of nineteenth-century studies focusing on the development of scientific racism and its intimate association with Manifest Destiny, U.S. expansion and colonialism.⁵⁵ Notable exceptions do exist including José Cuello's work on colonial Saltillo, which argues that the fluid and malleable *sistema de castas* only illustrates that Spanish colonialism adapted to local conditions and that the system was still based upon an acceptance and acknowledgement of a hierarchy based on whiteness.⁵⁶

This study argues that it is beneficial to trace the early evolution of racial discourse through various colonial administrations beginning in the late eighteenth century despite the continuing importance of competing sociopolitical markers of identity, such as kinship, religion

and other cultural factors. Sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant's definition of racial formation as "the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meaning" can be applicable with the caveat that racial formation, especially in its infancy, remained contested by those whom it sought to racialize.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, this period is quite accessible for scholars interested in examining a transitional period when racial designations eventually gained hegemony over other forms of categorization, although the process was by no means preordained. Consequently, this project must balance an analysis cognizant of Indigenous and African agency and autonomy with nascent Euro-American understandings of racial difference.

In addition to an overarching emphasis on questions of race, the dissertation's individual chapters augment historiographical debates, specific to Florida History, concerning colonialism, nationalist discourse, and identity. Specifically, the project reinterprets British and Spanish colonialism, the role of nationalist ideology in William Augustus Bowles' filibuster activity, and the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship, and examines how the U.S. enforced the racial categories during the Second U.S.-Seminole War. Previous works labeled the British reign in Florida as a short-lived failure because of its abrupt end. However, the British established important precedents in diplomacy with Indigenous peoples, trade, and the establishment of plantations. Their vision for Florida's economic and political development remained influential among the Spanish, who counted on Euro-American planters and British traders for their control of the region. Simultaneously, William Augustus Bowles' filibuster activity, or rather the actions of his Indigenous hosts, served to undermine Spanish policies. Nonetheless the

adventurer illustrated how Florida and the Southeast had become familiarized with nationalist rhetoric and ideals despite continuing political decentralization of Seminole communities. U.S. annexation of the area and the subsequent designs of officials and elites to stabilize Indigenous relations in order to support plantations was the fulfillment of the British vision previously plotted half a century before. These developments in turn, especially the racialization of Africans and Indians, have lead scholars to stress sociocultural separateness in the Seminole and Black Seminole relationship. Colonial sources failed to account for the sociopolitical complexity that existed for Africans living among the Seminoles. The points mentioned above ensure that this work is in dialogue with current historiographical discussions while contributing original arguments.

Methodology

This study utilizes colonial sources written by officials charged with overseeing and controlling East and West Florida. Their correspondence with superiors, subordinates, merchants, Indigenous leaders, and others provides insight into local interactions. Often obscured and hidden, voices from subordinate groups are nonetheless present in colonial documents. For instance, diplomatic talks preserved Indigenous leaders' views on foreign policy and to a more subtle extent on race and gender. Petitions from Indigenous men and women were also taken to colonial officials and judges. Black Seminoles served as interpreters and occasionally as witnesses and translators. During the Florida territorial period, U.S. citizens' slave claims made to the Seminole Agency against the Seminoles produced Indigenous and African peoples' testimony and statements. Additionally, Black Seminoles and Seminoles

worked for the U.S. military and these documents contain valuable information as well.

However, materials ostensibly providing non-European perspectives are often filtered through the cultural lenses of British, Spanish, and American officials. Thus colonial sources remain problematic and their analytical value limited, which in turn hampers the ability to center the narrative upon Indigenous and African groups' settlements, sociocultural development, and identity formation.

Predominantly based upon internal British, Spanish, and U.S. government correspondence, policy discussions, and directives, this work utilizes significant turning points in the Florida Borderlands to emphasize themes of race, identity, and colonialism. Scholars working on mission history and free black militias anchor their work on records produced by those institutions: likewise this study relies on sources produced by the colonial administrations. However, the focus is not on a particular set of missions, military units, or specific Indigenous or African settlements, but rather on events that caused colonial entities to highlight their interactions with subordinate groups. This project's chapters are shaped around treaty conferences, legislative debates over slavery, the plantation economy, establishment of Indigenous trade, Seminole and Mikasuki "raids" and "depredations," filibuster threats, the operation of the U.S. government's Seminole agency, and slave claims made against Indigenous owners. The availability of these materials influenced the direction of this study to focus principally on the colonial policies that eventually racialized diverse ethnic groups into "Indians" and "Blacks." Emphasis on colonial policies notwithstanding, this work still seeks to present Indigenous and African peoples' resistance to the new colonial order and their ability to craft and preserve their identities. While subordinate peoples' agency is an important and significant

aspect of any historical narrative, the outcome of the colonial project and the larger structural forces, related to political and economic structures, that detrimentally affect the lives of subordinate groups must not be minimized.

Due to the type of sources being utilized for this study, priority is given to the critical analysis of colonial documents in order to illuminate what James C. Scott has called the “hidden transcript.” For instance, letters communicating Indigenous leaders’ views or responses to government officials are often shrouded in nuance and subtlety. Documents containing descriptions of Indigenous actions regarded as “savage” or “illogical,” especially in regards to “raids,” “captive-taking,” and “depredations” must be thoroughly interrogated and contextualized. New Mission History and Borderlands scholarship have established standards for working with colonial documents in order to gain insight about Indigenous peoples’ lives. For example, missionaries’ records are imbued with a religious worldview and preoccupation with proselytizing but nonetheless contain important Indigenous ethnographic data. Within this work colonial officials, merchants, and prominent residents’ correspondence is similarly analyzed for insight into Seminoles and Africans’ lives. Scholars such as Daniel K. Richter have gone beyond a critical reading of sources and have used innovative approaches to present Indigenous voices. For instance he reinterprets and revisits historical figures such as Pocahontas using available materials.⁵⁸ Unfortunately colonial sources sometimes speak more directly to Euro-American views on race and the “Other” rather than accurately describing Indigenous or African communities and societies. However, this tendency in the historical record facilitates a study highlighting racial discourse among colonial governments.

This project's methodological approach is centered on the analysis of the sources mentioned above in order to address three crucial questions. These inquiries emphasize the themes of colonialism, race, identity, and the nation-state. How did the colonial project adapt to Florida's distinct geopolitical situation at the turn of the nineteenth century? Both British and Spanish administrations were forced to modify their plans and were influenced by the broader currents of the Atlantic World and the U.S. Southeast. Equally significant are questions about Seminole and Black Seminole identity, which have been central to the work of scholars such as Porter and Mulroy. Although colonial regimes sought to create racial categories, Indigenous and African peoples remained in a strong sociopolitical position to maintain their localized identities based on real and fictive kinship. Finally, this work analyzes the rise of the nation-state and nationalism to determine its impact on hardening racial categories in the Southeastern Borderlands.⁵⁹ A critical reading of colonial documents in conjunction with questions concerning colonialism, race, identity, and the nation-state constitute the basis of this work's methodological foundation.

Sources

Materials utilized in this study are archived in three principal depositories and span the British, Spanish, and U.S. colonial regimes. Within the region, government sources are well preserved and represent a solid foundation for many of the work's inquiries. Few Florida Borderlands studies have adopted the scope and chronological perspective that spans the 1765-1837 period. Thus the integration of sources produced by the governments mentioned above is critical in analyzing the continuity of important processes.

British Public Record Office sources are housed in various institutions, such as the Library of Congress and the University of Florida's P.K. Yonge Library. The Library of Congress stores the Colonial Office documents dealing with the British occupation of Florida from 1763-1784. These materials are informative because they deal with a board range of issues centering on British colonial policies and goals for the province. This study has focused on British-Seminole diplomacy, development of the plantation export economy, and the transition from indentured servitude to African chattel slavery. Documents from the Joseph Byrne Lockey Papers, located at the P.K. Yonge Library, contain correspondence from the Foreign, War, and Colonial Offices as well as from the British Admiralty. Especially significant, the Lockey Papers have letters between British officers and their superiors dealing with their maneuvers and eventual evacuation from West Florida after the War of 1812. These actions caught the attention of neighboring powers since the British helped mobilize Indigenous and African allies during the war. U.S. and Spanish officials' worries over the disarmament of these groups was the source of much consternation.

The written record of the Second Spanish Florida period archived in the P.K. Yonge Library includes the East Florida Papers, the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, and the Pintado Papers, all of which yielded important information. Primarily containing documents from the provincial capital of St. Augustine, the East Florida Papers contain materials produced by the various Spanish administrations such as the governor's correspondence, edicts, court cases, and military records. They provide a window on Indigenous-Spanish relations, outbreaks of violence, and the treatment of free and enslaved Africans. The Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, a section of the Archivo General de Indias, is a collection of colonial documents generally from

Spanish possessions under the jurisdiction of the captain general of Cuba. Correspondence between Havana and the East and West Florida governors supplements much of the information within the East Florida Papers. Highlighted in this collection are events associated with Spanish-Seminole relations, the filibuster William Augustus Bowles, and the threat of U.S. invasion. In the Pintado Papers, documents related to the official duties of the Spanish surveyor general of West Florida provide insight on the last years of Spanish occupation. As noted above, Pintado's accounts offer details on the "Negro Fort" at Prospect Bluff. The Spanish sources for Florida during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provide an impressive amount of information.

With the annexation of Florida in 1821, U.S. government agencies and institutions established themselves in the territory, and their records can be found in the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Among the collections of the Library of Congress are the American State Papers and the Territorial Papers of Florida. The American State Papers hold the congressional records relating to Florida while the Territorial Papers contain correspondence between the governor and federal entities, especially the U.S. Department of State. Stored at the National Archives, the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in conjunction with other relevant offices produced documents related to their efforts to oversee the Seminoles. The Florida Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Seminole agents, and sub-agents sought to restrict Indigenous peoples' movement and space, enslave Black Seminoles, and manage the annuity.⁶⁰ Combined with military records stemming from the U.S.-Seminole Wars, government records provide vital data for analyzing the central themes and questions of this work.

Chapter Outline

This study traces the interrelated development of racialization, market capitalism, and nationalism in the Florida Borderlands. Following a rough chronological order, this work spans the colonial regimes of the British, Spanish, and the U.S.⁶¹ Taking as a starting point the 1765 Picolata Congresses between the British and the Seminoles, this text highlights important precedents in Euro-American and Indigenous diplomacy.⁶² Stable relations with the Seminole and the Lower Creeks were intimately connected with the propagation of the plantation export economy and the shift from indentured servants to African slavery. These trends are traced through the second Spanish period, 1784 to 1821, and culminating with the Second U.S.-Seminole War in the 1830s.⁶³ This study concludes with the significant turning point marked by the Treaty of Fort Dade in 1837 and its far-reaching consequences. General Thomas Jesup sought to divide the Indigenous and African resistance through simultaneous overtures of freedom to Black Seminoles and guarantees of property to the Seminoles. Military force enabled the U.S. to project its power through policies to separate African and Indigenous peoples into discrete racial categories. Jesup sought to divide their interests, firmly establishing one group as “master” and the other as “slave” in a system meant to approximate chattel slavery rather than Indigenous forms of bondage. The overarching narrative, found in the six chapters of this work, seeks to highlight the interaction of the larger processes of the Southeastern Borderlands, mentioned above, with local forces in the Florida territories.

Among the various colonial regimes of East and West Florida, the British period, 1763-1784, is often overlooked or met with muted interest. Scholarship focusing on this period had generally lacked analysis but did present valuable accounts of the events that transpired.⁶⁴ In

contrast, the first chapter argues that the British period is relevant and was not simply an interlude between periods of Spanish occupation. Addressing the significance of the British Florida period, this work argues that their colonial administration was influential to the development of plantations, establishing the parameters of diplomacy, and the expansion of the Atlantic World economy through the deerskin trade. Governor James Grant's vision for the colony consisted of learning from previous Spanish deficiencies by developing stable diplomatic relations with Indigenous peoples thus enabling the growth of plantations based on crops such as indigo and rice. Effective diplomacy in the Picolata Congresses delineated the "Indian Nation" from British territory. The rise of plantations, such as the Andrew Turnbull's holdings worked by Greek and Minorcan immigrants, convinced colonial leaders that African slavery was preferable to indentured servants. In the final days of British rule, the influx of refugee planters escaping the Carolinas and Georgia during the American Revolution led to calls for a "Negro Act" providing masters greater security in their property while restricting African slaves' sociopolitical mobility.⁶⁵ Simultaneously, the Panton, Leslie, and Company trading firm began collecting Seminole and Lower Creek deerskins to exchange them for European manufactured goods. While the first chapter traces these developments, the second chapter will emphasize their influence on the succeeding colonial regime.

Seminole-Spanish diplomatic exchanges constitute the core of the second chapter. Correspondence, known as the *pláticas* or talks, between Spanish East Florida governors with the Seminole leader Payne sought to preserve peace agreements and defuse potential conflicts while highlighting themes of colonialism, race, and gender. They serve as excellent gauges of the geopolitical situation and power dynamics between both groups. For instance, this work

outlines how the Spanish were reliant on British traders, the Panton, Leslie, and Company, and their need to base their legitimacy upon the previous British administration, thus signaling Spanish weakness. Traders such as John Hambly and John Forrester were important conduits between the Spanish and the Seminoles: they translated, explained, and transcribed *pláticas* for both parties. Information passed through their cultural lenses before it reached the Spanish governors or the Seminole headmen. Additionally, this chapter argues that British-Seminole relations served as a template for Spanish officials, as did goals of promoting a plantation export economy. Effective British diplomatic strategies allowed Florida's economy to develop similarly to other Southeastern British colonies, which resulted in the commodification of African slaves and rigid ideas of race. Meanwhile the region's connection to the Atlantic World was through the expansion of the market economy. This chapter argues that Spanish Florida was influenced by these transformations. *Pláticas* are especially insightful if the analysis considers how they are transmitted, the role of interpreters, and the meaning of their metaphors and symbols.

Central to the focus of the third chapter are the events associated with William Augustus Bowles and interplay between growing discourses of nationalism and Florida's decentralized political systems, especially among the Seminoles. This occurred in geographic borderlands and colonial peripheries that nonetheless remained accessible to the mobility of various groups, goods, and ideas. Partly due to the abundance of sources generated by Bowles' exploits, this section will analyze and reconceptualize the events surrounding his interventions between 1788 and 1792, and his return in 1799 through 1803. However, unlike older accounts, this work will focus on the actions of his allies, the Apalachicola Seminoles and the Mikasuki. Colonial

accounts often perceived conflicts with Indigenous peoples being the result of nefarious white men's designs. However, Indigenous peoples were astute observers of the geopolitical situation and formulated strategies based upon their own concerns and objectives. For instance, in Florida, the Lower Creek, Mikasuki, and the Apalachicola Seminoles may have sided with Bowles in hopes of attaining better trading terms and to acquire a counterweight to the U.S. and the Spanish. Also significant is the discourse of nationalism present among the Creek, the U.S., and in Bowles' "State of Muskogee." This chapter examines how emerging ideas of nationalism in Florida were illustrative of a liminal space in which different ideas concerning sociopolitical organization especially the nature and structure of political entities came into contact and engaged in dialogue.

The fourth chapter demonstrates how Seminoles and Black Seminoles were viewed as threats to both the Spanish and the U.S. because they undermined an emergent racial order based on non-whites' subordinate position. In the waning days of the Second Spanish Florida period, the British sought alliances with African and Indigenous peoples to strike out at the U.S. During the War of 1812, the British army attracted African, Seminole, and Creek allies and supplied them with goods to facilitate their resistance. While the British eventually evacuated the Southeast, they left behind the "Negro Fort" on the Apalachicola River. As previously noted, one of the valuable accounts of the African stronghold comes from Pintado, who harbored the fear that the fort would destabilize the entire province. On the pretext that Spain could not control this "dangerous" outpost the U.S. invaded West Florida. The first U.S.-Seminole War involved the illegal U.S. invasion to destroy the "Negro Fort" as well as Seminole and Black Seminole settlements. This drove both groups from northern Florida and forced them to relocate

further south. With this show of power, the U.S. sought to end the fluid cultural, racial, and political borderlands because it believed that they undermined the nation-state.⁶⁶ Nations strive to gain control over territorial and sociocultural borders and establish a racialized hierarchy. As Sturm aptly illustrates, “virtually all nations, including the United States, have normative racial ideologies that homogenize cultural diversity and shape discourses of social belonging.”⁶⁷ The U.S., especially in the South, because of its labor segmentation due to the plantation export economy, sought to impose its racial order in the hopes of maintaining that system. To U.S. officials, and to a lesser extent the Spanish colonial government, the “Negro Fort” represented a dangerous blurring of racial lines that undermined the social order. The nation-state could not tolerate the challenge to its influence from people it considered inferior yet dangerous. Cases of runaway slaves leaving their masters and seeking sanctuary at Prospect Bluff threatened the very notion of the nation-state.

Events stemming from the first U.S-Seminole War initiated the sustained drive to displace and relocate Seminoles, Black Seminoles, and recent runaway African slaves. Chapter five demonstrates that after annexation the U.S. attempted to extend its control over the Seminoles and Black Seminoles in order to promote its political and economic interests in the Florida Borderlands. Beginning with the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1823, the U.S. sought to restrict the Seminoles to a territorial boundary and warned that any movement outside of that space justified removal. U.S. agents also chastised the Seminole for their “corruption” of the master-slave relationship. They were appalled when Seminoles refused to cooperate in the capture of runaway slaves. American planters were astonished that they were deprived of their property because Seminoles refused to capture and return African slaves. U.S. citizens made

numerous claims to acquire the Black Seminoles believing that the Seminoles did not know how to properly utilize them. This chapter examines many of the detailed slave claims in order to speak to the relationship between the Seminoles and the Black Seminoles. A significant number of scholars have debated the status of both groups arguing that the Black Seminoles were slaves within a system of Indigenous slavery that differed from chattel slavery.⁶⁸ Porter argues that the Black Seminoles were vassals in a “democratic feudalism” to their Seminole masters.⁶⁹ Recent scholarship has stressed the sociocultural space between Seminoles and Black Seminoles. This work seeks to problematize this argument by demonstrating the difficulty of generalizing both groups’ varied and multifaceted relationship, which also included myriad forms of kinship. However, U.S. efforts to racialize African and Indigenous peoples served to obscure this history.

The sixth chapter commences with an analysis of the 1837 Treaty of Fort Dade. In the agreement General Jesup was successful in dividing the Seminole and Black Seminole alliance. He sought to impose distinct and separate racial identities on groups with a history of fluid sociocultural interaction. Although there was prolonged resistance to removal, the U.S. did remove a significant number of Seminoles and Black Seminoles west by the late 1830s. Removal out of the complex Florida Borderlands meant that the nation-state could exert more power over both groups, and fully integrate Florida into the body politic. Prior relationships between Seminoles and Black Seminoles became strained when slave claims from Creeks and Euro-Americans effectively racialized Black Seminoles as black and subsequently as slaves. Even Seminole identity was threatened when U.S. officials sought to politically subsume them under Creek authority in Indian Territory. Close proximity to the Creeks meant the Black Seminoles were especially vulnerable to attack from slavers and a number were seized. Scholars

have argued that the relationship between the Seminoles and the Black Seminoles was altered by the removal experience and life further west.⁷⁰ Miller writes that some Seminoles had felt that Black Seminoles had betrayed them by accepting positions as U.S. Army translators and were responsible for the removal treaties.⁷¹ Nonetheless, when Coacoochee, known by American authorities as Wild Cat, lost his bid for Seminole leadership he brought a number of Black Seminoles into his group and emigrated to Mexico. They left in search of the geopolitical borderlands they had lost in Florida as well as seeking relief from Indigenous rivalries and the increasing power of the nation-state.

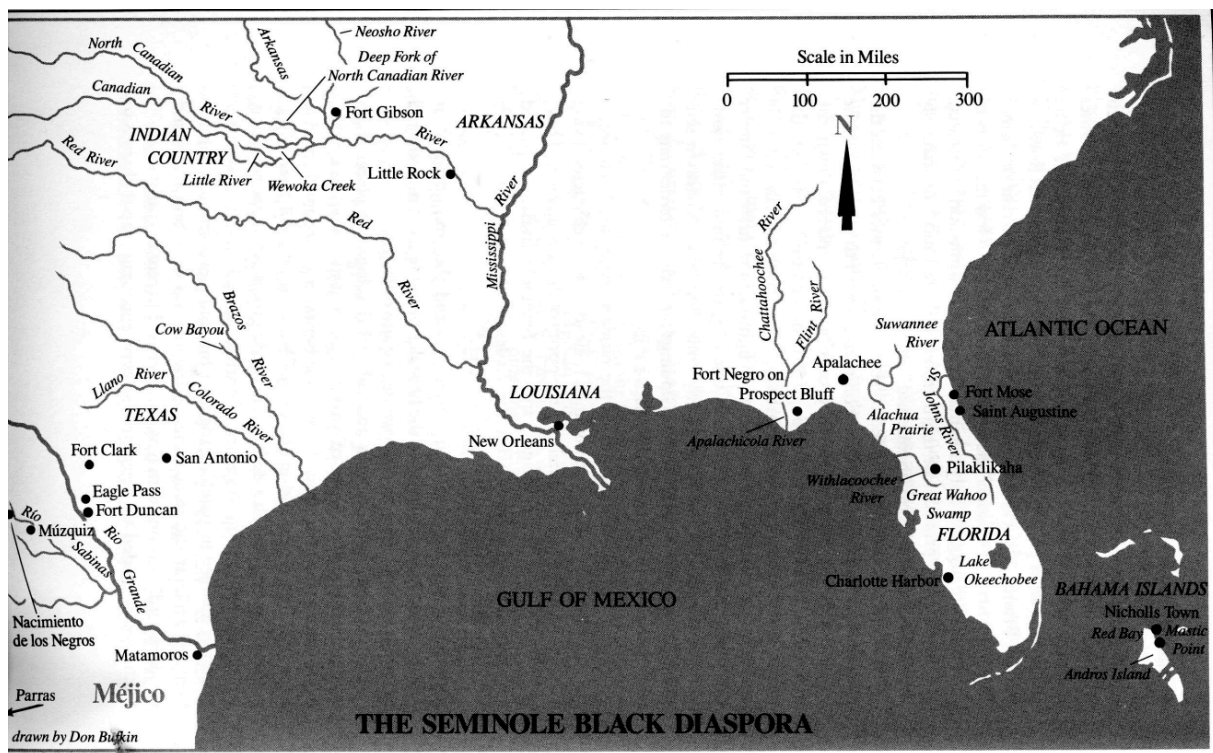


Figure 1.1 The Black Seminole/Seminole Diaspora. Source: Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 24.

Although scholarship concerning the Florida Borderlands, Seminoles, and Black Seminoles has grown in the last few years, few studies have implemented the chronological

scope of this project. While the events of British Florida are often isolated from the Second Spanish Florida period, this work asserts that the continuity of certain processes can be traced from the 1760s to the U.S. removal of Indigenous and African groups in the 1830s. With the utilization of British, Spanish, and U.S. sources this text is able to examine a critical transitional period through an approach that transcends the lifespan of a particular colonial government.

Notes:

¹ The “Negro Fort” was located at Prospect Bluff on the Apalachicola River and is referred to as Loma de Buena Vista within the Spanish documents; This study utilizes the term Florida Borderlands to refer to both West and East Florida provinces and their geographical borders with neighboring territories. After the British occupation in 1763 Florida was divided into West and East provinces with the Apalachicola River serving as the border. West Florida consisted of the westernmost part of the present-day Florida panhandle and extended west to the Mississippi River, its capital was located in Pensacola. Meanwhile East Florida included all of present-day Florida east of the Apalachicola River with its capital at St. Augustine. When discussing a specific territory within this work it will noted whether it is West or East Florida, otherwise I will utilize the term Florida to generally refer to both territories.

² Vicente Sebastián Pintado to Josef de Soto, 29 April 1815, Pintado Papers (hereafter cited as PP), microfilm reel 3, frame 785, P.K.Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY).

³ Larry Eugene Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 191.

⁴ Specifically the work of Jane Landers has positioned slavery and racial discourse in Spanish Florida as dialectically opposed to chattel slavery in the U.S.

⁵ Nathaniel Millett, "Britain's 1814 Occupation of Pensacola and America's Response: An Episode of the War of 1812 on the Southern Borderlands," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 84 (Fall 2005), 253. This article is one of the few to account for not only fugitive U.S. slaves but also Africans from Indigenous and Spanish settlements. He states that British recruitment of Africans to their military endeavors was not limited to U.S. slaves but extended to Spanish slaves as well. They left their masters in hopes of gaining their freedom despite the inherent risks of military service. This problematizes the standard view of Spanish Florida as a space of negotiation and lenient manumission laws since slaves felt compelled to risk their lives to leave that system of bondage as well. Millet explains this contradiction by writing that the Borderlands was a fluid place offering Africans the ability to chose between colonial powers who offered the most attractive incentives and opportunities. Nonetheless, the author notes that Pensacola was becoming increasingly hostile to the presence of British led armed African and Indigenous patrols.

⁶ Vicente Sebastián Pintado to Robert Spencer, 31 March 1815, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 778, PKY.

⁷ Vicente Sebastián Pintado to Robert Spencer, 02 April 1815, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 781, PKY.

⁸ Vicente Sebastián Pintado to Josef de Soto, 29 April 1815, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 785, PKY.

⁹ Jane Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary: Fugitives in Florida, 1687-1790," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 62 (1984), 297; Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 205. Linebaugh and Rediker write that Spain's reputation as a liberator of African slaves was a disruptive force in the Atlantic World. Citing examples such as the 1739 Stono Rebellion and disturbances during 1741 in New York which where partly undertaken by the belief that Spain would protect resistance leaders and their followers.

¹⁰ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), X. The author's concept of a "middle ground" seeks to examine "the place between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the non-state world of villages."

¹¹ Enrique White Edict, 20 May 1807, East Florida Papers (hereafter cited as EFP), microfilm reel 118, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY); Enrique White Edict, 26 September 1807, EFP, microfilm reel 118, PKY. The governor issued a series of regulations aimed towards all Blacks dealing with gambling, curfews, and virtual vagrancy laws.

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- ¹² Indian Territory consisted of reservation lands allocated to Indigenous groups that were removed from their own homelands. Due to later post-Civil War treaties and the 1887 Dawes Act, U.S. citizens acquired much of the land and the territory eventually became the state of Oklahoma.
- ¹³ Terrance M. Weik, "A Historical Archaeology of Black Seminole Maroons in Florida: Ethnogenesis and Culture Contact at Pilaklikaha," (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2002), 4.
- ¹⁴ Eric V. Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 3.
- ¹⁵ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the People in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999).
- ¹⁶ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional?*, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 19.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.
- ¹⁸ Herbert E. Bolton, "The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish-American Colonies," *The American Historical Review* 23 (October 1917), 42.
- ¹⁹ Herbert E. Bolton, "The Black Robes of New Spain," *The Catholic Historical Review* 21 (October 1935), 259. The author's survey of Jesuit missions in the Spanish borderlands makes scant mention of the brief Jesuit administration of the Florida missions; Amy Turner Bushnell, Review of *New Views of Borderlands History*, by Robert H. Jackson. *The Americas* 58 (July 2001), 159. The author writes that scholars have continued to associate Borderlands studies with the northern New Spain frontier while only giving Florida obligatory mention.
- ²⁰ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). The author's work is a comprehensive treatment of the Spanish borderlands and allocates space to each respective province.
- ²¹ David Thomas Hurst, ed. *Columbian Consequences, II, Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990); Bonnie G. McEwan, ed. *The Spanish Missions of La Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993).
- ²² Amy Turner Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana: Spain's Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida* (Athens University of Georgia 1994).
- ²³ Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida, Blacks in the New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary." Landers illustrates how the Spanish policy of sanctuary attracted fugitive African slaves from neighboring areas, which caused much consternation with United States officials. After facing international pressure, the Spanish officially repealed their policy but in reality slaves continued to enter Florida and only a few were returned to their owners.
- ²⁴ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 2; Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947).
- ²⁵ White, *The Middle Ground*.
- ²⁶ James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
- ²⁷ I utilize the term "distinct" to argue that it is difficult to identify another Spanish colony, with the possible exception of Louisiana, which was in a comparable position to Florida in regards of its geopolitical position.
- ²⁸ Amy Turner Bushnell, "Borderland or Border-Sea? Placing Early Florida," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (July 2003), 653. This review presents an informative discussion of recent works that take a boarder view of events occurring in colonial Florida.
- ²⁹ Jane Landers, ed. *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 8.
- ³⁰ Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 205.

³¹ John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³² Paul E. Hoffman, *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient: The American Southeast During the Sixteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

³³ James Gregory Cusick, "Spanish East Florida in the Atlantic Economy of the Late Eighteenth Century," in *Colonial Plantation and Economy in Florida*, ed. Jane G. Landers (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 169.

³⁴ Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, xii.

³⁵ Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1963); Eugene D. Genovese, *From Revolution to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

³⁶ Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) One of the author's significant points is that Africans from Senegambia were a force in bringing Islam to North America; James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) The book emphasizes religious continuity of African peoples, their influence on European colonists, and the eventual development of hybrid beliefs.

³⁷ Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1996).

³⁸ Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993).

³⁹ Ibid, 4; This study utilizes the term "Black Seminoles" to highlight the distinct history of the group in Florida and their association with the Seminoles. Although Black Seminoles should not be considered Seminole Indians, transculturation and intermarriage certainly occurred. Scholars have simply debated the intensity and frequency of these cross-cultural exchanges.

⁴⁰ Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

⁴¹ I am utilizing the term transculturation as defined by Ramon A. Gutiérrez and Elliott Young as a process where "people, cultures, and ideas moved in complex ways, defying linearity." This movement does not occur from one group to the other but rather both groups simultaneously influence each other. For a more detailed definition of transculturation see Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Elliott Young, "Transnationalizing Borderlands History," *Western Historical Quarterly* 41 (Spring 2010), 49.

⁴² Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969).

⁴³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999). Despite a long painful history of colonial powers and academics utilizing research to justify control of Indigenous peoples, the author feels that research can be redeemed. She advocates 25 different Indigenous research projects ranging from celebrating survival, preserving oral histories, and encouraging Indigenous peoples to write their own histories.

⁴⁴ Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 52.

⁴⁵ Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 115

⁴⁶ James F. Brooks, ed. *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 6.

⁴⁷ Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁹ Claudio Saunt, "'The English Has Now a Mind to Make Slaves of Them All': Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problem of Slavery," *American Indian Quarterly* 22 (Winter - Spring 1998). Seminoles unwillingness to adopt chattel slavery and its accompanying social and economic hierarchies clearly differentiated Seminole and Creek societies from each other.

⁵⁰ Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). The author writes that in Texas, Indigenous groups such as the Comanche were the actual power holders since the Spanish presence was extremely tenuous. Meanwhile James Brooks argued that in the Southwestern Borderlands the Spanish were only one of various partners in the captive raiding economy.

⁵¹ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

⁵² Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 48. Cherokee leaders had begun referring to the English as white and questioned the whiteness of the Spanish because of their deceitful behavior.

⁵³ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 7. Indigenous women's history must balance change and continuity while avoiding a declension narrative that over-emphasizes the loss of native women's pre-contact sociopolitical status.

⁵⁴ Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁵ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁵⁶ Jose Cuello, "Racialized Hierarchies of Power in Colonial Mexican Society: The Sistema De Castas as a Form of Social Control in Saltillo," in *Choice, Persuasion, and Coercion: Social Control on Spain's North American Frontiers*, ed. Jesús F. de la Teja and Ross Frank (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 205.

⁵⁷ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 61.

⁵⁸ Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁵⁹ Nationalistic movements in the Florida Borderlands were mostly limited to the United States and the Creeks. The U.S. effectively constructed the nation-state and accompanying institutions, which projected their power in the region during the 1830s.

⁶⁰ Seminoles received annuity payments from the U.S. for lands ceded in various treaties. These funds were distributed by the Seminole agency and could be garnished to pay slave claims.

⁶¹ Although U.S. control of Florida and eventual statehood is not usually considered a colonial occupation, for Indigenous and African peoples attempting to maintain their political and social autonomy, the U.S. regime imposing its authority by restricting Seminole territorial limits and Africans their freedom, is colonialism.

⁶² Within this context I utilize the term Euro-American to signify the British, Spanish, and United States administrations in both Florida territories.

⁶³ This study prefers to use the phrase "U.S.-Seminole Wars" rather than the more prevalent term "Seminole Wars" since it more accurately labels the character of these conflicts. Aggressive U.S. foreign policy, seeking the acquisition of Indigenous lands in Florida, was instrumental in the outbreak of hostilities.

⁶⁴ Cecil Johnson, *British West Florida, 1763-1783* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943); Charles Loch Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province, 1763-1784* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1964); James W. Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles: Negotiations between British Authorities in East Florida and the Indians, 1763-68* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1961).

⁶⁵ J. Leitch Wright Jr., "Blacks in British East Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 54 (April 1976), 436. Under the provisions of the Negro Act, African slaves followed the condition of their mother, free Blacks had to prove their status and wear armbands, slaves needed their masters' permission to travel and carry arms. Slaves accused of a capital crime could be tried locally with the only caveat that the governor reviewed the trial records and gave ultimate approval of the legitimacy of the proceedings.

⁶⁶ Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 8. Nation-states' boundaries are most visible and "contested at its territorial borders."

⁶⁷ Sturm, *Blood Politics*, 16.

⁶⁸ Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles*; Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977); Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*; Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Susan A. Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones: A Seminole Saga* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003).

⁶⁹ Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People*, 6.

⁷⁰ Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. argues that the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship fundamentally changed in Indian Territory due to the presence of groups that practiced chattel slavery. Kevin Mulroy argues that arrangements made in Florida remained largely intact until the twentieth century.

⁷¹ Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones*, 66. The author is specifically referring to the actions of the Black Seminole interpreters Abraham and Cudjo at the treaties of Payne's Landing and Fort Gibson.

Chapter 1

“THE WHITE AND RED PEOPLE LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS BROTHERS SHOULD DO”: BRITISH-SEMINOLE RELATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EAST FLORIDA PLANTATION ECONOMY, 1762-1783

The Great King after driving the French and Spanish from this land was most graciously pleased to appoint me to govern the white people in this part of his new conquered dominions.

I know and love the red people. I have lived long with them and as I am acquainted with their customs and manners, the Great King knew that I will do everything in my power to keep up peace and harmony between his white subjects and red children who the Great King wishes to live together as brethren should do.

You are apprehensive and have been told that the white people are desirous of getting possession of your hunting grounds. Your fears are ill founded for I am ordered by the Great King not to take any lands which are of use to you even if you should agree to give them up. You may judge from that how careful your Father the Great King is of your interests and welfare.

James Grant, 1765¹

British East Florida Governor James Grant readily recognized that relations with the Lower Creek and the Seminoles were of the utmost importance to his new administration.² Consequently in 1765 he accompanied the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern District John Stuart to Picolata, the primary crossing and meeting point on the St. Johns River between territory considered “Indian Country” and the colonial capital of St. Augustine. During the treaty conference, the European officials demonstrated their familiarity with Southeastern Borderlands diplomatic relations.³ Previously Grant had been involved in the Anglo-Cherokee War’s 1761 campaign and he cited this as evidence of his ability to treat with native peoples.⁴ Both men utilized Indigenous diplomatic procedures and employed metaphors and symbolic

language within their speeches. They sought to obey the appropriate protocols by participating in a calumet ceremony and evoking fictive kinship. During their speeches or “talks,” they dropped a string of beads for emphasis and as a sign of their good faith.⁵ Creek leader Tallechea took note that the British representatives’ posture had changed from his initial meeting with them at Taffuskie, “for now they (colonial officials) talked to them (Creeks and Seminoles) in their own way by giving them beads and tobacco to put them in mind of what is said, that everything is now well.”⁶

British officials gained jurisdiction over Florida after negotiating for its transfer following the end of the Seven Years’ War in 1763. Spain had been unable to control Florida partly due to the Lower Creeks’ power to “raid” and harass the province and its Indigenous allies.⁷ Although agreements had existed between neighboring Georgia and these Indigenous groups, their relationship became strained in the 1750s since the latter avoided an exclusive alliance with any European power.⁸ Cognizant of the Creeks’ strong geopolitical position, the British viewed a diplomatic agreement as critical to the future of East Florida.⁹ Grant felt that economic development hinged on the growth of plantations, which was contingent on stable relations with the Lower Creek and Seminoles. His willingness to grasp Indigenous diplomatic customs was motivated by the necessity of gaining their approval for British territorial claims. He wanted the Lower Creek and Seminoles to cede “the sea coast as far as the tide flows.”¹⁰ Essentially the British sought approval for the occupation of a sliver of land between the St. Johns River and Florida’s eastern coast. Although the governor undoubtedly foresaw taking a more aggressive stance concerning Indigenous subjugation and territorial expansion in the future, his pragmatic nature meant that he had to deal with native people on equitable terms.¹¹

Despite Grant's zeal for successfully completing the treaty, the decentralized nature of the Lower Creek political structure made consensus elusive. Understanding these barriers, the British negotiators sought to gain leverage by stationing a schooner with gifts in the St. Johns River.¹² They were sending a clear signal that the British were eager to partake in reciprocal exchanges, an important component of treaty negotiations. Theda Perdue asserts that the basis of these exchanges hinged on the fact that "the Indians received gifts; the English received peace and trade."¹³ Sensing that some Indigenous leaders questioned the treaty, the governor and superintendent began holding private meetings in order to individually persuade them of their plans. Grant and Stuart made Tallechea, Estime, and Captain Aleck "great medal chiefs" to demonstrate that British favor could enhance the prestige of the Lower Creek headman above their political rivals. Meanwhile the Alachua Seminole leader, known as Cowkeeper, was also awarded a medal in absentia, which was redeemed by his second-in-command, Wioffke. Once the Lower Creek contingent signed the treaty, Grant arranged a later meeting with Cowkeeper to further cement the alliance. The governor quickly made plans to have a second Picolata Congress although Stuart felt it was superfluous. Grant was adamant that disaster would befall British East Florida if he did not diligently seek and nurture Indigenous support.

The Picolata agreements represented a transformative moment in the Florida Borderlands and revealed the presence of various processes that ran both parallel and counter to one another depending on situation, time, and place. Colonial powers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century developed ideas associated with biological definitions of race, the nation, and market capitalism. However, Indigenous groups simultaneously inhabited a "middle ground" by maintaining a measure of power against the colonial project. Nevertheless Europeans sought to

promote and establish their hegemony over non-European peoples.¹⁴ This entailed the effort to control Indigenous and African peoples through their categorization as “Indian” and “Negro” which silenced their ethnic and political diversity.

While the Picolata Congress is representative of the pragmatism displayed by Grant and Stuart as well as the relative strength of the Lower Creek and the Seminole, the British nonetheless envisioned their colony reaching a “State of Maturity as will make them respectable and enable them to stand alone.”¹⁵ While conducting treaty negotiations, the British were already attempting to exert some control over Indigenous peoples. In their talks they presented the British monarch as the “Great Father” and the paternal authority over his “red children.” Additionally, Grant and Stuart, through their appointment of “Great Medal Chiefs,” were seeking to impose a centralized political structure upon the Lower Creek and Seminole. The British also began to utilize the terms “red” and “white,” a practice both Southeastern Indigenous peoples and Europeans engaged in and did not initially signify distinct biological difference until the middle of the eighteenth century. However, as Nancy Shoemaker states, British encouragement of a plantation export economy, especially in Barbados, led to the racialized division of labor and helped create the economic and political basis of whiteness and blackness.¹⁶ In East Florida, the British perception of a “red” identity upon Indigenous peoples was connected with efforts to confer blackness to African slaves. Governor Grant informed the Board of Trade and Plantations that “planters in the several provinces upon this continent only waited for the conclusion of the Indian treaty” and that “a number of Negroes have already been brought in, their labor is absolutely necessary in this warm climate.” The racialization of African and Indigenous peoples

was central to the British colonial project in East Florida and, despite its limited effectiveness, later shaped Spanish and early U.S. colonial policies.

Gauging the overall impact of the roughly twenty-year British reign in East Florida remains difficult. While this study is centered on illuminating how colonial powers starting with the British imagined and constructed racial categories, subordinate peoples, especially within the “Indian nations” continued to defend their political and cultural autonomy and negotiated alliances. Beyond the limits of St. Augustine no single power with its associated discourses on race, identity, politics or social structure held sway. This was due to the constant movement of Indigenous, African, and European peoples within the Florida Borderlands. Seminole settlements, once an outlier of the Creek Confederation, incorporated other groups such as the Yamassee and subsequent Creek migration from the north, especially the Creek Red Sticks after the War of 1812.¹⁷ British colonization of the Floridas coincided with the ethnogenesis of not only the Seminoles but also African slaves from European settlements. Living among the Indigenous peoples, either in adjacent settlements or within Seminole settlements, Africans occupied numerous positions in Seminole society ranging from slaves to kin. Colonialism’s ability to impose hierarchies based on whiteness and its sociopolitical order had to be modified when confronted with the fluid and dynamic Florida Borderlands.

The majority of studies on British Florida do not trace the continuity between its policies and the subsequent Spanish and U.S. regimes since the period was labeled a “failure,” implying it had little lasting impact. This perception is largely based upon the colony’s brief lifespan, stunted economic development, and limited power base. As noted above, emergent British notions of race were not hegemonic among all groups and their significance not readily apparent.

Among the early and few examinations of the period, Cecil Johnson's *British West Florida, 1763-1783* and M.L. Mowat's *East Florida as a British Province, 1763-1784* was described by a reviewer in 1945 as "explaining the failure of the Florida colonies."¹⁸ With the "failure thesis" establishing a consensus that British Florida offered little of analytical value, these works rarely strayed from a straightforward narrative. In fact, a significant number of texts, especially publications by James W. Covington and Lawrence H. Feldman, focused solely on presenting primary source materials from British archives.¹⁹ By looking at British Florida only through the lens of major events in U.S. history such as the American Revolution, the history of the region will continue to be treated as incidental. The onset of more studies focusing on subordinate peoples and themes of race, gender, identity, market capitalism, and colonialism will go beyond the question of failure.²⁰

Recent texts on British West and East Florida have emphasized individual colonists and their ambitions, which were rarely realized. They highlight British policies centered on economic expansion and the recruitment of planters. Robin F.A. Fabel in *The Economy of British West Florida, 1763-1783* touches upon the development of slavery, plantations, and the Indigenous trade. He argues that the drive to make Florida economically viable may have been possible if it did not face numerous constraints, not the least of which being time.²¹ In *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, Daniel L. Schafer, Patricia C. Giffin, and Susan R. Parker respectively examined the land holdings of major planters such as Richard Oswald, Andrew Turnbull, and Francis Philip Fatio. Only Fatio obtained long-term success through a "supranational viewpoint and business style that allowed him to readily adapt to the national requirements of shifting governments in Florida."²² On the other hand, Oswald and Turnbull

were on the verge of operating large prosperous plantations and settlements until drought and political disruptions proved insurmountable.²³ If the standards of British “success” continue to be economic factors and long-term political stability, then short-term growth of plantations and strategic planning aside, historical judgment of the British Floridas will continue to stress its “failure.”

This chapter seeks to contribute to current historiography through its central argument that the British occupation of East Florida established crucial trends in the racialization of Indigenous and African peoples, which provided a template for subsequent colonial powers. Rather than concentrating on economic success, this study centers on important processes occurring between the British, Indigenous peoples, and Africans. Specifically, a connection is discernable between the development of diplomacy, labor systems, and the codification of the emergent racial order.

In particular, three events are emphasized, the Picolata Congress, Governor Grant’s encouragement and support of plantations, and the Negro Act of 1781. As mentioned above, the Picolata Congress produced the first treaty between the “proto-Seminole” and the colonial power residing in St. Augustine.²⁴ This agreement and the manner in which it was produced, utilizing the protocols of Southeastern Borderlands diplomacy, remained in place until the 1824 Treaty of Moultrie Creek. Consequently, a stable relationship with the Lower Creeks and the Seminoles meant that Grant was free to promote the creation of plantations. During the American Revolution, Grant’s goals were nearly fulfilled when Florida experienced a sudden influx of refugee Southern planters and their slaves. Consequently, the emergent elite demanded stringent laws to maintain control over their slaves. With the backing of the Florida legislature

in the colony's waning days, the Negro Act sought to give slave owners security over their property.

These developments are significant since many of the British goals of obtaining land from Indigenous peoples, populating Florida with European settlers, and utilizing African slave labor eventually occurred under the U.S. The goals outlined by Grant in the 1760s were also voiced in the 1820s by numerous Euro-American authors seeking to embrace the political and economic vision established by the British. Although the return of the Spanish in 1784 is often perceived as a continuation of the policies of their previous colonial reign prior to 1763, the Spanish had to be aware that their initial occupation verged on collapse and that the British had made some strides towards making the colony viable. This would explain why the Spanish referenced the British in their dealings with the Seminoles while allowing traders and Euro-American planters access to its Florida colonies. A de-emphasis upon the "failure thesis" can facilitate a re-conceptualization of British East Florida and highlight its lasting influence on subsequent colonial projects resulting in a much more nuanced and informative historical narrative.

1.1 First Spanish Florida Period

In order to assess the transformations that occurred during the British period, a brief discussion of prior European colonization of Florida is necessary. The geopolitical situation from the middle sixteenth to the latter part of the eighteenth centuries witnessed cycles of Spanish colonial expansion and contraction centered on the colonial capital of St. Augustine. Indigenous leaders from the Guale, Timucuan, and the Apalachee utilized Spanish "gifts," trade,

and missions against both external and internal rivals. Spanish officials during periods of relative strength, coinciding with Indigenous demographic decline, attempted to impose their hegemony. Excessive demands of tribute and labor as well as attempts to manipulate internal Indigenous social and political structures often shattered optimistic Spanish assessments of their progress. Various incidents often sparked significant resistance movements such as the Juanillo (Guale) Revolt of 1597, the Apalachee Revolt of 1647, and the Timucuan Rebellion of 1655. During the final years of Spanish occupation the mission system and Spanish presence outside of St. Augustine collapsed under British pressure and a nascent Indigenous political and military power, the Creeks.

In areas that lacked valuable mineral wealth or large sedentary pools of Indigenous labor, the Spanish were more reactive than active in terms of colonial expansion. Early Spanish excursions into Florida had inflated expectations of finding wealth either through “gold and slaves,” as in the case of Juan Ponce de León in 1513, or an agricultural paradise which motivated Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón’s hunt for Chicora in 1526.²⁵ Scholars such as Paul Hoffman and John T. McGrath have provided insight into preliminary efforts to colonize Florida. Disavowing the notion that Spanish occupation was inevitable, they respectively focus on the individuals and the precarious events that could have easily altered the course of history. Through an examination of Ayllón’s colonization schemes, Hoffman both demonstrates the limitations of establishing settlements in the Southeastern Borderlands while also illustrating how expansion was not directly controlled by the Spanish monarchy but by individual investors, who often lost their venture capital.²⁶ McGrath focuses on the pivotal French settlements that rudely awoke Spanish officials from their complacency in the region. As the author notes,

viewing the destruction of Fort Caroline, and the subsequent founding of St. Augustine in 1565 by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés as predestined de-emphasizes the uncertainty that accompanied Spanish efforts to oust the French from Florida.²⁷ The author's micro history of an event traditionally portrayed as a historical footnote does well to explain why the Spanish and French exhausted significant resources to gain a foothold in Florida. Control of the region meant having access to the Bahama Channel where Spanish naval convoys filled with the spoils of conquest regularly traveled en route to Spain.

Spanish occupation of Florida after 1565 consisted of alternating efforts to expand Spanish dominion from St. Augustine and hasty retreats back to the colonial capital during times of crisis. Franciscans, having replaced the Jesuits in the 1570s, established themselves among the Guale, Timucua, and later the Apalachee. Florida's Indigenous peoples possessed a measure of political, social, and economic autonomy when dealing with missionaries. Spanish colonial hegemony strengthened when the groups mentioned above were confronted with a deteriorating demographic situation. Indigenous leaders sought a counterbalance to internal and external conflicts while Spanish authorities moderated their intervention into Indigenous political and social systems. Amy Turner Bushnell states that the Jesuits attempted to appropriate native peoples' leaders by sending their sons to college in Havana, but eventually the children were sent to the governor's residence.²⁸ Indigenous leaders or *caciques*, as the Spanish called them, were appointed to head the *República de Indios*, a society considered parallel yet subordinate to the *República de Españoles*: they served as mediators and collectors of tribute. However, higher taxation and infringements upon Indigenous political structures caused the spread of significant revolts, which curtailed Spanish expansion into the Florida interior.

Indigenous peoples within the Florida Borderlands tolerated and utilized Spanish colonialism until Franciscans and government officials overtly asserted their authority. Located north of St. Augustine, the Guale experienced early contact with the Spanish, and a reciprocal relationship was established with the various headmen. Guale leadership attempted to utilize Spanish trade items and recognition in order to bolster their claims to the position of “mico mayor,” or principal leader.²⁹ When the Spanish attempted to elevate one particular person in 1576, other Guale contenders killed the man and resisted against Spanish interference. The Timucua and the Apalachee, among whom disease and colonialism eroded or challenged Indigenous leaders’ legitimacy, became more willing to accommodate missionaries in hopes that increased access to the Spanish would add credence to their claims of authority.³⁰ As the Spanish interpreted this as subjection to their will, they increased the pressure on Indigenous economic, political, and social systems. Consequently, the 1597 Juanillo Revolt began when Franciscans interceded in a Guale succession of leadership. They opposed the ascendancy of “Juanillo,” a proponent of an Indigenous sociopolitical revivalist movement viewed as intractable to Spanish governance. In the subsequent conflict the Spanish lost many missions and suffered diminishing influence among the western Timucuan.³¹ When the Spanish finally did expand into western Florida, a violent encounter between the Apalachee and the Franciscans led to another major rebellion in 1647. Eight years later the Spanish lost control over the region for a year when their excessive corn demands drove Timucuan leaders, Lucas Menéndez and Diego, to overthrow colonial authority.

Spanish-Indigenous relations were also strained by further manifestations of European rivalries in the Southeastern Borderlands. With the exit of the French from Fort Caroline in

1565, the British eventually filled the vacuum by establishing colonies on the Atlantic and finding their own sources of wealth. Francis Drake's plunder of St. Augustine in 1586 stunted its growth and marked the arrival of the new British threat. A year later Spain abandoned Santa Elena in present-day South Carolina, due to logistics and expenses, effectively ending the region's prospects for Spanish colonization.³² Charles Town was then founded in 1670 and was implicitly recognized by the Spanish as a British settlement in the Treaty of Madrid, which was concluded the same year.³³

Following the establishment of British settlements, increased trade and political alliances between Southeastern Indigenous peoples and the British occurred because of the latter's ability to consistently furnish quality goods. Charles Town became integrated into the Atlantic World market economy and sought exports. As a result, the Indian trade, which included Indigenous captives and slaves, became the most important economic activity and source of labor until 1715. The Westo, seeking an alliance with South Carolina, supplied the colony with Indigenous slaves hailing from groups such as the Guale. When conflict occurred between the British and Westo, the Yamasee became the dominant power on the Savannah River. These groups proceeded to conduct raids into Florida and in 1685 attacked the Spanish mission school of Santa Catalina as well as the Timucuans.³⁴ Alan Galloway's *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* convincingly illustrates how trade in 20,000-50,000 Indigenous slaves for British manufactured goods had significant consequences and eventually reshaped the region's power dynamics.³⁵

Initiating important shifts, the Yamasee War in 1715 marked the transition from Indigenous bondage to African slavery. The Yamasee, a multiethnic political confederation on

the Savannah River, attacked the British over various abuses including fears of their own enslavement. Indigenous groups on the Savannah River and the Creeks joined the Yamasee and caused considerable damage to the colony. Eventually a British-Cherokee alliance against the Lower Creek represented a turning point that gave the advantage to the Europeans and their allies. Once the conflict ended, South Carolina drove many Indigenous peoples to Spanish Florida or to the Creek settlements. The latter were now in an advantageous position over the Spanish and the British; Creeks were the dominant power and could command gifts from both parties without committing to either camp. With increased leverage in their trading relationships, Indigenous groups no longer turned to slave raids and instead focused on the trading of pelts. Concurrently, South Carolina also witnessed the detrimental effects of the Indian slave trade and promoted a plantation export economy based upon rice cultivation and African, not Indigenous, slave labor.³⁶ This led to an embryonic racialization of Africans as “negroes,” bestowing upon them the inferior hereditary status of slaves. Development of chattel slavery in South Carolina created a new flash point between the British, Indigenous peoples, and the Spanish. During the 1715 conflict the Yamasee had seized African slaves and both groups established a base in Florida and returned to raid and liberate slaves from South Carolina plantations. As Galloway notes, the British were wary of Indigenous-African alliances and attempted to create social space between both groups.³⁷

Spanish Florida’s embrace of African slaves entering into the Florida Borderlands would also draw the ire of the British. In response to their precarious situation, the Spanish established the garrison town of Garcia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose for free Africans and runaway slaves, utilizing them as a border militia. The events of 1739, one year after the founding of Mose,

proved to be pivotal. In South Carolina, the Stono Rebellion illustrated that slaves would seek to utilize Spain's policy of sanctuary, which had been clarified six years earlier by Philip V's *cédula* or royal order.³⁸ Scholars argue that all parties involved were cognizant of role Spanish Florida played in inspiring the predominantly Congolese slaves to resist.³⁹ Towards the end of the year, the War of Jenkins' Ear offered Governor James Oglethorpe, of the newly founded Georgia colony, an opportunity to remove the Spanish irritant from the region. Oglethorpe and Creek allies quickly occupied the hinterlands including Mose, thus ensuring widespread destruction outside St. Augustine's Castillo de San Marcos. The siege lost its momentum when Spanish led forces, comprised of Europeans, allied Indigenous groups, and free Africans, launched a counter attack on British occupied Mose. The maneuver served to siphon off steam from the British offensive and eventually led to Oglethorpe's retreat.⁴⁰

Despite St. Augustine's stubborn determination and refusal to capitulate to the British, it lay prostrate to the diplomatic maneuvering following the Seven Years' War, which produced the British occupation of Florida. Although the Spanish had retained nominal control of the colony throughout the war, signs of weakness were evident. For example, the mission system completely collapsed, only 158 persons remained in the system by 1752.⁴¹ Thereafter the Lower Creeks gained hegemony over northern Florida and displaced prior groups such as the Yamasee and eventually incorporated them. Economically, Hoffman writes that Charles Town traders and Georgia ranchers even managed to incorporate St. Augustine as their market despite the illegality of their exchanges.⁴² The cycles of expansion and retraction of Spanish control over the Florida Borderlands ended as it had begun in 1565, with the Spanish clutching the coastline.

1.2 Seminole Ethnogenesis

As a distinct political and social entity, the Seminoles did not exist until the eighteenth century. According to anthropologist William C. Sturtevant, the Seminoles were a “post-European phenomenon” whose ethnogenesis and distinct identity resulted from the splintering of various Creek bands that migrated to Northern Florida.⁴³ Historian J. Leitch Wright has done well to document how the Seminole’s progenitors, the Creek, were themselves an amalgamation of various Indigenous ethnicities, cultural groups, and bands, mainly based around the Mississippi Valley.⁴⁴ In the Southeastern Borderlands events such as the Yamasee War caused the physical mobility, fission, and fusion of Indigenous settlements and groups. While these processes occurred prior to European colonization, the Spanish and British presence, as well as continuing Indigenous rivalries, seemed to have intensified the factors, such as prolonged conflicts, Indigenous slave raids, and commercial hunting, which applied ever increasing pressure for Indigenous groups to adjust to new conditions. Many of these challenges were met through malleable political and social systems that could incorporate new cultural and ethnic groups. Conversely, European imperial powers sought to project centralized political authority and identity upon Indigenous groups in order to facilitate treaty agreements and land concessions.⁴⁵ Significantly, the Southeastern Borderlands, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was a site of negotiation between political centralization, racialization, and market capitalism with decentralized Indigenous political structures, fluid identities and ethnicities, and primarily reciprocal exchanges.

Creek diversity is visible through their ethnic, linguistic, and geographic divisions.⁴⁶ The term “Creek” is said to have had its origins from the British traders who utilized the word to

describe the Ocheese living near the Ocumulgee River in Georgia.⁴⁷ This Muskogee speaking group migrated from the west and helped comprise one of the two linguistic divisions among the Creek. Meanwhile, the Ocheese became situated near the territory of Hitchiti speakers, who had inhabited the region longer than other groups. Both Muskogee and Hitchiti are considered to be part of the Muskogean linguistic family but are mutually unintelligible. While these two divisions serve as convenient markers within the confederation, they do not encompass all the linguistic variety within the Creek. For instance, a few Shawnee settlements, consisting of speakers of an Algonquian language, were also incorporated, as were the members of other language groups, such as Koasati, Alabama, and Yuchi, and the Natchez. Although many bands and towns spoke different languages, Muskogee did develop, for non-native speakers, as a second language that facilitated communication. In addition to language, geographic divisions also existed. “Upper Creeks” were based on the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers in present-day Alabama and the “Lower Creeks” were located in present-day Georgia near the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers. The Upper Creeks had more contact with the French near Mobile while the Lower Creek were alternating between alliances with the British and the Spanish, depending on the geopolitical situation.⁴⁸

In conjunction with linguistic and geographic divisions, the Creek, perhaps owing to their diversity, increasingly embraced ethnic designations. Scholars state that in the Southeastern Borderlands, Indigenous settlements had identified as either red (war) or white (peace) moieties. The exact responsibilities and duties under the purview of each division remained ambiguous or often changed. A simplistic description of the system holds that war towns provided leadership during military conflicts while white settlements served as sanctuaries and incorporated new

groups.⁴⁹ Red and white categories continued into the eighteenth century, but the more relevant membership status was roughly based upon the Muskogee/Hitchiti dichotomy. Affiliated and refugee Indigenous members outside the two main groups were given unflattering designations such as *estenko*, a Muskogee word, and called “stinkards.” This pejorative name conferred foreignness, inferiority, and a subordinate position.⁵⁰ Creek methods for ordering society would persist among the Seminoles, as they became a more unified ethnic group in the Florida Borderlands.

Scholars agree that while linguistic, geographic, and ethnic divisions were present among the Creek, the primary basis of Indigenous identity was based upon kinship, clan, and town membership. Serving as the foundation of Creek communities, the *huti* were clusters of several structures containing a clan based on the families of several Indigenous women.⁵¹ These were matrilineal settlements, meaning that men lived with their mothers and later their wife’s family. The leading male authority figure would be a man’s uncle, his mother’s brother. Concerning duties and responsibilities, women were involved in agriculture, preparing hides, making crafts, and tending children. Men devoted part of their seasons to hunting, trading, raising livestock, and were utilized during armed conflicts.

Significantly, women also had the vital role of bestowing upon their children their clan identities, which could not be altered by marriage. Clans were larger groupings of people who believed they shared a common ancestor; these identities were not localized to specific settlements but spanned the Creek towns. Various clans existed, such as the Bear, Deer, Wind, Beaver, Turkey, Wildcat, Panther, and Wolf, with some more prominent than others.⁵² Clans were charged with providing visiting members, considered relatives, with hospitality and more

importantly clans served to address perceived injuries and attacks upon anyone in the group. An elder headman of the clan represented its interests not only at the local level but also at regional conferences. If the clan had an association with an even larger political entity then its leader would go to that council as well.⁵³

In conjunction with clans, settlements and towns were crucial in the functioning of a Creek hierarchy as well as social and political structures. *Talofas* were small villages with a cluster of buildings where the *huti* lived. They served as satellite settlements and were affiliated with a square ground town known as the *talwa*. This was the principal political and social center for the *talofas* in the vicinity. A square ground at the *talwa* was a plaza surrounded by four rectangular structures, and served as the location of the ceremonial fire. One of the buildings in the town center was the council house, utilized for important conferences, meetings, and events. For instance, the busk or green corn ceremony was meant to mark a new year, the lighting of a new ceremonial fire, and the ripening of maize.⁵⁴ *Talwa* leadership consisted of the *micco*, the political headman, and the *tustenuggee thlacco*, the top military leader, and would also include a principal spiritual head. Power usually remained within a specific family, the *micco*'s brothers held the military and spiritual positions. Clan leaders from the *talofas* sent representatives to the *talwa* council to balance their authority.⁵⁵ While the *talwas* were considered independent, they could be part of a larger political entity meaning that they sent representatives to a general council led by a *micco* whose prestige gave him authority over other *talwa*'s *miccos*. This brief summary of Creek social and political organization, with its linguistic, geographic, ethnic, clan, and town divisions, illustrates that its overriding characteristic was decentralization, especially considering that *talofas* could splinter off from their *talwa* and form their own square ground

town.⁵⁶ This would occur in the eighteenth century when groups of Lower Creeks would enter into the Florida Borderlands and eventually become known as the Seminoles.

When the Seminoles entered Florida and the date that their *talwas* gained complete independence from the Lower Creek continues to be uncertain. Spanish overtures were made during the early eighteenth century encouraging Creek bands to relocate to Florida and serve as a buffer to the British. These efforts included Lieutenant Diego Peña's visits to the Lower Creek, the establishment of Fort San Marcos de Apalache, and the presence of a trading house.⁵⁷ However, Spanish officials' inability to guarantee a steady supply of gifts and trade undermined these efforts. Scholars argue that some Lower Creek may have accepted the offer and relocated near Apalachee.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, general consensus holds that Creek raids into the Florida Borderlands, especially during the 1739 and 1743 Oglethorpe invasions, not only devastated Spanish indigenous allies but familiarized the Lower Creek with the northern Florida interior. Subsequently, the vacuum created in the Florida offered an opportunity for bands or towns seeking to relocate.

Precisely tracing the movement of proto-Seminoles in a fluid and dynamic borderlands is difficult. Nonetheless, scholars such as Covington and Miller write that proto-Seminoles entered the area in various phases, with the latter identifying four specific groups and geographic areas, three of which will be discussed shortly.⁵⁹ Early settlement occurred with the first few bands establishing themselves in the present-day Florida Panhandle. Around 1715, the first major relocation involved Indigenous villages leaving Lower Creek territory and moving south to form Apalachicola River towns. A few years later, a significant second front of Lower Creek immigration was opened in the vicinity of Apalachee, a trend that would continue in the

following decades. The Mikasuki, a major power during the second Spanish Florida period, would establish themselves at this location. Around the 1750s, the Indigenous leader Cowkeeper, as the British called him, founded the Alachua Seminoles in the area of present-day Gainesville and Micanopy. These interior north-central Florida lands during the first half of the seventeenth century had been part of Spanish treasurer Francisco Menéndez Márquez's Rancho de la Chua where he raised cattle.⁶⁰ Apparently the name Cowkeeper alluded to the Seminoles tending of cattle in that location as well.⁶¹ These three main areas in the Florida Borderlands, Apalachicola, Apalachee (Mikasuki), and Alachua, would become the major Seminole demographic and political centers until the 1830s.

Eventually, the Indigenous groups establishing themselves in Florida would become recognized as the Seminoles and would diverge politically from the Creek Confederacy. Various factors led to the fissioning of the Lower Creek and the ethnogenesis of the Seminoles. The towns and bands that relocated from Georgia, the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers, have been described as primarily Hitchiti speakers with a significant Muskogee minority.⁶² Wright states that non-Muskogee groups, including the Hitchiti, were often singled out as “stinkards.”⁶³ Hitchiti bands may have sought to evade a stigma of inferiority by relocating to Florida. Another explanation may rest with the efforts of Lower Creek headman to achieve positions of leadership. Miller writes that Chilokilichi, in Apalachicola, and Simpukasee, based in Apalachee, were related to the prestigious Coweta *Micco*, known as Brims, the former his brother and the latter being his son.⁶⁴ Additionally, Cowkeeper, the Alachua Seminole founder, was from the elite lineage of the Oconeas, and thus proto-Seminole leaders were not marginal members of Lower Creek towns. However, especially in the case of Chilokilichi and

Simpukasee, they may have not been in line for becoming *miccos*.⁶⁵ Establishing their own *talwas* in northern Florida may have offered the opportunity to strike out on their own. Numerous explanations could possibly be made in order to understand Indigenous peoples' movement into Florida. Nonetheless, Lower Creek political structures were decentralized and the branching out and founding of new *talwas* was representative of that system. Since Lower Creek *talwas* often retained their independence it was not abnormal for proto-Seminole settlements to then assert their autonomy.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Seminole and Lower Creek cleavages had become apparent. British documents and naturalist William Bartram's travels in 1774 produced the first written sources to recognize Seminole autonomy.⁶⁶ British East Florida Governor Patrick Tonyn would come to understand that agreements with Lower Creeks did not necessarily apply to Florida's Indigenous peoples since "the Indians settled in this province . . . are separated from the Creek Nation, and are not considered by them to be of it."⁶⁷ Tracing the etymology of "Seminole" can provide some insight into the development of their distinct identity. Sturtevant writes that "Seminole" is derived from the Muskogee term *simanó•li*, which was influenced by the Spanish word "cimarrón" meaning "wild" and "runaway."⁶⁸ Beyond the adoption of a separate term to refer to Florida's indigenous peoples, political motives were the driving force in the separation of the Seminole from the Creek. A radical transformation in Seminole culture from the Creek was not the cause of the split. Anthropologists state that among the Seminole, "Creek settlement patterning, religious and political institutions, and economic practices were all preserved."⁶⁹ However, Seminole *talwas* had the geographical space and latitude to assert their own autonomy. In a convincing argument, Claudio Saunt asserts that it was Upper Creek elites,

such as Alexander McGillivray, who embraced political centralization, market capitalism, and chattel slavery, which represented a shift in Lower Creek values and from the Seminoles. Rigid social hierarchies contradicted previous decentralized political and social relationships. While scholars such as Mulroy and Miller de-emphasize Africans' role in shaping Seminole identity, Saunt states that their rejection of chattel slavery and incorporation of Africans was a "distinguishing feature of Seminole identity by the beginning of the nineteenth century."⁷⁰

1.3 British Colonialism in East Florida

Whereas Oglethorpe's siege of St. Augustine had failed, negotiations stemming from the 1763 Treaty of Paris effectively swapped Havana, which the British had captured, for Florida, and consequently divided the province into East and West Florida.⁷¹ Colonial officials were certainly cognizant of the geopolitical situation not only in the Southeastern Borderlands but in North America generally. As illustrated by the Proclamation Line of 1763, the British sought to avoid costly wars with Indigenous peoples while utilizing alliances and gifts. This policy took shape in the Florida Borderlands as officials were determined to establish stable relations with the Lower Creeks and the Seminoles in order to achieve their larger goal of making their newly acquired colony profitable.

British occupation of Florida after 1763 occurred within a larger context of North American colonization. As Richard White notes, Indigenous peoples strategically utilized imperial rivalries between the French, British, and in the Southeast, the Spanish. The "middle ground" was a physical and metaphorical space of negotiation and accommodation. With the withdrawal of the French from the Great Lakes Region and the Mississippi River Valley, the

British hoped their victory in the Seven Years' War meant they could dictate terms to Indigenous peoples. In particular, British General Jeffrey Amherst sought to curtail the distribution of gifts, a significant component of the reciprocal exchanges vital to diplomacy in the region.⁷² He felt the Algonquians and Iroquois were no military threat and should fully abide to British authority. Although colonial powers operating in the middle ground expediently turned to diplomacy, they still had expectations of having their authority over Indigenous peoples and their territories recognized. However, Indigenous peoples had simply viewed arrangements with Europeans as alliances that did not entail allegiance to a European monarch. Once colonial powers' positions improved they sought to enforce the hegemony they perceived Indigenous peoples had already accepted.⁷³ Concurrently, there was an increase of social space between Europeans and Indigenous peoples, with the latter viewed as alien and biologically different. In the Great Lakes region the British began to demand the return of all captives, many of whom had served as important cultural mediators, and they also viewed the exchanges of goods as solely business transactions without any social meaning.

These policies were pivotal in the resistance that culminated in Pontiac's Rebellion, a pan-Indian alliance that attacked newly occupied British forts. White writes that while the conflict is seen as a failure in terms of ending British occupation, it did succeed in restoring the middle ground.⁷⁴ This was epitomized in the Proclamation of 1763, which sought to avoid expensive wars with Indigenous peoples by restricting colonists from settling west of Appalachian Mountains. British policy reversed course and resumed the utilization of gifts in order to cement the Algonquian-British alliance. Although the costs of engaging in Indigenous

diplomacy were great, the British were convinced they had to follow what they knew as the French model in order to avoid the greater cost of larger conflicts.⁷⁵

As Pontiac's Rebellion was drawing to a close, East Florida Governor Grant was nervously welcoming delegations of Lower Creek headmen at Picolata. Undoubtedly aware of the broader trends of British North American colonization, he was personally involved with developments in the Southeastern Borderlands. The region had witnessed destructive conflicts such as the Yamasee War and Oglethorpe's offensives. Inheriting a feeble colony confined to the coast was the end product of those wars. Preceding his appointment as governor, Grant was a British officer in the Anglo-Cherokee War, ignited in part by tensions over Carolina colonists encroaching on Cherokee territory. In the waning years of the conflict, Grant and the Cherokee leader Attakullakulla were credited with ending the war. Supposedly sympathetic towards the Cherokee, Grant offered generous terms.⁷⁶ He would later brandish these credentials during the Picolata Congress to illustrate that he was an honest broker.⁷⁷ Grant's efforts may have also led to the presence of a Cherokee delegation at recent Augusta treaty negotiations with the Creeks. John Stuart, assigned the position of Superintendent of Indian Affairs, was at this conference where he informed the Creeks that a separate treaty would be discussed with the East Florida governor.

Although the British officials at the Picolata Congress were supporters of diplomacy and practitioners of negotiation and accommodation, the conference was meant to facilitate colonization of Florida, not to guarantee Indigenous autonomy. Early British documents outline the goals of developing the colony into an economically viable province.⁷⁸ Neighboring colonies, especially South Carolina, established the precedent of utilizing slave labor, initially

Indigenous but later African slaves, to fuel plantations that produced commodities for the Atlantic World economy. Grant stated that securing land and stability from the Lower Creeks and Seminoles represented the most significant obstacles against the immigration of South Carolina planters, such as Francis Kinloch, to relocate to East Florida.⁷⁹ British officials, such as Major Francis Ogilvie, continued to believe that Florida was an agricultural paradise that had been stymied by neglectful Spanish colonists.⁸⁰ In a letter to the Board of Trade, he expressed his disdain toward Spanish subjects by writing that their departure was:

no loss to his Majesty's Government of East Florida, their not staying here as they were the least industrious of any people I ever saw having depended entirely on our colonies in America for supplies of provisions, there was no trade or manufactures of any kind in this province, and by the constant war with the Indians and their little capacity to carry it on, they were helm'd in within the lines of St. Augustine excepting two posts Picolata and Apalachia, which were supported by very bad troops.⁸¹

Spain's inability to control Indigenous peoples and its failure to contribute to the Atlantic World economy disqualified its claims to the province in the eyes of British officials. In order to follow South Carolina's precedent of creating productive plantations with prosperous planters, British Florida had to avoid Spanish mistakes. Grant realized that an agreement with the Lower Creek and Seminoles had to be reached before another colonial endeavor could be undertaken.

1.4 British-Seminole Relations

The 1765 Picolata Congress marked a transformative event that delineated the political relationship between the British, Lower Creeks, and the Seminoles.⁸² While other scholars have noted the conference and even published its proceedings, there has not been an in-depth analysis of its consequences and broader meaning.⁸³ Concerned with the racialization of Indigenous peoples and Africans, this work argues that the congress set the terms of the Seminole-European

relationship and was a significant component in the colonial project. In contrast to narratives that draw a stark line in 1821, the date of U.S. annexation, as the significant period in terms of racialization, market capitalism, and political centralization, the British occupation should be re-examined for its contribution to these trends. This may seem counterintuitive since the British had rejected Amherst's policies and embraced the "middle ground," especially in terms of diplomacy. However, this was only seen as a temporary solution, a pragmatic course, and did not represent a British repudiation of their presumed hegemony over Indigenous peoples. During the Second Picolata Congress Grant sought to avoid diplomatic failure with the Lower Creek and Seminoles since "there would not have been a plantation existing in the province in six months."⁸⁴ The British sought to establish more social and physical space between themselves and Indigenous peoples in order to support the development of plantations and chattel slavery. British occupation turned the Florida Borderlands into a contested space where emerging rigid racial views dominated in some locations and situations, especially on the indigo, rice, and sugar plantations, while away from European settlements more fluid notions of race continued. The Picolata Congress illustrated the insidious nature of colonialism in the sense that the British acceded to Indigenous autonomy in exchange for the stability that allowed British planters to enslave and racialize Africans.

A discussion of the Picolata Conferences should concentrate in three areas: an assessment of British policies, a discussion of the diplomatic protocols and language utilized in the negotiations, and an examination of internal Indigenous politics. Although prior historians have judged the British period a failure, in the realm of diplomacy its record is more positive. Consequently, the language utilized in the conferences would establish an important precedent

that would influence diplomacy in the Florida Borderlands until the 1820s. Although written sources from Picolata privilege the perspective of British emissaries, the meetings shed precious, but limited, light upon Lower Creeks and the Alachua Seminoles. The Picolata Congresses provide a rare glimpse into the important transformations occurring in the Florida Borderlands during the late eighteenth century.

Governor James Grant, a skilled mediator from his experience with the Cherokee, was fully aware of the stakes as he awaited the arrival of the Lower Creek headmen in 1765.⁸⁵ Certainly Grant's most advantageous virtue was his grasp of Southeastern diplomacy, especially the importance of "gifts." Considered the lubricant to the gears of foreign relations, gifts were more than mere bribes but neither were they European charity. Their value went beyond the accumulation of commodities and they represented important reciprocal exchanges that cemented alliances. The governor knew that the expenses resulting from the gifts would raise the ire of superiors but he nonetheless defended their use.⁸⁶ They played a significant factor in the determining the success of the first Picolata Congress. Grant stationed a schooner in the St. Johns River stocked with gifts in order to ensure an agreement with the Lower Creek. While the promise of receiving gifts was not the only factor in the treaty, it did enhance British prestige because they were able to supply gifts and promise abundant trade goods. Lower Creeks would have seen the benefit of having Florida as outlet for their deerskins and as another source of trade in case other colonies threatened an embargo.

In addition to gifts, Governor Grant and Superintendent Stuart balanced their use of distributing goods with attempts to exert their influence among Lower Creek headman. Initial meetings at Picolata exposed Indigenous leaders' reluctance to cede land because of their

discontent with Pensacola trade rates and disputes in Georgia. In between sessions the British representatives had private meetings with the leading Indigenous spokesmen, Tallechea and Captain Aleck. The headmen were informed that they would not receive any gifts if an agreement on the land cession could not be reached. Grant's posture towards the leaders became more reserved and he did not extend invitations for dinner as he had done previously.⁸⁷ These maneuvers seemed to have been effective since an agreement was reached shortly thereafter. Captain Aleck was then presented to Grant in order to recognize him as a "king" so that he could negotiate with Georgia Governor James Wright. Additionally, Grant presented "great medals" to Tallechea, Estime, and Captain Aleck while making others small medal "chiefs." British officials utilized internal Creek politics by seeking to bestow prestige upon headmen who accepted their terms. While the Lower Creeks had a decentralized political structure, agreements such as those reached at Picolata sought to elevate headmen like Tallechea and Captain Aleck as spokesmen for a broad range of Indigenous groups.

Vital to the Picolata negotiations were Grant and Stuart's recognition that Lower Creek autonomy had to be respected, at least temporarily. A year after the conference, Grant wrote to the Board of Trade and outlined recent conflicts between the Cherokee, the Creek, and the British colonies. According to the governor the Creek had grown "insolent and overbearing" because of their ability to play colonial powers against each other. Nonetheless, Grant could only foresee disaster for the young colonies of Georgia and Florida if a war with the Creek broke out.⁸⁸ With this understanding of the geopolitical situation British officials found it prudent to negotiate on Indigenous terms and form alliances. The treaty articles illustrate the extent to which the British recognized Indigenous authority. Article five utilizes ambiguous language and

stops short of stating that the Lower Creek were allowing the British settle in East Florida. Considering that the province, from a European perspective, belonged to the British monarch, it must have been awkward for the colonial power to admit it was not the dominant group. Seeking to avoid this issue, the agreement stated that in order to sidestep misunderstandings, both the British and Lower Creek, were simply seeking to clarify land boundaries. Further reinforcing Indigenous jurisdiction, the third article of the accord allowed for Indigenous peoples to apply justice within its own community for anyone proven to have committed an offense against the British.⁸⁹ Through an accurate gauging of power dynamics in the Southeastern Borderlands, British officials were prudent not to encroach upon the autonomy of the Lower Creek.

In addition to the shrewd political calculations of dispensing gifts, persuading headmen, and respecting Lower Creek authority, Grant also partook in the rituals and metaphors of Indigenous diplomacy. Tallechea remarked that his “white brothers” now ‘talked to them in their own way,” meaning that appropriate customs and language were implemented. Naturalist John Bartram was present at Picolata and mentions the dances and presentations that began all the sessions.⁹⁰ Three different translators were utilized and various Indigenous traders were present. They were an important source of information for the governor considering their association with the Creek. Both Grant and Stuart seem to have handled the protocols for the conferences correctly.

Diplomatic exchanges or talks usually sought to create a familiarity and connection between both parties. Grant and Stuart invoked fictive kinship in order to establish the close bonds of alliance. Since the Lower Creek were decentralized and invested considerable importance to the *huti*, it was understandable that diplomatic relations occurred through the

prism of kinship. Talks often began with the greeting “friends and brothers,” and the British king was given the position of patriarch, father to his “red children.” However, through the cultural lens of the British and the Lower Creeks, the position of a father had a different connotation. To the British it meant the Indigenous peoples were recognizing the British king as their ultimate authority. On the other hand, the Lower Creek were from matrilineal societies where fathers were advisors but not authority figures. While gender was often cited, especially since kinship was often mentioned, in talks between Europeans and Indigenous peoples it often had a different meaning for each party.

Race is another concept over which the British and Lower Creeks would have diverging understandings. As scholars such as Reginald Horsmen note, notions of race were in flux during the late eighteenth century.⁹¹ Nancy Shoemaker argues that British plantations in North America and the development of blackness and whiteness helped usher in categories of biological difference.⁹² However, when this transformation actually occurred is difficult to ascertain. Certainly this process was present in British Florida, nonetheless it remained ambiguous, as the term “white” had different meanings. In some cases officials state that it only applies to the British, yet when Mediterranean immigrants were recruited for Florida plantations they were alternatively called white and non-white, depending on whether their behavior was considered virtuous.⁹³ Within the Picolata Congress the ubiquitous terms “red” and “white” are regularly used by both the British and the Indigenous leaders. When these categories came to represent distinct biological difference is debatable. Indigenous usage does not seem to connote a racial difference, for instance Tallechea stresses commonality when he said that the British were sent by the “great giver of breath.”⁹⁴ Shoemaker also notes that the Lower Creeks had recognized the

division of red and white towns and this may have been what they were referring to during discussions.⁹⁵ However, it has been noted that the British were never viewed as “red” but only as “white.” There is a greater probability that the British did use “red” and “white” as racial designations since they had already utilized the designation black or “negro.” If this was not the case in the 1760s, certainly it became the case in succeeding decades with the increase of plantations and the movement to legalize Africans’ inferiority. While “white” may have been restricted to the English initially, when the Spanish returned to Florida in 1784 they would embrace the term in their diplomatic relations with the Seminoles which they patterned after British precedent.

Although it is difficult to gauge Lower Creek beliefs of an emerging racial order, the Picolata Congress is able to speak to the dynamics of internal Lower Creek politics. Scholars have debated whether the Creek had reached a beneficial agreement at Picolata or whether they were swindled. While Saunt writes that Creeks were in a weak position and were “cajoled” to cede the land, Kathryn E. Holland Braund argues that this is a “harsh” assessment.⁹⁶ Braund’s conclusion is more accurate, since a close examination of the headmen present at the conference demonstrates the true costs to the Lower Creeks. Many of the leaders were from towns located on the Chattahoochee River, about 300 miles northwest from Picolata. Considering the decentralized nature of the Creek Confederacy it is difficult to assume that headmen such as Tallechea and Captain Aleck felt they could project their power over Florida towns. In reality, the Lower Creek leaders were able to gain British favor and goods for distant lands that only served as seasonal hunting grounds. This is apparent in the concerns that the Lower Creeks aired during the treaty negotiations. Rather than focusing on the land cession, sticking points

concerned trade prices promised at Pensacola and the increasing numbers of settlers in Georgia. These were all relevant issues for Indigenous peoples living further north. The cession of land in Florida was perhaps a secondary issue or simply leverage for dealing with conflicts in Georgia. As mentioned above, once the Picolata conference concludes, Captain Aleck and other leaders quickly informed Grant they will depart to meet with Georgia Governor Wright. Tallechea and Aleck, despite having conducted a treaty previously in Augusta, were savvy enough to once again gain gifts and trade assurances in exchange for land they did not control. This begs the question of exactly who was being out-manuevered during the negotiations.

The biggest injury committed at the Picolata Congress was directed towards Cowkeeper, the Seminole headman. Alachua was directly adjacent to the territory the British were requesting and they would have to deal with the consequences of the transaction. Although speculative, it is difficult to argue that Cowkeeper's absence from the proceedings was purely coincidental. In a similar situation that occurred in 1774, the trader and planter Jonathan Bryan had claimed that the Creeks had agreed to cede an enormous land grant just north of Alachua to him. While British authorities felt that this was fraudulent, Gallay argues that the Creek may have been attempting to preempt a possible British trade embargo by having Bryan as another source of goods.⁹⁷ He also states that the Creek possibly sought to coerce the Seminoles to return to Georgia. When Bryan sought out Cowkeeper's approval of the land grant, the headman was absent long enough for British East Florida authorities to thwart Bryan's land scheme.⁹⁸ Whether Cowkeeper utilized absence as a negotiation ploy is uncertain, but it is more reasonable to assume he did not appreciate lands arguably in his jurisdiction being ceded by leaders living hundreds of miles away.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, the Alachua Seminoles lacked the power to openly

confront the Lower Creeks, for their population numbers even into the nineteenth century were relatively low. Perhaps the Seminoles were yet to decisively split from the Lower Creeks. This is illustrated through the behavior of Wioffke, considered Cowkeepers' second-in-command, and his deference to Tallechea during the Picolata Congress.¹⁰⁰

While the cession of East Florida territory was done largely through an agreement between the Lower Creek and the British, Cowkeeper still saw the benefit of an alliance with the latter, which ironically secured the Seminoles their independence from the Creek. Cowkeeper and Governor Grant met privately in St. Augustine to ratify the Picolata agreements. Although they were scheduled to meet in a few months, Cowkeeper briskly made his way to the colonial capital to make his own arrangements with Grant. The Seminole leader established an important policy position for the Alachua Seminoles. He decided that a close alliance with the British, a policy that continued even after the Spanish returned, was in the best interest of the Seminoles. This served not only as an important military alliance but also a source of trade goods, especially ammunition. Although the Lower Creeks had negotiated with the British, they maintained a policy of ambivalence towards their treaty partners. On the other hand the Seminoles embraced their British allies as a cornerstone of their foreign policy. In a 1774 letter to the new East Florida Governor Patrick Tonyn, Cowkeeper explains that he "had always been a friend to the English was taught to be so by his father and though he was called a wild man by the nation, it was not so, for both he and his people loved the white people."¹⁰¹ Linking their fortunes through a strong alliance with East Florida served to make the Seminoles more independent from the Lower Creek.

When the Spanish returned to Florida after the American Revolution, they claimed legitimacy by citing their close connection with the British in their talks with the Seminoles. The Picolata Congress had established the terms of diplomacy in the region, even after the departure of the British. Through an examination of Spanish colonial documents it becomes clear that the Seminoles never lost their preference for the British over the Spanish. Grant's conferences, including the lesser attended second meeting held in 1767, achieved their immediate goals of gaining territorial rights and defusing tensions in British, Lower Creek, and Seminole relations. They established a blueprint, in terms of gift giving and the language of diplomacy, that the Spanish would follow in their own policy. In this regard the British period could be considered a success. Additionally, the congress led to the stability that the governor sought so that plantations could develop.

The proceedings of the Picolata Congresses were not exhaustive and did not address issues that would in the future become prominent, namely trade and fugitive African slaves. Both issues had been important points of discussion in the past but the priority for the British was the land grant. These issues were implicitly mentioned in the treaty articles concerning guarantees of trade as well as the protection of settlers' property. The presence of traders at the Picolata meetings is mentioned but not elaborated upon. British merchants sought the continuation of the commercial deerskin trade. Southeastern Indigenous peoples had requested that the trading houses place agents in their towns in order to gain access to manufactured goods. Tallechea stated at the Picolata conference that he requested the trader John Colvit be assigned to his town while John Letter be sent to Alachuca.¹⁰² Although few records exist of his operations, James Spalding was a prominent trader in East Florida among the Seminoles. Serving as his

host, naturalist William Bartram often stopped with Spalding and documented transactions between the trader and the Seminoles.¹⁰³ Eventually William Panton and his partner John Leslie replaced Spalding's East Florida operation. They formed the Panton, Leslie, and Company trading firm and in 1776 Patrick Tonyn appointed them to manage the Indian trade.¹⁰⁴ They established a trading network that would eventually span into the Second Spanish Florida period. Although none of the traders married into Seminole communities their outposts represented the few sources of intelligence about Indigenous settlements. During the Second Spanish period, traders often doubled as Spanish diplomatic envoys.

Traders main line of business was the exchange of deerskins for manufactured goods delivered from London, but they also traded in slaves on a small scale. As will be discussed shortly, British Florida witnessed in its brief history a rapid transformation from a mixed labor system including white indentured servants to the spread of plantations specializing in African slaves. Earlier Spanish rule had made Florida a sanctuary for African slaves, including runaways who relocated among Indigenous peoples. For British authorities seeking to promote the development of plantations this would be a cause of concern. In a letter to the Board of Trade, Lieutenant Governor John Moultrie writes that runaway slaves make haste to "Indian towns." Seminoles had given officials verbal assurances that they would deliver up "fugitive" African slaves. Moultrie notes that in select cases the Seminoles consented to individual planters retrieving their own slaves but without any actual assistance. Seeking to draw clear social and political distinctions between Indigenous peoples and Africans, the British offered incentives for the return of absconded slaves. Moultrie was convinced of continuing Seminole cooperation in the future.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, the historical record does show that the Seminoles often feigned

compliance only to leave masters frustrated once efforts to locate slaves were thwarted. The ever-increasing presence of Africans among Indigenous peoples would become a concern once the number of slaves and plantations increased. During the upheavals of the American Revolution and the influx of southern planters into Florida, Governor Tonyn lamented a trade between the inhabitants and Indigenous peoples. Apparently colonists were “exchanging prize Negroes and runaways for cattle taken by the Indians from the rebels which if not put a stop to will be productive of very bad consequences.”¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the governor failed to elaborate why this development caused much consternation, but during Florida’s colonial period many officials felt the congregation of Africans and Indigenous peoples would lead to negative repercussions.¹⁰⁷

With the success of the Picolata Congresses, Governor Grant had established the ideal relationship, at least for British interests, with the Lower Creeks and Seminoles. Indigenous groups made regular visits, participated in talks, and received gifts; conversely, they recognized British land claims while agreeing to make restitution for the loss of property and damages resulting from individual conflicts between Indigenous peoples and colonists. Due to the proximity of the Seminoles, planters needed guarantees that they could control the social and geographic space between Indigenous peoples and Africans. Emerging political and economic systems based upon a plantation export economy were reliant on the creation of a rigid racial hierarchy that marginalized African slaves to its lowest rungs. This racial order was based on the creation and maintenance of biologically distinct categories. Populations of runaway Africans among the Seminoles threatened the possibility of not only a political and military alliance but

the blurring of racial lines. Grant seems to have sufficiently allayed these fears in order for several ambitious endeavors to be undertaken.

1.5 The Rise of Plantations and the Racialization of Africans

Despite British Florida's short lifespan and the disruptions of the American Revolution, the potential of a developing plantation export economy and labor segmentation based on race remained feasible. A number of prominent planters attempted large-scale operations and a few, such as Fatio, had crossed the threshold of prosperity. While others, such as Turnbull, fell short of their overly ambitious designs, nonetheless, their tales of unfulfilled wealth are instructive concerning the direction that the colony was approaching. Particularly significant was the shift from a labor system based on indentured servants and African slaves to a labor regime reliant on the coercive labor of blacks. Although efforts were made to lure "white" indentured servants and settlers, colonial officials swiftly emphasized the desirability of African slaves. As Stephanie E. Smallwood notes in *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, the British, through institutions such as the Board of Trade and Plantations, had by the early eighteenth century commodified African slaves as units to be quantified, measured, and exploited.¹⁰⁸ In Virginia during the 1660s, various laws were enacted distinguishing between European American indentured servants and African slaves, most notably slaves' children inheriting their mother's slave status and the declaration that Christian baptism did not release a slave out of bondage.¹⁰⁹ South Carolina's panicked response to the 1739 Stono Rebellion was a Negro Act, slave code, implemented a year after the insurrection. A little more than a decade and a half later the recently founded Georgia colony would pattern its own code on the South

Carolina law. Arriving late to these developments, Florida's legislature would pass its own Negro Act in the twilight years of the American Revolution. This legislative action cemented the hardening of racial categories in British Florida.

Governor Grant was able to examine the development of neighboring colonies when crafting the policies of British Florida. As mentioned above, his own experiences in South Carolina with the Cherokee taught him the value of reaching diplomatic arrangements with Indigenous groups. Considering that the governor also sought to lure South Carolina planters and their African slaves to Florida, he also sought to emulate that colony's economic model.¹¹⁰ In correspondence with the Board of Trade and Plantations, it is clear that Grant had a vision for Florida that sought to attract white settlers (small-scale farmers) and large-scale planters. In his July 1763 letter to the board, the governor mentions the possible use of French Protestants and the purchase of a hundred slaves to assist in building projects.¹¹¹ A year later he issued a proclamation, which bestowed one hundred acres to a head of a household and an additional "fifty acres for every white or black man, woman or child."¹¹² Grant was able to draw a number of planters, as well as their slave workforce, who became recipients of large land grants. The governor worked tirelessly to support these endeavors, including financial assistance; they were part of his clear vision for British Florida.¹¹³

Beyond simply being a booster of plantations, Grant was among the ranks of investors seeking profitability in the newly acquired territory. He formed his own plantation called Grant's Villa and procured advice on the cultivation of indigo, which became Florida's principal plantation export crop. The governor hired an experienced overseer and then purchased a number of slaves: the estate eventually had sixty-nine slaves by time they were all sold in 1784.

Slaves were initially organized in the “gang” labor system but Grant embraced the “task” model, which assigned slaves a daily quota of duties.¹¹⁴ Although this method of organizing slaves is generally viewed as less rigid than “gang” labor, Grant still sought to maximize the production of his slaves. He began to boast of being a “great planter and improver” and seeking to increase the number of his slaves.¹¹⁵ By 1774 Grant’s Villa had recouped the initial investment and yielded a considerable profit for its proprietor, who by then resided in Europe.¹¹⁶

During the same year that Grant delivered his first Picolata talk to the Lower Creek and Seminoles, he also established a partnership with Richard Oswald, a prosperous London merchant. Grant choose his associate well since Oswald had access to both capital and African slaves, both critical in the mind of the governor.¹¹⁷ Indigo and rice became important export crops for their 20,000-acre Mount Oswald plantation. Oswald was willing to heavily invest into the endeavor and he paid for African slaves who had carpenter and blacksmith skills. Many were slaves from Bance Island in Sierra Leone, owned by Oswald’s slave trading company. Daniel L. Schafer argues that Mount Oswald was on the verge of financial success when the massive disruptions of the American Revolution caused first stagnation and then abandonment.¹¹⁸ Oswald felt vulnerable in East Florida after the Spanish joined the American Revolution, and he arranged for his slaves to be transported to Savannah. Eventually the slaves were forced to return to Florida once the war concluded, the various journeys taking their toll on the group. Many of the province’s planters would be forced to relocate once the terms of the Treaty of Paris of 1783 were finalized.

One of the few British subjects and successful planters to weather the turmoil of the revolution and remain in Florida was Francis Philip Fatio. His life is informative since it

spanned British Florida and the succeeding Second Spanish Florida period. In a 1782 letter, Fatio wrote to Major Morrison to convince him that the British should retain the colony. Reminiscent of Grant's early letters to the Board of Trade, Fatio perpetuated the trope of Florida as an untapped Eden.¹¹⁹ While offering his words of wisdom, the planter discloses that he has lived in British Florida for ten years.¹²⁰ In Susan R. Parker's analysis of Fatio's New Switzerland, she argues that his political flexibility and economic diversification ensured his survival and financial gains.¹²¹ While others concentrated their activities on indigo, Fatio invested in cattle, citrus, and the sale of timber. He made the necessary arrangements when the Spanish returned to Florida and became a supplier to the government. Fatio's stature as a prominent planter was cemented under the Spanish and he often became a focal point in colonial affairs especially when the Mikasuki raided his plantation and seized slaves.

In comparison to planters such as Oswald and Fatio, the events associated with Turnbull's estate are comparatively speaking more spectacular and educational. A prominent Scottish physician based in London and former British consul to Greece, Turnbull became enamored with the prospects of establishing massive settlements and plantations in Florida. The cornerstone to his ambitions involved the enlistment of Greek, Italian, and Minorcan settlers to work his lands in East Florida. Turnbull believed that people acclimated to a Mediterranean climate and with knowledge of agriculture in such an environment would make an ideal workforce. He felt that "whites" would be more industrious than African slaves and their Mediterranean background would immunize them from the rigors of plantation work. Turnbull's use of white indentured servants ran counter to larger trends that began with Bacon's Rebellion and the shift towards a racialized division of labor and the utilization of African slaves on

plantations. However, as anti-slavery policies in Georgia illustrate, critiques of slavery, especially its propagation of a hierarchical society, did exist. On the other hand, Turnbull's main objection was based on the belief that "white" indentured servants were more efficient workers.

While Grant remained convinced of the supremacy of African slave labor for his colony, Turnbull sought a labor force that was both considered "white" yet clearly subordinate.¹²² The whiteness extended to Greek, Italian, and Minorcan workers was liminal. Their cultural position, especially as Catholics, bestowed an aura of foreignness. Certainly their working conditions and virtual state of bondage, including the renewal of contracts without compensation, threatened their status as "white."¹²³ For example, one Greek worker's attempt to flee was punished with the warning he would labor with the "Negroes," while a blacksmith was whipped by an African laborer under Turnbull's orders.¹²⁴

A combination of misguided policies and the ill-treatment of workers was responsible for the eventual dissolution of Turnbull's grandiose scheme, which consequently reinforced arguments about the impracticality of employing white indentured servants. While giving Carolina planters a tour of his estate in 1768, Turnbull encountered an attempt by a portion of his Italian and Greek workers to abscond to Havana. Just as his guests "were astonished at the progress which had been made, they agreed that the same number of Negroes could not have done more," the rebellious laborers seized weapons, a ship, and left the main manager wounded. They plundered storage buildings and attacked other servants, especially the Minorcans who refused to join them. Grant believed that the lack of discipline among the leaders of insurrection led to the eventual capture of the hijacked ship. Many of the instigators were punished, and the governor had promised to send troops into the area since "planters in the neighborhood of Mr.

Turnbull are already alarmed as what has happened.”¹²⁵ Grant stated that the Seminoles were also alerted to the presence of the immigrants: apparently the workers were mistaken for being Spanish. Attempting to clarify the status of the workers, the British official stated they are not “white people (English)” but are subjects there “to help their brothers the English to cultivate the lands.”¹²⁶ While the Italians, Greeks, and Minorcans were obediently working they were labeled white and industrious. However, after the incident Grant primarily points to their foreignness as the root cause of the revolt and he disowns their whiteness in front of the Seminoles. More significantly, this episode and the continued problems occurring at Turnbull’s plantation must have reaffirmed the governor’s faith in the value of African slavery as opposed to white indentured servants.¹²⁷

Ironically, the same upheavals that eventually led to the 1783 retrocession of Florida to Spain nearly transformed the colony into Grant’s vision of a substantial plantation export economy. As a loyalist sanctuary from the active theaters of the American Revolution, Florida attracted numerous planters with their slaves from South Carolina and Georgia who hoped to resume their agricultural operations there.¹²⁸ With the drastic influx of refugee planters, the number of African slaves increased by 8,000, surpassing the British population.¹²⁹ During a span of about five years Florida experienced a rapid transformation and geopolitical shift from the margins to the center of British activity in the South. Once the British experienced a Southern resurgence around 1779 in the South Carolina and Georgia theaters, Florida was no longer directly threatened by American Forces. However, Spain’s entry into the conflict and Bernardo de Gálvez’ capture of Pensacola in 1781 did stir fears in St. Augustine. As mentioned above, this prompted Oswald to relocate to Georgia. Similar to other wars, the East Florida capital

never capitulated and British settlers, such as Fatio, had argued that it should remain apart of the British Empire. To their dismay, as well as to the frustration of their Seminole allies, the British would not make the necessary efforts to retain a territorial foothold in the Southeastern Borderlands.

As the brief British tenure in Florida was drawing to a close, the newly formed East Florida assembly passed the 1782 Negro Act, which epitomized the hardening of racial categories in the colony. Children of African slaves were legally bound to follow the condition of their mothers. Free Blacks and mulattos could be enslaved if they failed to provide evidence of their freedom, such as a silver armband inscribed with the word “free.” Slaves were restricted from freely moving around, especially while carrying arms, without written permission from their masters. Other supplemental acts provided for slave patrols, construction of a workhouse to provide discipline, and the impressment of slaves for public works.¹³⁰

However, the Negro Act nearly failed to become law due to a substantial stalemate over a provision in the law. Consequently Governor Tonyn had to take the drastic action of dissolving the assembly. At the heart of the debate was the guarantee of a jury trial for African slave defendants in capital cases. In the upper house legislators “maintained that it was most humane and most conformable to the laws of England; and no wise prejudicial to the owners of slaves, that they should have the fairest and fullest chance for their life, by being tried by a jury before the justices of the general court.”¹³¹ Conversely the East Florida Commons House of Assembly was adamant that sending slaves to St. Augustine for a trial was an undue expense to planters and could be settled by a local trial with a jury of “twelve free white men.” Furthermore they argued that a “a lenient slave code” served as an impediment to “loyalist slave-owning planters from

immigrating into the province and might prod those already in the colony to leave.”¹³²

Eventually they conceded to gubernatorial oversight over any judicial proceedings once the trials were completed.¹³³ Although the governor remarked that the debate “carried on with a great deal of warmth on both sides, and with some illiberality by one side, no personal animosities prevail,” tensions were clearly present.¹³⁴ The lower house effectively stymied colonial business in 1781, a critical period during the American Revolution, and refused to attend to any other business until the Negro Act, their foremost priority, was adopted. The act was “virtually a Black Code for East Florida” patterned after a similar laws in Georgia and South Carolina. Considering elite fears that the American Revolution could spark social upheaval, including the increased black agency that resulted from their military service in the British ranks, planters felt vulnerable and sought legal protection.

Eventually Tonyn, chastised by his superiors, managed to reconvene the assembly in early 1782 and reached a compromise.¹³⁵ Passage of the Negro Act signaled the transformation of Florida from a struggling area with a few plantations, many of which had to diversify in order to survive, to a territory ready to follow the example of its neighboring colonies. Although the revolution had created a chaotic situation with refugee planters in dire straits, a return to stability would allow these recent arrivals to establish themselves in the territory. All the parties in the dispute over the Negro Act had accepted its necessity and only fought over the extent of restrictions upon African slaves. Writing two years prior to the impasse, Tonyn stated that:

the wealth of the inhabitants of the southern colonies consists entirely of Negroes, and without a provincial law establishing a property in them, property is on a precarious tenure, besides the great degree of licentiousness, that prevails amongst them renders it necessary that they should be under more restraints than the laws of England have laid upon servants.¹³⁶

Despite their opposition, the upper house had already conceded on many of the points of the act but held firm on the issue of the trials. Their stance was cognizant of trends in England where slavery was being phased out, but they realized that the situation in Florida was different. Conversely, two members of the lower house, John Leslie and Thomas Forbes were Indian traders and future members of Panton, Leslie, and Company.¹³⁷ Although both men specialized in transactions involving deerskins for manufactured British goods they nonetheless were landowners. Forbes in particular had been in possession, through the company, of an indigo plantation. In all probability they had utilized slave labor and were sympathetic towards efforts to protect property rights. With the passage of the act, refugee planters and traders had made a statement about the role they envisioned for themselves in the development of the province.

Although only existing briefly before the retrocession of Florida, the Negro Act marked an important milestone in the racialization of Africans. In addition to the act, Tonyn later called for the use of slaves for the public defense as well as the construction of a workhouse for “the custody and punishment of Negroes.”¹³⁸ Wright states that Africans in East Florida had to contend with curfews, regulations on their economic transactions, and a system that publicly delineated free Africans and slaves belonging to rebel colonists.¹³⁹ Through the adoption of a Negro Act, Florida now mirrored other southern colonies’ racialized division of labor. Although Grant had always favored African slave labor, Turnbull and fellow planter Denys Rolle sought to utilize white indentured servants on their plantations.¹⁴⁰ In particular, Turnbull transported Mediterranean “whites,” reasoning that their bodies were acclimated to the warm climate and intensive labor. These workers’ rebelliousness and their later appeal to colonial authorities proved decisive in the debates over African slavery and indentured servitude. As had been

realized elsewhere, “white” workers, in this case Greeks, Italians, and Minorcans, were more difficult to control. They had greater avenues to flight, resist, and the ability to appeal on the basis of their, albeit limited, whiteness against extremely coercive labor regimes. Africans were racialized as “black” and viewed as a distinct biological group, as evidenced in arguments that Africans were suited for warm climates and naturally apt at plantation work routines. The Negro Act institutionalized through government enforcement the subordinate position of Africans by stripping them of any legal protections. No longer were the lines between African slaves and white indentured workers blurred in a society where racial lines were clearly drawn between red, white, and black.

Conclusion

News emanating from the 1783 treaty negotiations began to filter down to British loyalists in East Florida. Despite expectations that the crown would retain the colony it became clear that Spain would reclaim its former province.¹⁴¹ Disillusioned refugee settlers having already been displaced from other southern colonies were forced to once again relocate. The Alachua Seminoles also shared their frustration, having allied themselves closely to the British, and enjoying a stable trade, they had to stomach the return of the Spanish. Cowkeeper had apparently disclosed his disdain of the Spanish by remarking that he would “kill every Spaniard that offers to set his head out of the lines of the town.” Understandably he felt betrayed and abandoned by his alliance partner.¹⁴² Nonetheless, the twenty-year British reign in Florida was more than a brief interruption in Spain’s occupation of Florida. Although many of the ambitious

schemes dreamt by Governor Grant never came to fruition, British Florida nonetheless left an imprint on the development of the territory.

Traditional narratives stressing the failure of British East Florida have relied on economic and political gauges but have not emphasized the important precedents established during their reign. Agreements reached at the Picolata Congresses with the Lower Creek and the Seminole would become the basis of Spanish diplomatic policy with those Indigenous groups.

Considering the Creek's effective raids during the first Spanish Florida period and the collapse of the Franciscan missions, Spanish officials would adopt the British model based on gifts and alliances. In talks or *pláticas* with the Seminoles, the Spanish traced their political legitimacy from the British, and in so doing they recognized the high regard the British held with Indigenous leaders, especially Cowkeeper. The significant presence of Scottish merchants in the Pantón, Leslie, and Company trading firm began under British rule and continued under the Spanish. Traders would become vital agents in the field, supplying trade, delivering *pláticas*, and translating messages from Indigenous headman. They would ensure that the language implemented by Grant in the Picolata Congresses would continue in Spanish-Seminole correspondence. Additionally the British governor illustrated that stable relations with the Seminole could enable economic growth through plantations. While the majority of British planters evacuated the colony, Fatio remained and wielded considerable influence. Spanish officials would attempt to nurture their own plantation export economy by seeking to entice American planters to relocate to Florida. Considering the difficulties of their first occupation of the province, the Spanish were keen to build upon the successful aspects of British Florida.

Scholars examining the development of a plantation export economy, chattel slavery, and solidifying racial designations begin their analysis with the U.S. annexation of Florida in 1821. Nonetheless Grant's policies were instrumental in encouraging an economic and labor system dependent on the creation and maintenance of categories such as "white," "negro," and "red." Through the Picolata agreements, Grant was able to gain physical and social space between Seminole and British settlements. In conjunction with the understanding that the Seminoles would return runaway slaves, the governor could now nurture a plantation system that quickly embraced African slavery over white indentured servitude. Refugee planters from South Carolina and Georgia soon demanded that Florida institutionalize its control and racialization of African slaves. With passage of the Negro Act, the territory more resembled other southern colonies. Although the consequences of the American Revolution signaled the end of British Florida and the displacement of many of its colonists, the processes ushered in during this period did not simply vanish.

Notes:

¹ James W. Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles: Negotiations between British Authorities in East Florida and the Indians, 1763-68* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1961), 23.

² The early British documents continue to label all the Indigenous peoples in the area as Creeks. As Europeans become acquainted with the Seminole headman Wakapuchasee, known by the British as Cowkeeper, they came to the realization that the Seminoles were a separate political entity from the Creeks with some residual sociopolitical connections.

³ Julie Anne Sweet, *Negotiating for Georgia: British-Creek Relations in the Trustee Era, 1733-1752* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2005), 179. It was not uncommon for British officials to build upon their previous experiences in Indigenous diplomacy. For instance the Georgia Trustees in 1851 advised the colony's new leadership on following a number of guidelines when treating with the Creeks. They highlighted the utilization of gifts, a neutral ground for conferences, and the presence of a respected spokesman.

⁴ Report of the Picolata Congress, 09 December 1765, Colonial Office (hereafter cited as CO) 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, Public Records Office, London (hereafter cited as PRO), Library of Congress (hereafter cited as LC). This account of the proceedings contain the speeches given by the British and Indigenous officials. Additionally, these records also summarize but do not detail the events and individual negotiations that occurred outside the main conference. Grant and Stuart also outline their diplomatic strategies of utilizing gifts to maintain support as well as attempts to exploit divisions among Indigenous leaders.

⁵ James W. Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles*, 23. The author provides an excellent resource consisting of primary source documents relating to the Picolata Congresses.

⁶ Report of the Picolata Congress, 09 December 1765, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.

⁷ Sweet, *Negotiating for Georgia*, 154. During the War of Jenkins Ear, Lower Creeks groups accompanied Georgia Governor James Oglethorpe in the 1743 invasion of East Florida and the siege of the Castillo de San Marcos. Although the campaign failed to dislodge the Spanish, the Lower Creeks caused considerable damage to the countryside.

⁸ Ibid, 189.

⁹ Southern North American British colonies had significant experience with the Creeks as both adversaries and allies. During the Yamasee War, Lower Creek groups fought South Carolina, both groups being the main belligerents of the conflict. Later, a number of Lower Creeks allied with Georgia against the Spanish in the invasions of East Florida in the 1740s.

¹⁰ James W. Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles: Negotiations between British Authorities in East Florida and the Indians, 1763-68* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1961), 37.

¹¹ Jenny Hale Pulsipher, "'Subjects . . . Unto the Same King': New England Indians and the Use of Royal Political Power," *The Massachusetts Historical Review* 5 (2003), 34. Initial British treaties with Indigenous peoples of New England deemphasized their subjugation to the king and were based upon reciprocity. However, once colonies matured economically and gained population numbers, government officials asserted their jurisdiction over native peoples.

¹² This study places the term gifts in parenthesis to signify that these transactions were not presents bestowed by benevolent colonial powers but rather actions associated with reciprocity.

¹³ Theda Perdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 12. The author was specifically referring to then General James Oglethorpe in Savannah, Georgia offering gifts to Indigenous delegations.

¹⁴ The term European Americans in this sense is referring to the colonial powers of Spain, England, and the U.S.

¹⁵ John Stuart, "Observations of Superintendent John Stuart and Governor James Grant of East Florida on the Proposed Plan of 1764 for the Future Management of Indian Affairs," *The American Historical Review* 20 (July 1915), 824. British Indian Superintendent Stuart argued to the Board of Trade and Plantations that gifts to Indigenous groups was a necessary expense until the colony had the power to unilaterally deal with native peoples.

¹⁶ Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to Be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102 (June 1997), 631.

¹⁷ James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 14.

¹⁸ R. P., Review of *British West Florida, 1763-1783*, by Cecil Johnson and *East Florida as a British Province, 1763-1784* by C.L. Mowat. *The English Historical Review* 60 (May 1945), 277.

¹⁹ Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles*. The author provides an excellent resource by printing the primary source documents relating to the Picolata Congresses; Lawrence H. Feldman, *The Last Days of British Saint Augustine, 1784-1785: A Spanish Census of the English Colony of East Florida* (Baltimore: Clearfield Co., 1998); Lawrence H. Feldman, *Colonization and Conquest: British Florida in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Clearfield Co., 2007).

²⁰ For recent scholarship more focused on issues of race and slavery during the British period see: Jane Landers, ed. *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); Daniel L. Schafer, *Governor James Grant's Villa: A British East Florida Indigo Plantation* (Florida The St. Augustine Historical Society, 2000); Daniel L. Schafer, *William Bartram and the Ghost Plantations of British East Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida 2010).

²¹ Robin F.A. Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida, 1763-1783* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1988), 198.

²² Susan R. Parker, "Success through Diversification: Francis Philip Fatio's New Switzerland Plantation," in *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, ed. Jane G. Landers (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 69.

²³ Daniel L. Schafer, "'A Swamp of an Investment'? Richard Oswald's British East Florida Plantation Experiment," in *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, ed. Jane G. Landers (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 24; Patricia C. Griffin, "Blue Gold: Andrew Turnbull's New Smyrna Plantation," in *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, ed. Jane G. Landers (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 58.

²⁴ During the Picolata Congresses, Grant and Stuart addressed their talks to the Lower Creeks and do not use the term "Seminoles." Although the British delegation is aware of the presence of the Alachua Seminoles among the Lower Creek leaders, they most likely continued to believe that the former fell under the jurisdiction of the latter and do not perceive them as politically distinct. I utilize the term "proto-Seminoles" in this context because it is difficult to ascertain when a separate Seminole identity was apparent.

²⁵ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 33. The author writes that primary sources never directly link the Spanish conquistador's advances in Florida with the famous "fountain of youth" and that the usual enticements of Indigenous labor and mineral wealth may have sufficed.

²⁶ Paul E. Hoffman, *A New Andalucia and a Way to the Orient: The American Southeast During the Sixteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

²⁷ John T. McGrath, *The French in Early Florida: In the Eye of the Hurricane* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁹ Paul E. Hoffman, *Florida's Frontiers* (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 2002), 66.

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- ³⁰ Bonnie G. McEwan, "The Spiritual Conquest of La Florida," *American Anthropologist* 103 (September 2001), 634; Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 60. The author writes that few Indigenous settlements became Spanish provinces but those that did were due to disease, gifts, and the efforts of the missionaries.
- ³¹ Hoffman, *Florida's Frontiers*, 82.
- ³² Ibid, 76. While Governor Menendez was willing to abandon Santa Elena, he resisted calls from Havana to withdraw from La Florida completely. The Spanish believed that the colony was a drain on resources and that other potential European colonial powers attempting to settle the region would be thwarted by the same conditions that confounded them.
- ³³ J. Leitch Wright, *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 53. Spain continued to view the English presence at Charleston as illegitimate despite the Treaty of Madrid. Florida Governor Manuel de Cendoya sought to organize an attack to destroy the settlement but troop strength and lack of supplies proved to be insurmountable.
- ³⁴ Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 79.
- ³⁵ Ibid, 299; Although slavery had existed prior to European colonization, the institution did not function as a major labor system, racialize slaves, and did not occur on a massive scale. However, the Indian slave trade during the 17th and early 18th centuries had profound effects upon foreign relations among the various parties of the Southeastern Borderlands. This is often forgotten due to the later development of chattel slavery based on the exclusive exploitation of African slaves.
- ³⁶ Ibid, 341; Alan Galloway, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989). This text traces the development of African slavery and the planter class through the life of Jonathan Bryan in the middle of the eighteenth century.
- ³⁷ Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 348. Laws in South Carolina barred Africans from partaking in the Indigenous trade, especially as interpreters. Planters also employed Indigenous peoples to return runaway slaves. However, in both instances, enforcement and cooperation proved to be lacking. Nonetheless, a social and political distance was being created between Indigenous peoples and Africans, the former held relative autonomy due to military strength while the latter was commodified into Atlantic World economy. In fact European powers more readily accepted Indigenous self-rule in order to gain stability to safeguard slavery.
- ³⁸ Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 198; Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary," 300.
- ³⁹ Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 34.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, 37.
- ⁴¹ Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 197.
- ⁴² Hoffman, *Florida's Frontiers*, 200.
- ⁴³ William C. Sturtevant, "Creek into Seminole," in *North American Indians in Historical Perspective*, ed. Eleanor Burke Leacock and Nancy Oestreich Lurie (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press 1971), 92.
- ⁴⁴ J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 3.
- ⁴⁵ Although Europeans were integral in the creation of designations such as "Creeks" and "Seminoles," this work is cognizant that Indigenous bands and towns had significant power in embracing these identities and political entities for their own agendas and motives.
- ⁴⁶ John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922).
- ⁴⁷ Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 2. The text presents a valuable discussion of the complex origins of the Creeks and the Seminoles.
- ⁴⁸ Brent Richards Weisman, *Unconquered Peoples: Florida's Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 12.

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- ⁴⁹ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 93.
- ⁵⁰ Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 18.
- ⁵¹ Brent Richards Weisman, *Like Beads on a String: A Culture History of the Seminole Indians in North Peninsular Florida* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 28.
- ⁵² Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 19.
- ⁵³ Susan A. Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones: A Seminole Saga* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 4. While the author is specifically addressing Seminole clan and political structures, scholars have argued that cultural continuities between both groups existed. Thus a discussion of Seminole social and political structures would shed light on the Creeks.
- ⁵⁴ Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 22; Weisman, *Like Beads on a String*, 18. The author writes that the green corn ceremony is related to the "platform mound rituals of Mississippian societies." These ceremonies revolved around cleansing, regulating, and fertility. Consumption of tobacco and the black drink, a tea made of various herbs, was based on the desire of seeking purity.
- ⁵⁵ Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones*, 5.
- ⁵⁶ *Talofas* could leave their *talwas* for a host of reasons such as population increase and the carrying capacity of the land as well as political and social disputes or rivalries.
- ⁵⁷ James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 10; Weisman, *Like Beads on a String*, 37. Spanish Florida's inability to furnish sufficient trade goods for Southeastern Indigenous peoples became a reoccurring theme and was an important gauge of Spanish weakness, especially in comparison to the British.
- ⁵⁸ Weisman, *Unconquered Peoples*, 13; Sturtevant, "Creek into Seminole," 101. According to the author there is no direct evidence that any Creek groups relocated to Florida due to Spanish efforts. However, Weisman states that this was most likely the case since offers were made to the Apalachicola, Oconee, Hitchiti, Sawokli, and Yuchi and they were later based in the region; Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 5.
- ⁵⁹ Miller describes four phases of Creek immigration to Florida, the first three will be discussed in the main body of the text. The fourth movement consisted of Creek Red Sticks immigration after the War of 1812.
- ⁶⁰ John E. Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida: Volume I: Assimilation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 199. This text describes how Menéndez negotiated with Timucuan and had the resources to operate his livestock operations; Amy Turner Bushnell, "The Menéndez Marqués Cattle Barony at La Chua and the Determinants of Economic Expansion in Seventeenth-Century Florida " *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 56 (April 1978), 408.
- ⁶¹ Gregory A. Waselkov and Kathryn E. Holland Braund, ed. *William Bartram on Southeastern Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 53. Traveling through Alachua, the British naturalist William Bartram provides important accounts of Seminole daily life. In this account he states that Seminoles living in Cuscowilla were collecting well-proportioned cattle belonging to the Cowkeeper in order to prepare a feast.
- ⁶² Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 12; Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 3.
- ⁶³ Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 113.
- ⁶⁴ Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones*, 8.
- ⁶⁵ The headman Chilokilichi may have been blocked from a leadership role by the presence of his brother the Coweta Micco. Meanwhile Simpukasee, as Brim's son, would not be the next in line to become the micco since the Creek traced inheritance through matrilineal lines of descent.
- ⁶⁶ Waselkov and Holland Braund, ed. *William Bartram on Southeastern Indians*, 52.

⁶⁷ Patrick Tonyn to Earl of Dartmouth, 23 September 1774, CO 5/550-556, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC. Tonyn acknowledges that the Florida Indians, he does not use the term Seminoles, are politically distinct from the Creek. However, he does state they “cannot entirely hold them, as a free people, independent of that Nation (Creek).”

⁶⁸ Sturtevant, "Creek into Seminole," 105; Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen*, 5.

⁶⁹ Weisman, *Like Beads on a String*, 13. The author argues that the position of cultural continuity among the Seminoles and Creeks is shared by Sturtevant. Weisman utilizes the metaphor of beads on a string to illustrate this dynamic.

⁷⁰ Claudio Saunt, "The English Has Now a Mind to Make Slaves of Them All": Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problem of Slavery," *American Indian Quarterly* 22 (Winter - Spring 1998), 170. The author argues that the Creek Red Stick War, 1813-1814, marked the ultimate schism between the Creek and Seminoles. Consequently, the outcome of the Creek Civil War meant that refugee Red Sticks took residence among the Seminoles in Florida. Their departure marked the dominance of the “new order,” nationalism, market capitalism, and property, among the Creek. Meanwhile the Seminoles would continue to resist chattel slavery and political centralization.

⁷¹ Once the British occupied Florida they divided it into two provinces, East Florida and West Florida. East Florida consisted of the present day state of Florida, with the exception of Pensacola. West Florida composed portions of the Florida Panhandle, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

⁷² British officials, in addition to cutting the costs of offering gifts to Indigenous leaders, also sought to control Indigenous peoples’ access to gunpowder. Their efforts were especially grating since ammunition was crucial for commercial hunting.

⁷³ In addition to British attempts to consolidate their power over Indigenous peoples, the Spanish also attempted during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to exert their power in Florida. Consequently a number of revolts by the Guale, Apalachee, and Timucuan accompanied what was viewed as a fundamental change in the terms of the Indigenous-Spanish relationship.

⁷⁴ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 270.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 310.

⁷⁶ John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

⁷⁷ Report of the Picolata Congress, 09 December 1765, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC. Governor Grant informs the Lower Creeks that he intervened in the favor of the Cherokee in a 1762 treaty negotiated in Charleston. Despite apparently having the power to acquire vast swaths of land, Grant professes he give the Cherokees lenient terms because he knew they need the “hunting grounds.” The governor states that if he treated an enemy in such a manner then his friends would fare even better.

⁷⁸ James Grant to John Pownall, 20 July 1763, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.

⁷⁹ James Grant to the Board of Trade, 08 May 1765, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.

⁸⁰ J. Leitch Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1975), 3.

⁸¹ Francis Ogilvie to Board of Trade, 23 May 1764, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC; James Grant Proclamation, 22 November 1764, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC. The governor repeats Ogilvie’s assessment that prior Spanish inhabitants failed to exploit the colony’s natural resources because of Indigenous attacks and their own lack of motivation.

⁸² The treaty was negotiated with Lower Creeks and Seminole representatives, however the British never use the term Seminole. They assumed that the Indigenous groups in the area were Creeks and were yet to grasp the split between the Alachua Seminoles and the Lower Creeks.

⁸³ Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles*; Weisman, *Unconquered Peoples*, 28; Weisman, *Like Beads on a String*, 49; Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "'the Congress Held in a Pavilion': John Bartram and the Indian Congress at Fort Picolata, East Florida," in *America's Curious Botanist: A Tercentennial Reappraisal of John Bartram, 1699-1777*, ed. Nancy E. Hoffmann and John C. Van Horne (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2004), 79-96. The author discusses the account of the conference from the perspective of Botanist John Bartram, father of William Bartram.

⁸⁴ James Grant to the Board of Trade, 10 December 1767, CO 5/340-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC; James Grant to the Board of Trade, 30 August 1766, CO 5/340-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC. Governor Grant makes a detailed case why the British cannot afford to antagonize the Creek. Since they are a "powerful Indian Nation" their attack would be devastating and would ensure the destruction of Georgia plantations and dissuade any settlers from coming to East Florida.

⁸⁵ Grant's background, including as a military commander and negotiator, against the Cherokee would have resonated with Creek who were often in various stages of peace and conflict with their northern Indigenous neighbors.

⁸⁶ James Grant to the Board of Trade, January 1772, CO 5/340-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC. The governor requests a 1,000 pounds for gifts and reminds the Board of Trade that relations with the Creeks were stable only because of the use of gifts.

⁸⁷ James W. Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles*, 32.

⁸⁸ James Grant to the Board of Trade, 30 August 1766, CO 5/340-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.

⁸⁹ Grant's decision to allow the Lower Creek and Seminoles to administer their own justice to Indians accused of crimes against British subjects was a significant concession that implicitly acknowledged Indigenous jurisdiction. In the Southeast, the British had by 1730 had demanded the extradition of Cherokee to British courts and this point of contention fueled violence during the Anglo-Cherokee War, 1758-1761. For information on the issue of contrasting Cherokee and British notions of law and justice see: Stephanie Pratt, "'Reynolds' 'King of the Cherokees' and Other Mistaken Identities in the Portraiture of Native American Delegations, 1710-1762," *Oxford Art Journal* 21 (1998), 140.

⁹⁰ Braund, "'the Congress Held in a Pavilion,'" 87. The author states that the governor treated Bartram with generosity because he felt his reports would advertise the richness of Florida's geography.

⁹¹ Reginald Horsman, "Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (1976), 387-410.

⁹² Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to Be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102 (June 1997), 624-644.

⁹³ James Grant to the Board of Trade, 29 August 1765, CO 5/340-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC. The Seminoles were told that Mediterranean servants were not white (English); James Grant to the Board of Trade, 30 August 1766, CO 5/340-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC. The document notes that the Creek call the British "white" while the French are referred to as "French" rather than white; James Grant to the Board of Trade, 02 July 1768, CO 5/340-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC. The governor refers to the immigrants brought from the Mediterranean as white.

⁹⁴ Report of the Picolata Congress, 09 December 1765, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.

⁹⁵ Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to Be Red."

⁹⁶ Claudio Saunt, "New Order of Things: Creeks and Seminoles in the Deep South Interior, 1733-1816," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1996), 69; Braund, "'the Congress Held in a Pavilion,'" 93.

⁹⁷ Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite*, 144.

⁹⁸ Ironically, British authorities claimed to be protecting the Lower Creeks and Seminoles from Bryan's nefarious land grab, however, this episode can also be interpreted as the British asserting their right to intervene in Indigenous political agreements. Previously, the British had been wary of claiming the jurisdiction for events in the Florida interior.

⁹⁹ Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, 25; Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 256. Although the Seminoles were not directly affected by the American Revolution, prior and succeeding events including internal factors were responsible for vital changes among Florida's Indigenous peoples. Cuscowilla Seminoles relationship with the British and later the Spanish as well as political decentralization and geographical distance led to a formation of Seminole identity. Calloway cites the Bryan incident as one of the events that demonstrated the increasing political, economic, and social distance between the Creek and Seminole.

¹⁰⁰ Report of the Picolata Congress, 09 December 1765, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.

Although Cowkeeper did not attend the conference he did send Wioffke in his place.

¹⁰¹ Cowkeeper to Patrick Tonyn, 13 March 1774, C.O. 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC.

¹⁰² Report of the Picolata Congress, 09 December 1765, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.

¹⁰³ Waselkov and Braund, ed. *William Bartram on Southeastern Indians*, 66.

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Tonyn to Earl of Dartmouth, 16 February 1776, CO 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC.

¹⁰⁵ John Moultrie to the Board of Trade, 29 June 1771, C.O. 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC.

¹⁰⁶ Patrick Tonyn to George Germain, 03 July 1779, C.O. 5/559-60, microfilm reel 4, PRO, LC.

¹⁰⁷ In particular I am referring to officials such as East Florida Governor Henry White and surveyor general of Spanish West Florida Vicente Sebastián Pintado. The governor in 1808 expressed his fear of "Negros de los Indios" by forbidding them in any settlements or plantations. Pintado illustrated Spanish concerns of an Indigenous and African coalition by protesting the "Negro Fort" at Prospect Bluff in 1815.

¹⁰⁸ Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 2.

¹⁰⁹ John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 57.

¹¹⁰ James Grant to the Board of Trade, 08 May 1765, C.O. 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC; Schafer, "'A Swamp of an Investment,'"?, 13.

¹¹¹ James Grant to the Board of Trade, 30 July 1763, C.O. 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC; Board of Trade to James Grant, 04 July 1766, C.O. 5/563-66, microfilm reel 5, PRO, LC. The board's response to Grant's earlier requests for the purchase of a hundred slaves for use in the construction of public works states that the decision is left to his discretion. However, the board expressed its doubt that the government can effectively control the slaves and that slave ownership is best left to private enterprise.

¹¹² James Grant Proclamation, 22 November 1764, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.

¹¹³ James Grant to Board of Trade, 01 September 1770, C.O. 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC; Earl of Hillsborough to James Grant, 11 December 1770, C.O. 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC; John Robinson to John Pownall, 08 March 1771, C.O. 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC. Governor grant expended considerable effort to assist Andrew Turnbull 's New Smyrna plantation.

¹¹⁴ Schafer, *Governor James Grant's Villa*, 9.

¹¹⁵ Alastair Macpherson Grant, *General James Grant of Ballindalloch. 1720-1806* (London: A.M. Grant, 1930), 79.

¹¹⁶ Schafer, *Governor James Grant's Villa*, 30.

¹¹⁷ Schafer, "'A Swamp of an Investment,'"?, 13.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 24.

¹¹⁹ Francis Philip Fatio to Major Morrison, 14 December 1782, C.O. 5/559-60, microfilm reel 4, PRO, LC.

¹²⁰ Land Grant Petition, 03 March 1773, C.O. 5/570-571, microfilm reel 6, PRO, LC; Land Grant Petition, 07 April 1773, C.O. 5/570-571, microfilm reel 6, PRO, LC. Approved land grant petitions document Fatio's presence in Florida in the early 1770s.

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- ¹²¹ Parker, "Success through Diversification," 69-82.
- ¹²² James Grant to Board of Trade, 02 July 1768, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.
- ¹²³ Griffin, "Blue Gold," 52.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid.
- ¹²⁵ James Grant to Board of Trade, 29 August 1768, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid.
- ¹²⁷ Griffin, "Blue Gold," 45. The author provides an excellent discussion of the various conditions and incidents after the 1768 revolt, which led to the decline of Turnbull's plantation.
- ¹²⁸ Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, 17. According to the author, both Floridas were reliant on British Parliament for financial support. Many of the taxes levied on the North American colonies would indirectly benefit their development. Additionally Wright argues that they lacked effective assemblies and consequently any leadership willing to articulate opposition to royal measures.
- ¹²⁹ J. Leitch Wright, "British East Florida: Loyalist Bastion," in *Eighteenth-Century Florida: The Impact of the American Revolution*, ed. Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978), 8.
- ¹³⁰ J. Leitch Wright Jr., "Blacks in British East Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 54 (April 1976), 436.
- ¹³¹ Patrick Tonyn to George Germain, 30 November 1781, C.O. 5/559-60, microfilm reel 4, PRO, LC.
- ¹³² Wright Jr., "Blacks in British East Florida," 437.
- ¹³³ Minutes of East Florida Upper House of Assembly, 27 July 1781, C.O. 5/572, microfilm reel 7, PRO, LC.
- ¹³⁴ Patrick Tonyn to Board of Trade, 30 November 1781, C.O. 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.
- ¹³⁵ Board of Trade to Patrick Tonyn, 22 February 1782, C.O. 5/563-66, microfilm reel 5, PRO, LC.
- ¹³⁶ Patrick Tonyn to George Germain, 03 July 1779, C.O. 5/559-60, microfilm reel 4, PRO, LC.
- ¹³⁷ William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola University of West Florida Press, 1986), 41.
- ¹³⁸ Patrick Tonyn to Board of Trade, 25 January 1783, C.O. 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, PRO, LC.
- ¹³⁹ Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, 109.
- ¹⁴⁰ Griffin, "Blue Gold," 40.
- ¹⁴¹ Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, 127.
- ¹⁴² Correspondent to Robert Bisset, 20 May 1783, C.O. 5/559-60, microfilm reel 4, PRO, LC.

Chapter 2

PLÁTICAS DE LOS ESPAÑOLES Y GENTE COLORADA: SHIFTING RACIAL DISCOURSE IN THE FLORIDA BORDERLANDS DURING THE SECOND SPANISH PERIOD, 1784-1821

To the headmen and warriors of the Lower Creek and Seminoles. I wish to see you and it gives me much joy that you have come. My officials and I welcome you and extend a hand of friendship and smoke the peace pipe. The Spanish and English kings have reciprocated in extending their hands and burying the hatchet. Your sons and warriors live in peace, and like brothers. Our father the great king of Spain has sent me to look after the Red people as if they were his own children. We will keep the road clear and abundant in this land and for the Indian nations. We will secure all the red people so that they may hunt peacefully in the countryside and mountains.

Friends and brothers, let us now smoke the peace pipe. Let us become joyful, and drink to the health of the great king of Spain and all the Red People.

Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, 1784¹

Spain's reacquisition of Florida coincided with the interplay between an emerging market economy and increasingly rigid racial categories with previously established Indigenous and European systems. Initial Spanish occupation of the province (1562-1763) more closely reflected the institutionally driven colonialism found in other North American areas such as New Mexico and California.² The Spanish led military and missionary operations in the Florida interior with efforts to expand their influence outside the few principal settlements. Their first territorial reign underscored the limitations of this particular colonial project, especially in areas outside St. Augustine, as increasing Indigenous and British pressure kept the Spanish at bay.³ For the region's native peoples, the Gaule, Timucuan, Apalachee, and Yamasee, the presence of the Spanish, the spread of diseases, and the outbreak of violent conflicts brought about their

demographic collapse.⁴ Reacquisition of Las Floridas, East and West, during 1784-1821 ushered in more varied governmental policies. Spanish officials, with a small military presence, jettisoned attempts to acculturate Indigenous peoples through missions and centered their colonial strategies on diplomacy.

Within this context, Governor Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes could not dictate the terms of his economic and political relationship with the Seminoles and Lower Creeks. Setting a precedent for subsequent Spanish governors, he instead relied on existing channels of Southeastern Borderlands diplomacy. During their brief tenure in Florida, the British utilized experienced officers to reach agreements with Indigenous groups through congresses and conferences that followed the diplomatic protocols of the region. An essential part of these gatherings were speeches given by Indigenous and European representatives outlining their positions and grievances. Following an initial speech was an intercession and then the other party would give its own speech rebutting unfavorable arguments while reasserting their position. Transcripts of the discussions from Picolata Congresses of 1765 demonstrate that the speakers utilized various metaphors in their speeches to communicate fictive kinship and power relationships, express peaceful intentions, and to mitigate any words or actions that could cause offense. Often the discussions occurred through an intermediary that could translate the speeches, either a European-American trader or an African and Indigenous interpreter. An additional component of the meetings was the distribution of gifts in order to establish a relationship of reciprocity. Europeans viewed these expenditures as necessary bribes or payments but for Southeastern Indigenous peoples they were important in cementing the new arrangements. While calling these goods “gifts” connotes European benevolence, colonial

representatives were asking for something in return. Indigenous peoples were expected to consent to alliances, land grants, trade relationships, and to prosecute individuals accused of a crime.

The talks or *pláticas* were letters that fulfilled similar functions as the speeches given during conferences. This correspondence occurred between principal Seminole leaders and various Spanish governors and constituted nation-to-nation talks. Nancy Shoemaker notes that the term “nation,” in the early to middle eighteenth century, possessed a different meaning than what it would eventually signify.⁵ Nations referred to political entities united through culture and language, they were not synonymous with a nation-state and its accompanying institutions.⁶ Although the Seminoles were politically decentralized, the *pláticas* did serve to highlight Indigenous leaders such as Payne. He was the recipient of the majority of talks directed to the Alachua Seminoles, until the emergence of Bowleg. Meanwhile, Spanish messages to the Mikasuki were directed to their leader Kinache. Thus the *pláticas* highlighted certain leaders and colonial authorities held expectations that they spoke for a wide number of settlements and people. During the Picolata Congresses, the British established a precedent of seeking to elevate Lower Creek and Seminole leaders over others in order to facilitate negotiations.⁷ Indigenous leaders holding discussions with colonial powers often gained control of trade and gifts, which would help elevate their prestige and political position.

While physical meetings between Indigenous leaders and colonial representatives could lead to new treaties, the *pláticas* often sought to reaffirm or maintain pre-existing agreements rather than lead to new accords. The treaties were informal agreements spelling out roughly what territory Europeans and Indigenous peoples could inhabit as well as the terms of mutual

defense agreements. These arrangements could be undermined by the shifting geopolitical situation, the encroachment of colonists in Indigenous territory, and even incidents between individuals and small groups. Within the hierarchy of diplomatic encounters, the *pláticas* did not carry the same weight of a conference. Nonetheless, the Seminole-Spanish *pláticas* sought to defuse events that could unravel the delicate agreements that had begun between the British, Lower Creeks, and Seminoles.

Diplomacy through the *pláticas* marked a departure in Spanish colonial policy and highlighted their tenuous position. Unlike the British speeches delivered in the congresses and conferences, the *pláticas* were even more dependent on intermediaries and translators to transmit their messages. In Florida, this often meant that the British firm Panton, Leslie, and Company, consisting of mostly Scottish merchants, handled the communications with Indigenous peoples since the Spanish had been forced to outsource the Indian trade and by extension aspects of their diplomatic mission. Unlike the British who could afford to hold meetings such as the 1767 Picolata Congress, the Spanish had to rely more on traders and *pláticas* rather than expensive conferences. Indigenous peoples could identify the significance of Spain's inability to hold congresses, give gifts, and their reliance on British mediators who arguably were more powerful since they controlled trade.

Although the late eighteenth century witnessed a greater tendency in Spanish colonial North America to utilize diplomacy and gifts, Spain's relationship with Florida's Indigenous peoples was distinct. In California, the Spanish remained faithful to a strategy based on mission and presidio complexes to hold territory and acculturate Indigenous peoples and turn them into Spanish citizens. Meanwhile in New Mexico and Texas, James Brooks and Juliana Barr write

that the Spanish had to engage in Indigenous political, economic, and social systems centered on the captive raiding economy and notions of gender. However, in Florida the Spanish had to adjust to the specific conditions of the Southeastern Borderlands, a region also connected to the economic and political currents of the Atlantic World. While captive taking and the use of gender metaphors did occur in the region it was not as prevalent as it was in other areas. Florida's provinces during the British period experienced the growth of the plantation export economy and African slavery; which made it different from the regions of Texas and New Mexico discussed by Barr and Brooks respectively. British traders among the Lower Creeks and Seminoles sought to control the deerskin trade and integrate the region to the market economy. Consequently, scholars such as Nancy Shoemaker state that the spread of African slavery in the Southeast initiated the creation of rigid racial categories. Indigenous peoples had previously utilized terms such as "white" and "red" to refer to peace (white) and war (red) towns. Though these divisions were malleable, white settlements were generally charged with domestic affairs and diplomacy while red towns were responsible for military leadership.⁸ However, during the eighteenth century these terms eventually became markers of racial difference for Europeans and later Indigenous peoples as well. The Spanish upon their return to East and West Florida would be influenced by these processes and be forced to adapt due to their vulnerable position.

Diplomacy between the Lower Creek, Seminole, and Spanish spanned the entire Second Spanish Florida period, 1784-1821, and broached several themes and topics. Initial *pláticas* were concerned with re-asserting Spanish political jurisdiction after the 1783 Peace of Paris resulted in the evacuation of British officials and settlers from the province. In short order, the treaties not only restored Florida to Spain but they also established a northern border with the

young nation of the United States. Zéspedes and other Spanish officials were distressed over the threat posed to the colony by combustible relations with Indigenous groups whose power in northern Florida had to be respected. Seminole headman Cowkeeper had expressed his hostility towards the Spanish and vowed to “kill every Spaniard that offers to set his head out of the line of the town.”⁹ He also asserted his sovereignty over Florida and would contest Spanish authority. In light of these concerns the early *pláticas* sought to win Indigenous acquiescence to the transfer of colonial power and to convince headmen that Spain sought a continuation of British policies. Zéspedes, his agents and interpreters, stressed a fictive kin relationship and a willingness to acknowledge a measure of Seminole autonomy. Equally important for both parties were assurances that gifts and trade goods, which were consistently provided under the British, would resume unabated in hopes of securing Indigenous alliances and peace treaties. Thus *pláticas* provide valuable insight into both the goals and agendas of the Spanish, Seminole, and Lower Creek and they shed light on the ground level political dynamics of the Florida Borderlands.

Aside from divulging details about the state of Spanish-Seminole affairs in northern Florida, the *pláticas* provide larger analytical insight into important questions and processes. They demonstrate how Spain’s geopolitical position, as illustrated through the talks, influenced the racial discourse of the Florida Borderlands. Reginald Horsman argues that the late 18th and 19th centuries represented the beginning of a transition to more rigid notions of race based upon the separation of racial groups and the inherent inferiority of non-whites.¹⁰ British precedents in Indigenous diplomacy and the continuing presence of British traders and agents influenced Spanish officials and the language they adopted in the *pláticas*. Scholars Richard White, Peter

Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker also trace, respectively, the decline of the “middle ground” with a drive by empires to establish order against perceived threats to colonial societies and the emerging capitalistic system.¹¹ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron also write that “as colonial borderlands gave way to national borders, fluid and ‘inclusive’ intercultural frontiers yielded to hardened and more ‘exclusive’ hierarchies.”¹² Spanish Florida could not help but be caught in these emerging currents during its final years.

Considering the larger historical context of the second Spanish Florida period, this chapter examines a couple of key areas, drawing upon Spanish-Seminole *pláticas* as an informative lens on the interplay between local level power dynamics and larger transnational processes. Examining the manner in which the talks are delivered, their language and symbolism, and their subject matter powerfully testifies to the dynamism of the Florida Borderlands. Diplomatic talks demonstrate the racialization of Seminoles and, indirectly, Africans. Spanish diplomacy relied heavily on British traders as messengers, translators, and official representatives as they simultaneously oversaw the expansion of the market economy and the commodification of land, livestock, and African slaves. Their presence meant that Spanish officials engaged in a racial discourse that utilized terms such as “white” and “red” rather than more traditional cultural designations. Spanish colonial policies, influenced by their British predecessors, sought stable relations with Indigenous peoples in order to promote plantations while securing property. For Africans this signaled a shift in racial discourse and a decline in spaces of negotiation. Simultaneously, native peoples used the *pláticas* as forums for their political resistance to colonialism. Indeed, through the vehicle of the *pláticas* we see the

racialization and construction of “Indians” and “blacks” and an economy moving from reciprocity to the commercial deerskin trade.

Understanding how racialization and the market economy affected Spanish Florida constitutes an important contribution to North American Spanish Borderlands historiography. Claudio Saunt argues that while Spanish primary sources are invaluable, he challenges the notion that the region as a whole represented a “Spanish borderlands” since the Europeans’ presence was minimal.¹³ His efforts to integrate the Southeast into the larger story of U.S. colonialism and the Atlantic World economy provides a useful framework. Scholars such as David Weber argue that the return of the Spanish to Florida signaled the movement to “re-hispanicize” the area.¹⁴ Jane Landers’ work, influenced by Frank Tannenbaum, has focused on the first Spanish reign in Florida and has illustrated that African society in Florida received “acknowledgement of a slave’s humanity and rights and a liberal manumission policy.”¹⁵ A consensus exists among scholars that Spanish Florida was an area with malleable notions of race that offered groups, especially Africans, increased space for agency and resistance. However this observation can obfuscate and neglect larger processes that were taking root in the Southeastern Borderlands. The *pláticas* problematize generalizations of Spanish colonialism and demonstrate how officials adapted to changing circumstances. Factors such as the lasting influence of prior British policies and traders, adherence to Lower Creek and Seminole diplomatic protocols, and the emergence of racial designations of “white,” “red,” and “black” demonstrate that the Second Spanish Florida period must be contextualized within the larger sociopolitical movements at the turn of the nineteenth century.

2.1 Seminole-Spanish Pláticas

Primarily, the *pláticas* between the Spanish and the Seminoles grew out of a need to restore a sense of security for both groups during politically and militarily combustible periods. Early talks dealt with the nurturing of peace between the Spanish and Seminole immediately after the British evacuation finished in 1784. Periodically, conflicts broke out and threatened to foment cycles of violence between the Indigenous peoples and the planters on the St. Johns and St. Mary's Rivers. Spanish governors sent *pláticas* hoping to assure Indigenous peoples that any of their subjects who committed crimes would be punished and they requested that Seminole leaders reciprocate against Indigenous individuals accused of similar offenses. During the emergence of the British adventurer William Augustus Bowles in 1791, the Spanish governor dispatched many talks to dissuade the Seminoles, Mikasuki, and Lower Creeks from joining the movement against their colonial rule.¹⁶ Bowles wanted to utilize Indigenous alliances to seize territory and to end the Panton, Leslie, and Company trade monopoly. His base of support was first among the Apalachicola Seminoles and later with the Mikasuki. Indigenous accords with the British filibuster owed more to their previous acrimony towards the Spanish and local merchants rather than Bowles' abilities as a leader, despite his unabashed self-promotion.¹⁷ Unsuccessful in the early 1790s, Bowles later returned around the turn of the nineteenth century. Mikasuki headman Kinache utilized the ensuing upheaval to oversee successful captive taking and the subsequent negotiation of ransom payments.¹⁸ The raids drew Spanish authorities' ire, setting off diplomatic dispatches to the Alachua Seminoles requesting their intercession. These are only a few examples when Spanish officials, Indigenous leaders, and intermediaries relied on

diplomacy in order to avoid even wider conflicts that would have upset the delicate balance of power in the Florida Borderlands.

British withdrawal from East Florida in 1784 was disagreeable to the Seminoles, especially since they were never consulted. Seminole leader Cowkeeper voiced his frustration with the British, vowing to confront any Spanish forces attempting to re-occupy Florida and declaring the Seminoles independent of any foreign powers.¹⁹ Obviously the Spanish needed to earn the trust of the new headman Payne, who, having been related to the influential Cowkeeper, ascended to a prominent leadership position.

In that same year Florida Governor Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes sent a “*plática*” to the “*Jefes y Guerreros de los Indios Seminolies*” to begin peace talks.²⁰ He invoked a kinship relationship by using the terms “*Amigos y Hermanos*,” in an attempt to establish a familiarity between two distinct people. The letter explicitly sought to conflate the Spanish and British monarchs in the minds of the Seminole leadership. Evidently, colonial officials were attempting to follow the guidelines set forth under the British. Zéspedes also invoked the smoking of the “*pipa de amistad*,” which, according to Robert A. Williams, many of “the major Woodlands tribal groups of the Mississippi Basin region, from Georgia to the upper reaches of the Great Lakes, attached a sacred significance” during treaty negotiations.²¹ Within Zéspedes’ letter he calls the Spanish, “*los espanoles*,” while referring to the Seminoles as “*Hombres Colorados*,” translated as “red men.” Shoemaker, writing about race relations in the Southeast notes, the conflation of native peoples with the color “red.” Europeans and Indigenous peoples engaged in Southeastern diplomacy began to invoke “red” and “white” when addressing each other. Although native peoples did not immediately interpret this terminology to signify racial

difference, for Europeans during the course of the eighteenth century the use of “red” and in general “race outpaced the older categories of Christian and pagan to become the primary justification for expropriating the land and labor of others.”²² The Spanish governors and their interpreters would implement the same use of “red” and “white,” signifying the occurrence of the same process in the Florida Borderlands.

In the same vein as the *plática* mentioned above, Zéspedes delivered another talk in 1789. The diplomatic message was translated into English and delivered to the Seminoles and probably translated once more into Muskogee or Hichiti. It dealt with another contentious issue, reoccurring episodes of individual violent encounters threatening larger cycles of retribution. A recent murder of an Indigenous man apparently influenced “depredations” in the Mantanzas region, where a “white man” was murdered and horses and cattle taken.²³ Addressed within the letter is a claim by the Seminoles that the Spanish did not have the right to reside in Mantanzas, just south of St. Augustine. Zéspedes asserts his right of ownership through the Picolata Conference and states that the lands ceded to the British, areas east of the St. Johns River, had been transferred to Spain. Additionally, the governor requests that the Seminoles punish the guilty party over the recent murder. Similar to efforts by British Governor Grant, Zéspedes attempted to defuse a tense situation not through force but appealing to Seminole notions of justice. This particular letter heavily relies on metaphors and symbols in comparison to the *plática* discussed above. The governor metaphorically takes the “red man” by the hand and places it in his “bosom,” while simultaneously keeping bright the “chain of friendship,” and maintaining a “path clear between the Spaniard and the red people.” Zéspedes also positions himself as a paternal figure, since he supplied the Seminoles with “powder and ball” so that the

Seminole men could protect and feed their women and children. By situating himself as the role of a provider, the governor claimed honor because the Seminoles were dependent on him to protect their families. Finally, the talk ends with an admonishment to the Seminoles that the “white” and “red” peoples should not settle in adjacent lands since disreputable elements from “both colours” will be able to “deaden the brightness of the chain.”²⁴

Politically, Spanish Florida suffered ever-increasing disruptions during the late 1780s and early 1790s. Officials blamed Bowles, specifically his efforts to destroy and plunder the Pantón, Leslie, and Company’s stores as well as efforts to wrest control of the Floridas from the Spanish. The Bahamas Governor Lord Dunmore, the British official who utilized African troops during the American Revolution, encouraged Bowles’ covert operations. Landing in West Florida, the adventurer sought to buttress his small force with Indigenous allies, both Lower Creeks and Seminoles residing near Apalachicola. After a few setbacks, Bowles’ military forces were stranded in the Florida Borderlands, unable to capture St. Augustine. Fearful that Bowles could re-constitute his forces through the discontent of the Seminoles toward the Spanish, Governor Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada sent talks to the Indigenous leaders to maintain their loyalty or at least their neutrality.

In 1792, the governor sent a “plática” to “la nación Seminolie” in order to undermine any support for Bowles’ efforts against the colony. Similar metaphorical flourishes are in this diplomatic dispatch such as the “chain of friendship.”²⁵ Also present is the continuing invocation of fictive kin relations as the governor expresses his brotherly love for “la gente colorada.” Described as their common father, the king of Spain ensures trade and annual gifts to the Seminoles whereas Bowles is a liar and cannot be trusted. While in Spanish culture the

paternal figure received ultimate authority, Seminoles viewed the symbolic position of a father differently, for they gained their clan identities through their matrilineal lines of descent.²⁶ As Barr argues, the language utilized in diplomatic talks between Indigenous peoples and the Spanish could have different meanings for each party, but nonetheless remain beneficial.²⁷ In this case each party left the talks with different understandings of the role of a “father:”

Indigenous peoples may not have felt that this was intrusive since Seminole fathers were mostly advisors, while the Spanish believed that they succeeded in establishing their paternal authority over native peoples. Meanwhile, the governor described Bowles, unlike the Spanish king, to be an untrustworthy father figure who will not be able to protect the Seminoles but rather bring calamity to both their settlements and women and children. In other words, the governor feared that Bowles, since he was a Euro-American claiming to have British support, could have established control over the Seminoles because he thought they were naïve or gullible.

Europeans and later Euro-Americans repeatedly claimed that Indigenous actions were often part of the nefarious schemes of “bad white men.” While Bowles was important in the upheaval of the period, the Spanish never believed that the Lower Creeks and Seminoles could have been manipulating the adventurer to further their own internal and external agendas. He may have played a role as leverage in their negotiations against colonial powers. Conversely, if Bowles fulfilled his lofty promises then Indigenous peoples would have access to greater British trade goods and could avoid the Panton, Leslie, and Company monopoly.

Discernable in the three *pláticas* discussed above is the reoccurring theme that the Spanish must stress their affinity with the British to illustrate that their reign in Florida represented continuity with the older regime. Quesada stated that Bowles fell out of favor with

the British government and was no longer their representative. Part of the adventurer's rise to prominence among the Lower Creek and Apalachicola Seminoles was based on his guarantees that he could bring steady and larger supplies of British goods than his Panton, Leslie, and Company rivals or the Spanish. Undoubtedly, Quesada happily noted that Bowles' promises of ships laden with trade goods never appeared. The need to associate with the British demonstrated Spanish weakness but also illustrated that the new colonial administration sought to learn from its predecessor. For instance, Zéspedes' 1789 *plática* asserted land ownership in East Florida through the transfer to the Spanish of the rights the British received at the 1765 Picolata Congress. Also, his handling of the revenge killings discussed in the same talk echoed British Governor James Grant's strategy to respect Indigenous autonomy while his position remained weak.

The Spanish-Seminole diplomatic exchanges were not European dictates disguised in the language of Indigenous diplomacy, especially considering that the language, metaphors, and physical space of the discussions took place on Indigenous terms. Seminole leader Payne became an influential political actor, not necessarily due to the Alachua Seminoles' population size or military capacity; rather he occupied a strategic geopolitical position between larger powers. Payne's role as a mediator presented opportunities to accumulate political capital with his Spanish allies, but it also threatened to ignite rivalries, with the Mikasuki, Lower Creek, and with Georgia. An alliance with the colonial government in St. Augustine meant expectations of Seminole assistance if the Spanish were threatened. In addition to these duties, Payne often had to address issues ranging from "depredations," seizure of property, captive taking, and the return of fugitive slaves. However, the Indigenous leader did not solely fulfill the role of responding or

reacting to the demands or whims of the Spanish East Florida governors. He also made it clear that the Seminole expected annual gifts and that the Panton, Leslie, and Company could trade freely in their territory. Payne also subtly critiqued the Spanish with frequent mention of the British as a reminder that Spain was inadequate in comparison to its European rival's commercial prowess. Some documents, especially those concerning the seizure of Spanish subjects, paint a picture of Payne as a willing servant of the colonial administration.²⁸ Different circumstances illustrate his ability to assuage colonial officers' demands with answers that hint towards obstruction or an unwillingness to provide assistance. The Seminole leader's *pláticas* demonstrate that Indigenous groups were active negotiators and they strove to achieve their own political, economic, and social goals through the rituals of diplomacy.

One example of Payne seeking to present himself as a staunch Spanish ally yet simultaneously making material demands occurred in 1794, when a French inspired plot to enlist European American frontiersmen to attack Spanish Florida posed a threat to the region. A backdrop to the filibuster activity on the Florida border was the tenuous position held by the Panton, Leslie, and Company in the province. Not only would larger conflicts complicate the trading firm's ability to purchase goods for exchange, but also prominent citizens and the governor had signed a petition protesting the privileged economic position enjoyed by the company. A royal order was passed on June 9, 1793, which liberalized Louisiana and Florida's trading restrictions thus opening up the territories to traders from friendly nations with economic agreements.²⁹

Payne wrote to Governor Quesada on January 31, 1794 to pledge his support during this time of crisis.³⁰ The headman states that their adversaries, most likely General Elijah Clarke and

a body of men, recruited by French Ambassador Edmond Genêt, were lawless vagabonds since Spain and the U.S. were officially at peace. The *plática* compares Clarke's force as "wolves and tigers" as well as "birds, going to build a nest in some sequestered point of land," in need of discovery and expulsion. Beyond the assurances of military assistance are also subtle reminders of how the Spanish must reciprocate. Payne once again reminded Quesada that the Seminoles "held by the hand" the British until they left and the Indigenous people then extended a hand to the Spanish "as if two brothers out of the same belly." The headman then stated that the Seminoles would soon be left with a shortage of ammunition and he expected the governor to provide the Seminole with these goods, as well as flints, knives, and hatchets. Payne finished his *plática* with a stinging jab by reminding the governor that when the British "father" controlled the region the Seminoles were always supplied. Thus the comparison to the British questioned Spanish masculinity as "protectors" and providers. Deftly dulling his rhetorical attack, the Indigenous leader invoked a fictive kin relationship by stating that the Seminoles and Spanish were "brothers, as if from the same father and mother."³¹ On the surface, this talk appears to be a pledge from an Indigenous leader to assist a colonial power, but a critical reading illustrates that this is an arrangement by equal parties expecting a reciprocal exchange. Implicit in the document is that the Seminoles will have continued access to Panton, Leslie and Company agents and trade. The importance of the trading house to Seminole policy can be understood through the physical transmission of the governor's earlier *plática*. John Leslie, a firm partner, had delivered the letter: Job Wiggins, an employee, had translated Payne's subsequent reply, and the talk was given at the Conception trading post on the St. Johns River.³²

In addition to trade and security, the recovery of seized slaves and property as well as the return of “fugitives” were predominant topics within some *pláticas*. By 1800 William Augustus Bowles, much to the surprise and consternation of many, reappeared in Florida after seemingly being banished to a Spanish prison. Upon his return he led a force of Indigenous allies in capturing the St. Marks trading post, dealing a setback for the Panton, Leslie, and Company. This marked a period of increased raiding and attacks on the St. Johns plantations: it is unclear whether it was simply, as some scholars claim, because of Bowles’ orders.³³ Nonetheless, planters experienced a loss of horses, slaves, and other goods. There were also incidents of violence resulting in the murder of an inhabitant of the province. A talk purported to be from Governor White quizzed Payne about recent incidents and warned him to make sure not to listen to the “talks” of “bad men” such as Bowles.³⁴ Coming just months after the capture of the trading house at St. Marks, tensions were running high. White reported that “four negro slaves” and a “family of free negroes” had been “plundered.” In a second incident, a Spanish subject was murdered near the “town” by an African among a group of Seminoles. The governor reminded the Seminoles that previously a “white man” had murdered a “red man” and was killed in order to give the Seminoles “satisfaction,” and he now expected similar treatment. Interestingly, this Spanish document is one of the few written on the behalf of an East Florida Governor to simultaneously refer to three racial classifications based on color, white, red, and black (*negro*).

Payne began his response to White’s *plática* by stating that he desired a “clear path between you and us” and stated that he reprimanded his “young men” for listening to “bad talks.”³⁵ Apparently, the suspected African, who allegedly murdered a Spanish subject escaped

in the night but was wounded. The “Negroes” state that he is dead since they found his gun near a large pond where he apparently entered the water with no evidence that he ever came out.³⁶ Concerning the other fugitive slaves mentioned by White, Payne states that he has “sent” for them and that he desires it “will be done.” Concluding quickly, the Indigenous leader bids farewell by taking the governor’s hand in friendship and signing off as “Brother Paine king.” This *plática* is curt in comparison to Payne’s other communications and offers very few details. Considering that the body of the suspected man was never found, it is possible that Payne did not want to apprehend and extradite him. Although the story of the man’s death may not have seemed plausible to the Spanish, Payne may have surmised that the governor was not willing to challenge its validity and risk greater confrontation.

The zenith of the crisis occurred with the Mikasuki’s captive raiding activities in 1802 and only eased with the capture of Bowles in May 1803. John Forrester of the Panton, Leslie, and Company, later named the John Forbes Company after 1801, was tasked with reclaiming the African slaves that had been seized in the sacking of the St. Marks trading post, slaves taken from a raid on Francis Philip Fatio’s plantation, and the Bonelli family captives. He traveled to see various Seminoles, Mikasuki, and Creek attempting to undermine Bowles, defuse tensions, and deliver messages from White. The East Florida governor and Payne exchanged many small *pláticas* during the year. These messages between the two men lacked the language of diplomacy and the metaphors found in the other documents. They were succinct, impersonal, and betray the frail relations between the Seminoles and Spanish. This is illustrated by a June 14, 1802 citizens’ petition seeking removal of the Forbes Company store at Picolata because it attracted Indigenous clients.³⁷ Capture of a “white” family made this incident particularly

galling to the Spanish, who applied heavy pressure, such as the suspension of trade and gifts, until the family and the rest of the property were returned.

Diplomatic efforts nearly failed to restore the general peace and stability. A March 26, 1802 message from Governor White highlighted the tone of recent communications. He stated that he is ready to restore peaceful relations if the “Negroes, horses, white women, and children they have carried off” are returned. White wrote that the Indigenous peoples had been the “aggressors” and that he “patiently bore with the murders and robberies they have been committing these two years past, which can now no longer be put up with, for it is natural in all men to resist violence and defend their lives and property.”³⁸ The governor concluded by stating that if the “Indians” seek peace he demands to see actions demonstrating their good faith, such as the return of any seized goods. Protection of private property was becoming a priority as evidenced in Forrester’s advice to the governor in a July 5, 1800 letter to take actions punishing its theft.³⁹ Although diplomacy had been utilized in order to protect property, in early 1802 diplomatic channels were in disorder. Central to successful diplomacy in the Southeastern Borderlands was reciprocity. Trade networks were disrupted in Florida and gifts were withheld until the captives were returned. Even physical meetings between the governor and Payne were limited since the latter feared for his safety.⁴⁰

Both Payne and Governor White took the necessary steps to restore relations between their respective groups. Payne continued to stress that the Alachua Seminoles were not responsible for recent captive taking and that inquiries should be made with Lower Creek headman John Kinnard.⁴¹ When Payne visited White in St. Augustine on March 20th he assigned blame for recent actions on the Mikasuki and Bowles. The governor retorted that peace would

only be established with the return of the whites, Blacks, and horses.⁴² For his troubles, White retained one of Payne's men on the pretense that he was instructed to come alone. This would explain why Payne temporarily halted his visits to St. Augustine and why it required various assurances from the governor for him to return. On June 5, 1802, Payne explained that he had sent his men to Mikasuki to inquire about the "white woman and her children," without success. He then requested his man's release and a visit by Spanish representatives so that they could have talks. The Seminole leader reiterated that he wanted peace and would send the governor the *forzado* (a captured or condemned slave) Juan Ruedas, Gaspar Papy's "Negro," and also "property" belonging to another settler.⁴³ Concluding the letter by informing the governor that Seminoles and the Mikasuki operate independently, Payne's message combined a spirited defense of his position while still striking a conciliatory note. Although White continued to pressure Payne, he realized that the Seminole headman was a trusted ally and that the Mikasuki were largely responsible for the episode. Once Forrester established peace and secured the release of some of the captives, Payne was able to enter St. Augustine and collect on overdue gifts.⁴⁴ Eventually the tension subsided and gifts were extended to the Mikasuki and the Lower Creek. The strained diplomatic channels had been repaired.⁴⁵

2.2 Power, Race, and Gender in the Pláticas

The diplomatic exchanges between the Seminoles and the Spanish helped maintain peace and stability in the Florida Borderlands, but they also provide an analytical window into how power, race, and gender dynamics functioned in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In terms of power, the *pláticas* shed light on the region's geopolitical situation and the

respective political motives of the Spanish and the Seminoles. With the use of Southeastern Borderlands diplomatic language and metaphors, both parties could effectively communicate while tolerating their mutual reliance on each other. Conversely, the *pláticas* highlight the formation of a racial discourse increasingly gripping the region in the latter half of the eighteenth century. This is demonstrated through a focus on the Spanish agents and interpreters of the talks and the language that they often utilized. Since race and gender are often intertwined, the diplomatic communications also shed light on both Spanish and Indigenous notions of gender. Despite rarely mentioning women, the *pláticas* are nonetheless insightful in demonstrating how gender functioned. While the talks were undeniably written to address local issues, this chapter argues that they help explain how processes such as racialization and market capitalism emerged in the Southeastern Borderlands. However, there is a caveat: it is difficult to argue that the newer processes mentioned above had completely displaced older notions of race, economic exchange, and political organization. For instance, developing ideas of race, biological difference and clear separation of groups based on skin color, co-existed with Spanish beliefs that a person's racial classification was determined through cultural and class considerations such as physical comportment, clothing, and occupation. Nonetheless, this chapter seeks to problematize arguments that changing notions of race and market capitalism only occurred after U.S. annexation and integration of Florida.

While the *pláticas* contain crucial insights, the documents themselves must also be examined carefully. As scholars such as Brooks and Shoemaker note, diplomacy and interaction between Europeans and Indigenous peoples required shared notions of gender, honor, nationalism, and diplomacy.⁴⁶ However, this is different from arguing that Indigenous and

European groups had identical views of these concepts; rather, various groups had crafted a mutually comprehensible discourse that furthered their diplomatic agendas. When analyzing the *pláticas*, a critical reading of the documents is necessary. Although scholars utilize these written materials to shed light upon Indigenous and European societies, the respective leaders quoted in the *pláticas* had their own immediate concerns. Their messages were immersed in the language of diplomacy and sought to appeal to the other party. Indigenous and European speakers adjusted their views and language in order to be persuasive. As a consequence, the *pláticas* highlight Indigenous leaders' views about Europeans, and vice versa, as much as they disclose Indigenous and European peoples own political and social systems. Additionally, the physical logistics of translating, writing, and presenting the speeches must also be considered. In the Florida Borderlands, British traders, Black Seminoles, and Spanish interpreters all transmitted the various *pláticas* and distilled their messages to the Seminole, Creek, and Mikasuki leaders as well as the Spanish governors. It is hard to believe that their presence in diplomatic proceedings, especially traders with economic motives, would be inconsequential. Nonetheless, as scholars such as Williams and Shoemaker assert, the diplomatic talks are important sources into Indigenous peoples' vision of diplomacy, politics, and society.

The *pláticas* were forums for the negotiation of political, economic, and military alliances between Spanish and Seminole leaders. Colonial Spanish North America in late 18th century witnessed the increased utilization of alliances and treaties with Indigenous peoples. Harsh realities on the ground, such as inadequate supplies and resources, doomed traditional Spanish policies that sought to incorporate Indigenous peoples. In the second Spanish Florida period, officials followed a pragmatic foreign policy. For instance, Spanish officials turned to Pantón,

Leslie, and Company agents to deliver, translate, and present their dispatches. Spain had little choice but to outsource their most visible diplomatic posts, and this spoke volumes about their overall strength.

Seminoles and Lower Creek leaders constantly compared the Spanish king with the British monarch within their *pláticas*, noting that trade and gifts were plentiful under the latter. In Payne's January 1794 *plática* he notes that his English "father" was never refused a service and he always generously rewarded the Seminoles.⁴⁷ Spanish governors acknowledged this. For example, Governor Quesada asserted that the Spanish and British were allies and that they were intimately connected and that his administration represented a continuation of British rule.⁴⁸ Undoubtedly, the successful British-Seminole Picolata Congresses during 1765-1767 weighed heavily on the Spanish. Upon returning to Florida they encountered Indigenous groups who owed them no allegiance and had no history of being under Spanish authority. For a colonial power, having little recourse but to base its legitimacy on the reputation of one of its traditional rivals must have been galling. This was illustrated through the Seminoles' use of the phrase "friends and brothers" in addressing the Spanish whereas in the Picolata talks the British were referred to as an "elder brother" by the Lower Creek leader known as Captain Aleck.⁴⁹ Shoemaker notes that the British propensity to deliver gifts and trade had won them respected status as symbolic older brothers to the Southeastern Indigenous peoples.⁵⁰ However, the Spanish were never accorded the position of an elder sibling, which could carry the added responsibility "to assist their juniors in times of duress."⁵¹ Consequently, Spain's vulnerable position made it even more vital to abide by Indigenous diplomatic protocols of the region. As a result many of the Spanish *pláticas* contained metaphors, such as the "chain of peace" and

“clearing the path,” that scholars such as Williams and Shoemaker illustrate were prominent in the Great Lakes region and the Southeastern Borderlands.

Spanish political, economic, and military weakness led to their willingness to diplomatically engage Indigenous peoples. Conversely, the Seminoles occupied a tenuous position among regional Indigenous groups. During the final years of British rule, the Seminole had established their distinct identity from the Lower Creek but residual political authority still rested with the latter.⁵² Saunt writes that the Seminoles were “actually renegade Creeks” who did not establish their complete autonomy until after 1814.⁵³ Alachua Seminoles never had the population to become a military power.⁵⁴ They would continue to deal with threats concerning re-integration within the Creek Confederacy even after removal to Indian Territory.⁵⁵ Under these geopolitical conditions the Seminole alliance with the Spanish was beneficial, especially in terms of trade and gifts, towards supporting their continuing drive for independence. Since the Seminole and Spanish were both dealing with threats to their autonomy, they treated each other as equals within the *pláticas*. Utilization of the term “brother and friend” was the main greeting of nearly all the diplomatic exchanges. As Jon Parmenter notes among the Great Lakes Algonquian groups in the 1760s, the status of brothers in diplomacy connoted “less regular interaction, less intermarriage, and fewer direct mutual obligations than a ‘father-child’ structure” and remained focused around trade.⁵⁶ Seminole headman Payne often asserted this language to preserve the alliance especially during times of crisis. Conversely, the Mikasuki, in a stronger demographic and military position, were willing to challenge Spanish authority by raiding the plantations of Spanish subjects. Although Spanish colonial power was limited,

Seminole preoccupation with other external political and military rivals meant the *pláticas* participants' were on equal terms.

Although fictive kinship was a major component of diplomacy, the formation of racial difference is seen in the creation of categories such as White, Red, and Black. The *pláticas* shed light on the development of a racial discourse that began to stray away from the categorization of people based on cultural factors to the lines of demarcation being based on skin color as an indicator of innate biological differences. Shoemaker's work establishes an important foundation for understanding how notions of race developed in the region. *Pláticas* between the Spanish and the Seminoles both utilized terminology based upon color to distinguish between Indigenous peoples, Europeans, and Africans. Spanish governors wrote letters that mentioned the three groups based on color, *gente colorada*, *gente blanca*, and *negros*. In his April 1793 *plática*, Governor Quesada stated that the king of Spain desired that his "*gente blanca y la colorada vivieran unidos como hermanos*." Also within the letter is a mention of seized "negros" and "propiedad" which he demanded must be returned. Nonetheless, the rest of the letter identifies the Spanish as "Los Españoles" rather than "gente blanca." Discussions translated into English, by interpreters and British traders, often utilized the term "white man" and "red man" more frequently. Spanish racial designations had previously been based on religious, social, and cultural factors with lines being drawn between "gente con razón" and "gente sin razón." However, the influence of British merchants, efforts to encourage planter migration, African slaves' value as property, and the lack of Spanish efforts to integrate Indigenous peoples into their society made those categories inadequate.

Scholars argue that Indigenous peoples were not passive participants in the construction of a red identity.⁵⁷ Although difficult to ascertain, origin stories invoking the color red as well as the division of native peoples' settlements into moieties of red and white towns, have been cited for injecting "red" into Indigenous discourse. Consequently, Shoemaker argues that after the 1760s, as the "science of race emerged in Europe, Indians were also reading meaning into observable bodily differences and putting people into categories accordingly."⁵⁸ Concerning Spanish motives, various reasons could possibly explain the use of "*gente blanca*" in the *pláticas*. As demonstrated above, the Spanish could have been simply adapting to Southeastern Borderlands Indigenous diplomatic language. Additionally, Panton, Leslie and Company employees skilled in diplomacy and comfortable with the emerging racial discourse might have been the local source of this new terminology. Perhaps the Spanish utilized the term "white man" in order to draw an affinity and connection with the British whom the Indigenous peoples held in high regard. Spanish governors in the *pláticas* made many attempts to invoke the British and the shared friendship between both European nations. Additionally, since Spain was probably losing face by having the British firm Panton, Leslie, and Company provide goods to the Seminoles, claiming a white identity as "*gente blanca*" might have sought to minimize that loss of prestige by implying that the traders and the Spanish were the same.

Historians have cited the rise of the plantation export economy based on African slavery as the key to not only the development of blackness but also whiteness. However, scholars have often argued that in the second Spanish Florida period, plantations did not emphasize labor-intensive crops or labor-intense routines.⁵⁹ However, African slaves nonetheless escaped from Spanish masters or were seized during Indigenous raids. Among the reoccurring subjects in the

pláticas is the recovery of captured African slaves. Although slavery in Florida during this period cannot be considered chattel slavery, it nonetheless served to racialize Africans as “negros,” considering the fact that they were often listed as “property” along with horses and other goods. The establishment of blackness led to a system of racial categorization which also homogenized Indigenous peoples and Europeans into groups based on skin color.

Examining the utilization of the terms “red” and “white” men in the Seminole and Spanish *pláticas* demonstrate that Spanish diplomacy and racial discourse in Florida were affected by the territory’s proximity to the Southeastern Borderlands during a period of immense transformation. Consequently, comparing East Florida with the rest of Spanish colonial North America is difficult. Changing notions of race influenced and modified Spanish colonialism. The argument that these processes bypassed Spanish Florida only to appear after U.S. annexation assumes that the Second Spanish Florida period existed in a vacuum. The Florida Borderlands at the end of the 18th century and the of beginning 19th century was in the midst of changing ideas of race, but new rigid ideas of biological difference could not completely supplant culturally based notions of race, rather they coexisted uncomfortably.

Power and race in the *pláticas* functioned in conjunction with gender discourse. Southeastern Borderlands diplomacy often invoked masculinity and the role of men as protectors. Gender served as a cross-cultural bridge bringing together Indigenous and European leaders over a concept in which they shared some basic tenets. Similar to metaphors based upon clearing a path towards peace or burying an instrument of war, invoking men and women’s roles served to communicate messages, in this case connoting fictive kinship or dominance and subordination. As Williams notes, the language and rituals of diplomacy sought to make it

“possible, according to the values informing American Indian visions of law and peace, for treaty partners to accept and embrace the divinely revealed truth of their oneness and shared humanity.”⁶⁰ Specific talks between the Spanish and the Seminoles only sparingly mentioned women directly. However, a great number of discussions cited gender roles when assigning the Spanish monarch the role of father and the Spanish subjects and Seminoles as brothers. Particular conditions of the Florida Borderlands may have played a part in limiting the effectiveness and frequency of gender metaphors.

Women in the Seminole-Spanish *pláticas* were often invoked by Seminole and Spanish participants for different purposes. Seminoles cited woman within their discussions as figurative mothers to both the Seminoles and the Spanish thereby establishing fictive kinship making both parties symbolic brothers. Conversely, the Spanish sometimes reminded the Seminoles that they provided the trade necessary to protect Indigenous women and children. Meanwhile, Payne asserted that both the Spanish and the Seminoles came “out of the same belly” and that the governor was his brother, “as if from the same father and mother.”⁶¹ By sharing the same mother with the governor, he was creating a fictive kin relationship that acknowledged each party’s equality and intimate ties. However, the Spanish never cited the role of mothers but only the paternal figure of the Spanish king. While both groups shared some assumptions about gender, the tendency of the Seminoles to emphasize mothers’ roles was due to matrilineal lines of descent in determining Seminoles’ clan identities.⁶² In terms of male authority figures, uncles held more prominent positions than fathers, especially considering “the relation between sister and brother is a primary bond.”⁶³ A Seminole man’s heirs were the children of his sister and he would take special notice of their care. Consequently, the Spanish only mentioned Indigenous

women to emphasize the necessity to protect them. In 1793, a *plática* from Governor Quesada stated that the Seminole were provided ammunition to defend their women and children while also providing articles of clothing for them.⁶⁴ The Spanish believed that they strengthened their paternal authority by facilitating Seminoles' ability to assert their own paternal duties.

Despite not discussing women in the other *pláticas*, the Spanish and the Seminole continued to communicate through gender-coded language. Prominent among all symbolic images were the Spanish king's claim to the role of father who looks upon "la gente colorada como por sus propios hijos."⁶⁵ Undoubtedly European powers felt they scored a coup when Indigenous people seemingly acquiesced to the paternal authority of the Spanish king. However, as mentioned above, in Southeastern Indigenous groups, a person's mother and uncle were the most important figures in their lives while a father could be an advisor. Accepting the Spanish king as a "father" did not indicate an abrogation of authority that Spanish officials mistakenly thought it meant. Diplomatic discussions often resulted in parties leaving with different understandings of the proceedings: however, this could actually be beneficial to establishing peace.⁶⁶ For example, the Spanish were pleased that the Seminole accepted the authority of the king while the Seminole accepted the arrangement because they felt the king played a non-intrusive advisory role. Additionally, Southeastern Indigenous peoples believed that "higher rank entitled nations only to deference, not to the power to rule over other nations."⁶⁷ Further weakening the Spanish king's claim to a position of absolute authority was his colony's constrained position. The *pláticas* demonstrate that power was evenly parceled out between both parties.

Scholars such as Shoemaker have demonstrated that in the Southeastern Borderlands, sexuality and gendered metaphors were common because “diplomacy brought two bodies of people together and in so doing raised questions of dominance.”⁶⁸ However, among the Seminole and Spanish, utilization of gender metaphors, with the exception of the Spanish king asserting claim to paternal authority, were infrequent, and even more seldom were any specific mention of women. The lack of gendered language in the *pláticas* can be ascribed to the settled nature of the question of dominance. Diplomatic discussions between the Seminoles and the Spanish were not so much negotiations over which group held more power, rather they were mutual defense pacts aimed to preserve the precarious autonomy of both parties. *Pláticas* sought above all else to maintain stability and prevent a major rift between Spanish and Indigenous peoples. Consequently the most effective gendered language in defusing tensions over raids and seizures of property were to credit such actions to “young men.” Speakers implied that male youths could be forgiven because they were supposed to be ambitious, rash, and imprudent, implying that young women and older men were the opposite. Nonetheless, Indigenous and European leaders could salvage peace treaties threatened by the seizure of property. Spanish officials were spared calling for harsh retribution that could backfire if Indigenous leaders resisted. By assigning blame to “young men” both sides could save face and defuse a situation without risking a costly conflict.⁶⁹

2.3 Panton, Leslie, and Company

This chapter argues that in Florida, European promulgation of “Indian” and “Black” racial categories were intertwined. In order to produce a viable plantation-based economy,

planters need a steady labor source of Africans that could be exploited and controlled. Africans were racialized as Black, and thus became synonymous with slavery, while Blackness more broadly became associated with inferiority. Consequently, positioning Blacks in a racial hierarchy/order as a subordinate group through legal codes sought to limit their sociopolitical mobility. This process created space and delineated metaphorical borders between different peoples through an emphasis on their alleged biological difference. As a result, Africans' ability to engage in multi-racial coalitions with working class whites, as was the case in Bacon's Rebellion, and in Florida with Indigenous peoples, were undermined by the assumption that the purported biological inferiority was insurmountable. This process of racialization increasingly cast African origin peoples as inherently-i.e. biologically-incapable of higher order thinking and behavior. This alleged inferiority served to justify and explain in a circular and reinforcing fashion their designation as slaves. They were enslaved and treated as property because they were black, and they were black because they were slaves.

The racialization of blacks was slow and inconsistent in the Florida Borderlands in part because of the relationships crafted between Blacks and Indians, and because of the larger cultural and political landscape that both influenced. The Seminoles destabilized black racialization because they posed a multifaceted challenge to the plantation system. Firstly, land was an important resource and Euro-Americans needed Indigenous peoples' recognition of existing territorial claims with the possibility of seeking additional lands in the future. Secondly, if native peoples seized property from plantations, especially African slaves, then colonial elites would be deprived of the labor and stability vital for their economic endeavors. Thirdly, Africans finding sanctuary among the Seminoles would not only give potential runaway slaves

an incentive for escape but could lead to formable Indigenous-African alliances. Metaphorically speaking, the union between Seminoles and Africans resulting in children claiming hybrid identities also had the potential to destabilize and blur new racial boundaries. Mestizos and mulattos represented a challenge to the new racial system because they occupied a liminal space that called into question the legitimacy and permanence of racial categories. This would explain why mixed race peoples later came to be denigrated as being inferior in comparison to people from pure racial stock so that the fiction of biological difference could be maintained.⁷⁰ The presence of Black Seminoles would raise these difficult issues and potentially destabilize a plantation system that rested on stark racial differences and the alleged inferiority of African origin peoples.

British and later Spanish officials sought to address these problems by turning to diplomacy. They utilized conferences and *pláticas* and had little choice but to accept Seminole autonomy. Although this highlighted Indigenous peoples' power, it also simultaneously represented a facet of the colonial strategy to adapt to conditions in the Florida Borderlands. An alliance containing mechanisms for avoiding conflict and retrieving property with the Seminoles enabled planters such as Fatio and others to continue to function. Accommodation with native peoples allowed plantations the space to develop, which in turn promoted Blackness.

Spain's interactions with the Seminoles were distinct from its typical policies and strategies regarding Indigenous peoples. During the first Spanish Florida period, missionaries worked and lived among Florida's Indigenous groups. However, the Seminoles who were located further north during that period never experienced the mission system and Spain did not attempt any missions after 1783. In Florida, the Spanish remained socially and politically distant

from the Seminoles and relied on Panton, Leslie, and Company agents such as Forrester and John Hambly to meet and initiate discussions. Even the traders, who managed posts near the Indians, did not integrate themselves into Seminole society and few instances exist of their marriage to Indigenous women. Captives that were taken such as the Bonelli family were usually ransomed relatively quickly. Thus a mestizo population of Spanish and Seminole individuals that transcended social and cultural borders while facilitating communication was numerically limited. Spanish and Seminole populations remained distant, which explains why a discourse of cultural and biological difference gained greater traction in Florida.

Panton, Leslie, and Company's position within the Florida Borderlands allowed it to serve as the link between the desired plantation export economy and the policy of pragmatic diplomacy. Firm partners John Forbes and John Leslie had been members of the common house of British Florida's legislature in 1781 when that body stubbornly demanded a Negro Act.⁷¹ They owned slaves who worked company land holdings and although the overseers were not known for utilizing gang labor or other aspects of chattel slavery, they were nonetheless staunch supporters of the protection of property. Company profits were dependent on the security of their investments, including African slaves. The commodification of slaves and their status as property was an important development in the racialization of Africans as Black. Consequently Pantan, Leslie, and Company agents brought these concerns and views with them when they spoke to the Seminoles on behalf of Spanish governors or when they offered their advice to colonial officials.

The British firm was conspicuously present throughout the second Spanish Florida period. Leslie began his trading activities in East Florida at the beginning of the American

Revolution in 1776. On the foundation of James Spalding's previous operation, the firm soon began sending Indigenous supplied deerskins to London in exchange for manufactured goods, especially gunpowder.⁷² Forbes, his associate, established warehouses and a base within the city of Nassau located on the Bahamian Island of New Providence. When Florida returned to Spanish control, officials feared that they would lose their existing trade networks. Although mercantilist impulses nearly drove the Spanish to expel the Panton and Leslie partnership, pragmatism and precedent of successful British-Seminole relations could not be ignored. Providing consistent trading opportunities served as a major factor in successful diplomacy with Indigenous peoples and consequently enabled the growth of plantations. The company also aided its own cause by utilizing convincing arguments and economic leverage to convince Spanish officials to allow their current trade arrangements.⁷³

British defeat in the American Revolution meant a reorganization of trade and foreign relations for the Indigenous peoples now forced to deal with an emergent U.S. However, because the Panton, Leslie, and Company remained, trade links persevered in the Florida Borderlands. The accumulation of deerskins had already become established as an important activity that integrated the region "into the global economy; it also required most Indians to learn new ways of making a living."⁷⁴ Undoubtedly the trade had forced both native peoples and Europeans to adapt their economic systems. Merchants learned to use gifts and establish relationships with Indigenous leaders in order to trade. Meanwhile groups like the Creek and Seminoles came to understand that Europeans viewed resources as commodities that had certain values and were not acquired simply for subsistence but required a surplus for the market. While Saunt accurately points out that some Creek factions, rather than the Seminoles, more fully

embraced socioeconomic concepts of property and chattel slavery. Nonetheless, Seminole communities in Alachua and Apalachicola participated in the accumulation of goods for and from European markets. They engaged agents that did not establish kinship relationships unlike French traders in the Great Lakes region, but concentrated on economic exchanges.

Beyond the walls of St. Augustine and the west bank of the St. Johns River, the Panton, Leslie, and Company posts and employees represented what Daniel J.J. Ross and Bruce Chappell have called “an intelligence system so as to learn about events and conditions in the South and among the Indians.”⁷⁵ Hambly and Forrester engaged in the dual roles of traders and Spanish agents. By 1787, Hambly was overseeing the Almacén de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, the St Johns River company store closest to the Alachua Seminoles, and he was overseeing 50 to 60 slaves tending crops and cattle. The post cured and tanned Indigenous supplied deerskins and hides before they were sent to England.⁷⁶ As Ross and Chappell point out, Hambly undertook a few trips through “Indian Country” and his diaries provide rare glimpses into Seminole settlements.⁷⁷ Most likely his journeys combined business and intelligence gathering: for instance Hambly purchased horses from Pompy, a man described as “Payne’s negroe.” His journal highlights the fact that he was charged with explaining the governor’s talks to Indigenous leaders and to retrieve any responses.⁷⁸ Hambly’s counterpart Forrester provided the Spanish with a similar service. For instance, in his July 5, 1800 letter to Governor White he offers his “personal services to carry and explain any talk to them, personally, or to bring them (Indigenous leaders) down to your Excellency, in order that you may see and talk with them yourself.”⁷⁹ This correspondence also demonstrates how Forrester’s roles could become blurred since in the same letter he advises the governor, during a period of increased raids, that White must ensure that

“these robbers would meet with their just punishment when they come among us to takeaway our property.”⁸⁰ Forrester’s main concerns were as a trader and property holder.

Participation of Pantón, Leslie, and Company employees influenced not only the *pláticas* they delivered but also racial discourse and the movement towards market capitalism. As the documents attest, figures such as Forrester and Hambly possibly wrote but definitely carried, translated, and “explained” *pláticas* as well as transcribed Seminole responses. Although they did not usurp the complete meaning of the Spanish governor’s *pláticas*, Hambly and Forrester, were able to steer the Spanish into the language of Southeastern Borderlands diplomacy that included the use of metaphors, gendered language, and especially the utilization of the term “red.” Although scholars have cited Hambly’s business with the Black Seminole Pompey as evidence that Africans had more agency in Spanish Florida, nonetheless Hambly addresses him as “Payne’s Negro.” Any complexity in Pompey’s cultural identity or relationship with the Seminoles is glossed over. While Pompey is free to conduct financial transactions he is still considered Payne’s property. Hambly, the overseer of his own company’s slaves and an agent of a trading house that commodified resources such as deerskins and African slaves, helped established a more rigid discourse concerning race and property.

In addition to the participation of the Pantón, Leslie, and Company agents in Indigenous-Spanish diplomacy, Florida planters were also vital in calls for the protection of property. Fatio was one of the most prominent planters to span both the British and second Spanish Florida periods. In December, 1782 he wrote a British official expressing the various reasons why the British should maintain their hold of Florida, including the possibilities of supplying lands to refugee planters for growing corn, indigo, and rice for the province and for British West Indian

possessions. He notes that this had not yet occurred because of the interference of “wild Indians,” the Seminoles.⁸¹ Within a short time Fatio switched his allegiance to the Spanish in order to continue his economic progress. Susan R. Parker effectively illustrates that Fatio’s success was due to his ability to subscribe “to many of the practices and following ideas held by the ascendant cadre of British traders and entrepreneurs engaged in transoceanic and multicontinent ventures while tempering and adjusting to local conditions.”⁸² Fatio’s plantations emphasized the raising of livestock, citrus fruits, and the cutting of timber. Scholars have accurately argued that these economic activities were not conducive to chattel slavery. Nonetheless, planters such as Fatio did advocate for the protection of property. Slaves in Spanish East Florida represented a valuable investment; for example the 1801 Mikasuki raids demonstrated the value of slaves especially when they were ransomed for significant sums.

Scholars have approached questions of race in the Second Spanish Florida period by citing examples of African slaves receiving manumission, utilizing Spanish courts, and engaging in business transactions. Indeed, scholars such as Jane Landers have illustrated that the first Spanish Florida period gave Africans a measure of autonomy especially through militia service. The province had been a runaway slave sanctuary until the practice officially ended in 1790.

However during the Second Spanish Florida period these policies were also accompanied by contradictory actions. For instance in 1795, two men named Robert Andrews and Carlos Howard respectively complained about Francisco Xavier Sánchez’s slaves carrying arms and Euro-Americans buying goods from the slaves without their owners’ permission.⁸³ In 1806 William Lawrence had similar concerns about slaves trading in property without permission from their owners. He implored Governor White to reassert an article from the *Bando de Buen*

Gobierno, edict of good governance, that forbade trading between Spanish subjects and slaves. Lawrence was adamant that officials “remedy an evil of such bad consequence.”⁸⁴ A Panton, Leslie, and Company employee, he had been responsible for a shipment of 114 slaves from Africa into Florida, of whom 60 remained with the trading firm and the rest acquired by a local planter.⁸⁵ As a merchant he was deeply invested in the control of the slave population and the security of property in general.

A year after Lawrence wrote his letter to the East Florida governor, the situation for both free and enslaved Africans deteriorated. White on May 20, 1807 made a series of proclamations seeking to better control the whole African population. He issued an edict in order to “maintain the public peace which has been interrupted by persons with bad intentions.”⁸⁶ Among the articles, applicable to “all persons of color whether free or slave,” were curfews, the banning of gambling and dances, outlawing unannounced visitors, prohibiting slaves from boarding ships, and requiring residents to report suspicious behavior. Four months later, the governor expanded upon his edict by adding that free and enslaved “*Mulatos and Negros*” could not carry arms without permission, free persons had to have certificates from honorable residents or the governor must be able to testify to their character, and any unemployed Africans would be given six months labor on public works while being chained and shackled.⁸⁷ The following year the governor forbade “Negros de los Indios” from entering St. Augustine or any Florida plantations with the only exception being the Panton, Leslie, and Company stores.⁸⁸ Although legal edicts were nearly impossible to enforce and their impact difficult to judge, they do provide insight into racial beliefs held at least by the elites, such as the governor.

This harsh government policy can be partly explained by the historical context of the region at the turn of nineteenth century. Undoubtedly the events associated with the Haitian Revolution, beginning in the 1790s and lasting over a decade, instilled fear and suspicion throughout the Western Hemisphere. Planters had become especially distrustful of slaves coming directly from Africa and the Caribbean, who were perceived as being disposed to revolution and difficult to control. For Americans, the Gabriel Prosser Uprising of 1800 confirmed Euro-American's apprehensions about slave insurrections when Virginia thwarted slaves' efforts to overthrow their masters and liberate others. Eight years later the Atlantic slave trade was legally prohibited in the United States and coincided with a general reduction in trade between the U.S. and Europe. President Thomas Jefferson supported the Embargo Act of 1807 and a year later the Non-Intercourse Act, which severely stymied commerce to belligerents England and France. However, the legislation proved unenforceable because smuggling undermined its effectiveness. Due to liberalization of trade policies resulting from the Bourbon reforms in conjunction with the turmoil Spain suffered during the Napoleonic Wars, 1808-1814, Florida's Amelia Island, and in particular Fernandina, became a free port. Planters and traders from the Florida-Georgia border region were responsible for a temporary surge in economic transactions occurring in the settlement. Among the imports arriving during this period were African slaves, which could no longer be legally brought into U.S. ports. These activities continued until the Patriot Rebellion of 1812, an uprising of Georgia citizens with members of Florida's Euro-American population, and sequent filibuster activity as well as U.S. occupation of Amelia Island after 1817 ended this commerce.

Governor White's edict restricting the rights of the Black population of Spanish Florida coincided with the increasing economic importance of plantations and the slave trade. Even before the trading upsurge in Fernandina, the island had been annually exporting 60,000 pounds of cotton from local providers.⁸⁹ Landers writes that planters such as Zephaniah Kingsley and Fernando de la Maza y Arredondo had become major importers of slaves since they had the resources to undertake these endeavors. Spanish officials facilitated these efforts since they "saw slave traders as men who would help develop the underdeveloped colony."⁹⁰ However, Spanish Florida's history of liberal treatment for slaves and malleable definition of race contradicted this embrace of plantations and the slave trade. For instance, the colony depended on the utilization of a free black militia for its defense, yet it is unlikely that transplanted Euro-American planters in Florida would be drastically different from their Georgia counterparts in their aversion to and fear of armed Blacks.

These conflicted processes could be observed within the lives of the planters themselves. Kingsley operated as a slave trader responsible for bringing numerous Africans into a state of bondage because he believed they provided the few avenues for economic success. Nevertheless, Daniel L. Schafer argues that the planter felt race "ought not be the badge of degradation." He cites the case of Anta Majigeen Ndiaye, Kingsley's freed slave and mother to several of his children. The planter also utilized the less restrictive task system, permitted expressions of African culture, encouraged free Blacks to own property, and supported the integrity of family units. Nonetheless, Kingsley felt that Blacks were naturally, if not biologically, suited to work in the Florida climate and on its plantations, a conclusion he reached because of their dark skin pigmentation.⁹¹ Due to the precarious situation of the colonial

government, its inability to potentially respond to a slave revolt, the plantation system had to adapt through a pragmatic approach that advocated lenient treatment of slaves. However, Lawrence's 1806-1807 letters to White demonstrate that not all planters had reached a consensus concerning the treatment of slaves and some confusion existed over any regulations. In the former's correspondence to the governor, he asked for clarification because "some of the planters in this district use their slaves with severity, which ought not to be practiced."⁹² White answered that he considered any punishment that resulted in death, mutilation, cost a limb, and led to excessive blood loss to be a criminal act.⁹³ Although White was apparently willing to prosecute a slave master for killing his own slave, demonstrating a level of protection for slaves, he basically set the standard for punishment to be anything as long as it was short of death. His brief response, a short paragraph, may also be an indication of his interest in prosecuting abusive slave masters. Even Lawrence's concern for slaves' wellbeing was mitigated by his unwillingness to allow them to trade freely without their owners' permission.

Conclusion

Beyond highlighting specific Seminole-Spanish diplomatic negotiations, the *pláticas* provide insight into larger political, economic, and social trends. They demonstrate that the region's power dynamics were evenly distributed between Indigenous and European groups. Payne and the various East Florida governors utilized their alliance to stem the threats of external rivals, the Mikasuki, Lower Creeks, and the U.S. Internally, the talks also served to elevate Seminole headmen, such as Payne, as the principal representative of the Alachua Seminoles. Neither the Seminoles nor the Spanish could dictate the terms of their relationship since they

could not jeopardize their mutually beneficial arrangement in light of their precarious political and military situation. Meanwhile, the ubiquitous presence of Scottish traders in the transmission of the *pláticas* testifies to Spain's inability to conduct its own trade and intelligence among Indigenous peoples. Consequently, the Panton, Leslie, and Company agents were influential as merchants integrated into an Atlantic World economy and who sought to protect private property, including African slaves. Their participation, including as occasional interpreters, meant that the Spanish utilized the language of Southeastern Borderlands diplomacy including the terms "red" and "white." For Euro-Americans, especially traders and planters, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these terms came to represent categories of biological difference. These developments ensure that the second Spanish Florida era is difficult to place within the general rubric of Spanish North American colonialism, especially in terms of racial discourse.

Factors specific to Spain's East Florida province near the turn of the nineteenth century helped shape an intellectual borderlands where Indigenous and Spanish political, social, and economic concepts interacted with what Claudio Saunt has called the "new order" consisting of the movement towards political centralization, market capitalism, and hardening racial attitudes. The territory concurrently experienced exposure to influential planters, the Panton, Leslie, and Company, and the constant contact and movement of people through the Atlantic World and the Southeastern Borderlands. Florida's geopolitical situation meant that its experiences are difficult to compare to other Spanish North American colonies.

With the *pláticas* as an analytical lens, this chapter argues that a degree of continuity existed between British Florida and the return of the Spanish to the province in 1784. This

serves to problematize the dominant historiographical narrative that asserts that the British period had little influence on the Spanish and that processes, especially pertaining to race and market capitalism, only reared their heads once the U.S. annexed Florida. Although these processes were far from dominant and not always obvious during Spain's final reign in Florida, it would be difficult to argue they were absent and not in dialogue with the existing systems as part of the larger milieu of the Florida Borderlands.

Notes:

¹ Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes to Seminole Indians, 30 September 1784, East Florida Papers (hereafter cited as EFP), microfilm reel 43, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY).

² I am referring to mission-presidio-town complexes that developed in New Mexico, California, and around San Antonio, Texas. Herbert Eugene Bolton's work centering on the importance of the missions, established the central place of this institution in studies of Spanish colonialism. Recently, scholars such as James Brooks and Juliana Barr have de-centered Spanish institutions in Borderlands scholarship and have emphasized areas where power was negotiated and Indigenous political, social, and economic systems held sway.

³ The term "Florida," unless specifically noted, refers to both East and West Florida, a division created during the British occupation.

⁴ James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 5. The author provides a concise summary of Florida's Indigenous peoples before the migration of the Lower Creeks and Seminoles into the region.

⁵ Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6. The author writes that the term "nation" in the 18th century did not connote more contemporary meanings of the nation-state but rather a political entity united by culture and language.

⁶ Claudio Saunt argues that within the Southeast, the Creeks, rather than the Seminoles, adopted a centralized government with figures such as Alexander McGillivray seeking to become national leaders.

⁷ James W. Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles: Negotiations between British Authorities in East Florida and the Indians, 1763-68* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1961), 19.

⁸ J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 14. At the end of the eighteenth century ethnic divisions became more prominent than the categorization of settlements as either red (war) or white (peace).

⁹ St. Augustine correspondent to Captain Robert Bissett, 20 May, 1783, CO 5/540-49, microfilm reel 4, Public Records Office, London (hereafter cited as PRO), Library of Congress (hereafter cited as LC). Seminole headman Cowkeeper expressed his disgust that Indigenous peoples were not consulted during treaty negotiations despite the Seminoles' loyalty to British Florida.

¹⁰ Reginald Horsman, "Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 3 (1976): 390.

¹¹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics In the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Although this text focuses on the Great Lakes region, the analytical concept of the "middle ground" can be applied to the Florida Borderlands to describe spaces of political, social, and economic negotiation in lieu of a dominant power until the 1830s. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). The use of the many headed hydra metaphor is an instructive model for the colonial processes that sought to bring order to perceived threats. In Florida, the number of runaway slaves and their relationship with the Seminoles were certainly viewed as dangerous.

¹² Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the People in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 816.

¹³ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5. The region does not constitute a Spanish Borderlands since Indigenous peoples rather than the Europeans were the arbiters of power.

¹⁴ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 276. According to the author the Spanish were able to “re-hispanicize” parts of West Florida through the reestablishment of garrison towns and trading centers, albeit they remained under-funded and isolated.

¹⁵ Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida, Blacks in the New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 2; Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947); Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 3. Hanger argues that Landers and Tannenbaum’s position that Catholicism and Spanish law, the Siete Partidas, offered slaves more opportunity for manumission is too broad and general to be applied to all Spanish colonial possessions. She cites David Brion Davis who asserts that economic factors such as absentee owners, specific crops grown, and type of labor performed with consideration towards geopolitical position, major historical events, and ideological, political, and social changes shaped racial discourse; Jane Landers, “Spanish Sanctuary: Fugitives in Florida, 1687-1790,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 62 (1984), 311; Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 2. Despite the author’s recognition that Spanish policy towards African slaves began to shift with the official end of the sanctuary policy in 1790, Landers cites scholarship that differentiates between labor on Spanish plantations and chattel slavery found elsewhere in the U.S. during the Second Spanish Florida period.

¹⁶ Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, 06 January 1792, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. This source documents Bowles’ initial attempts to gain control of northern Florida, his main allies were the Apalachicola Seminoles; John Forrester to Enriqu  White, 07 September 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. In his letter to the governor, Forrester is attempting to both negotiate for the return of captives from the Mikasuki and restore stability after Bowles’ decline.

¹⁷ Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Seminoles and Creeks, 30 April 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY; Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Payne, 24 August 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. Spanish *pl ticas* often attributed Indigenous political decisions and raiding to the influence of “bad white men” rather than Seminoles and Lower Creeks’ independent calculations. Accounts of William Bowles’ incursions often attributed Apalachicola Seminole and Mikasuki actions to their blind loyalty to the British filibuster. Conversely, Indigenous groups may have sought to place the responsibility for conflicts on “bad white men” in order defuse tensions and facilitate negotiations.

¹⁸ Although difficult to substantiate, the tendency of the Spanish to blame “bad white men” for the raiding could have been responsible for the increased seizure of property. Savvy Indigenous leaders may have increased their raids with the knowledge that blame would principally fall upon Euro-Americans perceived to be the true leaders.

¹⁹ Robert Bissett to Correspondent, 05 May 1783, CO 5/559-560, microfilm reel 4, PRO, LC.

²⁰ Vicente Manuel de Z spedes to Seminole Indians, 30 September 1784, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

²¹ Robert A. Williams, *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 45.

²² Nancy Shoemaker, “How Indians Got to Be Red,” *The American Historical Review* 102 (June 1997), 625.

²³ Vicente Manuel de Z spedes to Seminole Indians, 13 October 1789, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Juan Nepomuceo de Quesada to Seminole Indians, 06 January 1792, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

²⁶ Susan A. Miller, *Coacoochee’s Bones: A Seminole Saga* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 3.

²⁷ Juliana Barr, “Beyond Their Control: Spaniards in Native Texas,” in *Choice, Persuasion, and Coercion: Social Control on Spain’s North American Frontiers*, eds. Jesus F. De La Teja and Ross Frank (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 160.

²⁸ Enriqu  White to Marques de Someruelos, 10 June 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 10, PKY. Although Payne’s trip to Mikasuki ended in failure, the Spanish commended him for returning captured goods, a fugitive slave, and a forced laborer called a *forzado*; Enriqu  White to Marques de Someruelos, 30 July 1802, EFP, microfilm 11, PKY. In this account of Payne’s visit to Mikasuki, a “Negro” said to belong to Payne obtained valuable intelligence concerning casualties in a recent clash between the “Indians” and the free black militia.

²⁹ William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola: University of West Florida Press, 1986), 186.

³⁰ Payne to Juan Nepomuceo de Quesada, 31 January 1794, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 237.

³⁴ Enriqu  White to Payne, 18 July 1800, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

³⁵ Payne to Enriqu  White, 29 July 1800, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

³⁶ Seminoles were often reluctant to apprehend Africans or Black Seminoles from their community when colonial authorities requested their extradition. The willingness to protect Africans raises questions about the relationship between both groups that seemed to transcend simple pragmatism.

³⁷ Citizens of St. Augustine to Enriqu  White, 14 June 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 157, PKY. This large petition contain’s inhabitants’ demands to close the St. Johns River trading post. The close proximity of the store to the river plantations meant that planters feared the presence of Indigenous people. Some also argued that stolen goods could be sold at the post and accused the British trading firm of underhanded tactics.

³⁸ Enriqu  White to Chiefs of the Indian Towns, 26 March 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

³⁹ John Forrester to Governor Henry White, 5 July 1800, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. This document provides an important glimpse into Forrester’s function within Spanish Florida. Although he is a Panton, Leslie, and Company employee, he simultaneously operates as an interpreter and messenger for the Spanish governor. In this document he encourages the governor to meet with the Seminoles and end the crisis. He also states that the governor’s ability to settle the matter would convince the inhabitants that anyone seizing their property will be punished.

⁴⁰ Enriqu  White to Antonio Huertas, 06 May 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY. The governor is requesting that Huertas inform the Seminole headman Payne that he desires peace and that he should visit him with guarantees of security; Enriqu  White to Payne, 26 May 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. The governor promises that Payne will have safe passage to St. Augustine if he comes in to talk the governor; Enriqu  White to Payne, 06 June 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

⁴¹ Payne to Enriqu  White, 02 March 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

⁴² Enriqu  White to Marques de Someruelos, 31 March 1802, Papeles de Cuba (hereafter cited as PC), microfilm reel 37, P.K.Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY).

⁴³ Payne to Enriqu  White, 05 June 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. The document probably written by Juan Bautista Collins states that a “Negroe Harry” had been in St. Augustine and overheard rumors that harm would be done to Payne the next time he returned to the town. In conjunction with the seizure of his companion during his last visit, Payne showed understandable reluctance to visit the governor in person; Jose Cordovy to Enriqu  White, 09 July 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 56, PKY. The letter confirms that Ruedas was being sent to the governor.

⁴⁴ John Forrester to Enriqu  White, 07 September 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. Forrester reports to the governor that he secured the release of the Bonelli family with the exception of the elder daughter

who was in the company of a “great villain.” He left with the captives that he managed to free and they went to see Payne in Alachua. The headman stated that he wished to be invited to St. Augustine to receive the presents he had been promised; Enriqu  White to Marques de Someruelos, 22 September 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 11, PKY. According to the letter from Governor White to the Captain General of Cuba Marques de Someruelos, Seminole headman Payne and 300 to 400 Indigenous people are expected in St. Augustine to receive gifts.

⁴⁵ Enriqu  White to Marques de Someruelos, 29 November 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 11, PKY.

⁴⁶ James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 9; Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 85. Shared understandings existed between Indigenous peoples and Europeans that “nations” sought to strengthen themselves through alliances. Both parties entered these agreements based upon “perceptions of each nation’s relative strength: some international coalitions merged the interests of nations equal in power; others were rooted in an imbalance of power”; Ibid, 90. The text states that Indigenous peoples had developed a mechanism for establishing arrangements between politically dominant and subordinate groups. Assigning sole responsibility to U.S. courts for constructing the concept of a “domestic dependent nation” would ignore the long history of Indigenous groups incorporating others. Shoemaker cites the examples of the Iroquois Confederacy integrating the Tuscaroras as well as the entrance of the Yuchis within the Creek Confederacy. These groups maintained autonomy over their internal affairs but were under the authority of larger Indigenous political entities; Nancy Shoemaker, “An Alliance between Men: Gender Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century American Indian Diplomacy East of the Mississippi,” *Ethnohistory* 46 (Spring 1999), 240. Shoemaker states that “Indians and Europeans understood each other’s gender metaphors, for they shared some ideas about gender difference.”

⁴⁷ Payne to Juan Nepomuceo de Quesada, 31 January 1794, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

⁴⁸ Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Seminoles and Creeks, 30 April 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

⁴⁹ Covington, *The British Meet the Seminoles*, 29.

⁵⁰ Shoemaker, “An Alliance between Men,” 251. This work is specifically dealing with Cherokee and British relations during the 1720s when British trade benefited the Cherokee against the Creek.

⁵¹ Jon William Parmenter, “Pontiac’s War: Forging New Links in the Anglo-Iroquois Covenant Chain, 1758-1766,” *Ethnohistory* 44 (1997), 619. Designated as an “elder brother” within the Iroquois Covenant Chain carried added prestige but also the responsibility of military assistance. Although the author is writing about the Great Lakes region, this concept of the “elder brother” may have had similar characteristics in the Southeast.

⁵² Upper and Lower Creek Leaders to Seminole Headmen, 9 June 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. Principal Creek men are writing to the Seminoles that they have received numerous complaints from the Spanish about seized property and want the goods returned and stable relations restored.

⁵³ Claudio Saunt, “‘The English Has Now a Mind to Make Slaves of Them All’: Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problem of Slavery,” *American Indian Quarterly* 22 (Winter - Spring, 1998), 158; Ibid, 170. The author argues that one of the Seminole’s defining characteristics, distinguishing them from the Creek, was a decentralized government that resisted adoption of chattel slavery.

⁵⁴ James Cusick, “King Payne and His Policies: A Framework for the Seminoles of La Chua, 1784-1812,” Paper presented at the Southern Historical Association 73rd Annual Meeting, Richmond, Va. 2007, 3.

⁵⁵ Seminole leaders to Andrew Jackson, 19 August 1835. National Archives Microfilm Publications, M234, Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1824-81, 962 rolls (hereafter cited as M234), roll 806, Seminole Emigration, 1827-46.

⁵⁶ Parmenter, “Pontiac’s War,” 619.

⁵⁷ Shoemaker, “How Indians Got to Be Red,” 627.

⁵⁸ Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 133.

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- ⁵⁹ *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, Edited by Jane G. Landers (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000).
- ⁶⁰ Williams, *Linking Arms Together*, 100.
- ⁶¹ Payne to Juan Nepomuceo de Quesada, 31 January 1794, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ⁶² Susan A. Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones: A Seminole Saga* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 25. Through the author's discussion of the Seminole leader Coacoochee's clan identity, Miller illustrates that Seminoles adopted their mother's clan.
- ⁶³ Ibid, 22.
- ⁶⁴ Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Seminoles and Creeks, 30 April 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ⁶⁵ Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes to Lower Creek and Seminole, 8 December 1784, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY; Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Payne, 24 August 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY; Enriqu  White to Payne, 18 July 1800, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ⁶⁶ Juliana Barr, "Beyond Their Control: Spaniards in Native Texas," in *Choice, Persuasion, and Coercion: Social Control on Spain's North American Frontiers*, eds. Jesus F. De La Teja and Ross Frank (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 160.
- ⁶⁷ Shoemaker, "An Alliance between Men," 251.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid, 245.
- ⁶⁹ Vicente Manuel de Z spedes to Seminole Headmen, 13 October 1789, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. Governor Z spedes assures the Seminoles that the recent murder of a "red man" would result in justice through Spanish courts and that the young warriors should not act impertinently; Payne to Enriqu  White, 29 July 1800, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. The Seminole headman assures the governor that he has admonished his young people for their recent actions. Governor White had been demanding justice for a raid that led to the seizure of African slaves and a murder. Payne claims the murderer had perished and that the African slaves would be returned; Francisco Fatio Jr. to Francisco Fatio, 02 October 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY. While speaking with the Seminole headman Bowleg, Francisco Fatio Jr. learned that his father's slaves were being held captive at Mikasuki. Bowleg states that Bowles was at the Indigenous settlement and stated that the robbery of the slaves was due to the actions of immature "young men." Nonetheless he did not release the slaves; Upper and Lower Creek Leaders to Seminole Headmen, 09 June 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. The Upper and Lower Creeks, under pressure from the Spanish, request that Seminoles cease raiding and return any seized property. In order to do this they request that the talk would be circulated not only to the Indigenous leaders but also the "young men."
- ⁷⁰ One exception to unfavorable views on mestizo peoples is due to the civilization discourse. Mixed races peoples with a Euro-american parent could be considered more civilized compared to non-white races because they contained a measure of white "blood." Nonetheless these individuals were still considered inferior and part of the dilution of the "white race."
- ⁷¹ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 41.
- ⁷² Ibid, 35.
- ⁷³ Carlos McLatchy to Vicente Manuel de Z spedes, 04 March 1784, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ⁷⁴ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 11.
- ⁷⁵ Daniel J. J. Ross and Bruce S. Chappell, "Visit to the Indian Nations: The Diary of John Hambly," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (July 1976), 60.
- ⁷⁶ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 34. Hambly's parents were originally from London, England. The Panton, Leslie, and Company trader eventually married Maria Mitchell and established himself on the St. Johns River.
- ⁷⁷ John Hambly Journal, 29 June to 27 August 1794, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

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- ⁷⁸ In this particular instance Hambly was explaining a talk to the Lower Creek leader known as the “Hallowing King.” The Spanish agent was in Georgia assessing the situation associated with General Clarke’s filibustering efforts.
- ⁷⁹ John Forrester to Governor Henry White, 5 July 1800, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ⁸¹ Francis Philip Fatio to Major Morrison, 14 December 1782, CO 5/559-60, microfilm reel 4, PRO, LC.
- ⁸² Parker, “Success Trough Diversification,” 79.
- ⁸³ Interim Governor of Florida to Carlos Howard, 12 May 1795, EFP, microfilm reel 51, PKY.
- ⁸⁴ William Lawrence to Enrique White, 04 October 1806, EFP, microfilm reel 58, PKY.
- ⁸⁵ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 175.
- ⁸⁶ Enrique White Edict, 20 May 1807, EFP, microfilm reel 118, PKY. The governor’s edict consists of 11 points dealing with the free and slave African population.
- ⁸⁷ Enrique White Edict, 26 September 1807, EFP, microfilm reel 118, PKY.
- ⁸⁸ Enrique White to Damaso Yglesias, 5 July 1808, EFP, microfilm reel 59, PKY.
- ⁸⁹ Christopher Ward, “The Commerce of East Florida During the Embargo, 1806-1812: The Role of Amelia Island,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (October 1989), 167.
- ⁹⁰ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 177.
- ⁹¹ Daniel L. Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 32.
- ⁹² William Lawrence to Enrique White, 26 May 1807, EFP, microfilm reel 58, PKY.
- ⁹³ Enrique White to William Lawrence, 04 June 1807, EFP, microfilm reel 58, PKY.

Chapter 3

THE “STATE OF MUSKOGEE”: EMERGING NATIONALIST DISCOURSE IN THE FLORIDA BORDERLANDS, 1790-1803

Therefore we do determine, and are determined to take such measures as may be effectually necessary to defend our Country, to defend our most Sacred Rights: to defend the Honor of this Nation, and procure reparation and satisfaction for our injured citizens. Therefore be known to all Men, That We the Director General of Muskogee, in special council met, for the reasons aforesaid do, by virtue of our authority and High Office, as in duty bound declare war against his Catholic Majesty and his subjects in order that general reprisal be made both by land and sea of the goods, ships, and subjects of his Catholic Majesty.

William Augustus Bowles, 1800¹

During the turn of the nineteenth century various rambling diplomatic dispatches emerged from Mikasuki, a settlement sharing its name with the Indigenous group that inhabited a part of northwestern Florida.² Although its headman, Kinache, was one of the major power brokers in the region, his guest, William Augustus Bowles, was responsible for the proclamations. The theatrical visitor was a former British loyalist from Maryland who, while serving in the armed forces, became acquainted with West Florida as well as the Seminoles and Lower Creek. Bowles was a Euro-American filibuster seeking to carve out an empire in the supposed political vacuum of the Southeastern Borderlands where national power was weak. Although his “State of Muskogee” made pretensions to forging a united Seminole and Creek national consciousness, he simply sought to exploit and “civilize” his Indigenous hosts in order to quickly elevate himself to a position of power. He was a strong advocate for Indigenous

sovereignty and territorial integrity as long as it was beneficial to his cause. Indulging in the discourse of the noble savage, the adventurer awaited the flood of Euro-American immigrants to his new nation to educate and uplift his Indian supporters.

Bowles' exploits, his two campaigns and subsequent imprisonments roughly spanning from the early 1790 to 1803, became fodder for those dabbling in the "Great Man" theory of history. J. Leitch Wright's *William Augustus Bowles: Director General of the Creek Nation* is one of the few extensive works solely focusing on the filibuster.³ Primarily a narrative of Bowles' life, Wright's book focuses on an interesting figure whose life intersects with critical historical events such as the American Revolution, the XYZ Affair, and the Louisiana Purchase. A contemporary re-interrogation of the analytical value of Bowles' life is needed but hampered by scholars' reluctance to once more center the narrative on a Euro-American male historical figure.⁴ Recent Borderlands texts have shifted their focus to subordinate groups such as Indigenous peoples, Africans, and women, examining how they shaped their worlds despite imbalances of power and the onset of new forms of economic, social, and political control. Nonetheless, this chapter argues that Bowles' experiences in the Florida Borderlands still retain historical importance beyond the confines of his own life. One of the advantages of utilizing Bowles in order to touch upon the larger themes of this work is that his attempt to usurp existing trade networks and colonial authority drew Indigenous and European powers' attention, thus producing a significant textual record of his activities. His interactions with the Mikasuki, in turn, enables historians to gain an insight into the broad changes that were occurring in the Southeastern Borderlands, especially among Indigenous communities. This chapter argues that the events associated with Bowles, the Mikasuki, and the Seminoles illustrate that the Florida

Borderlands remained quite accessible to various groups' mobility and existed in an intellectual and economic crossroads between the U.S. Southeast, Caribbean, and the Atlantic World. Thus Florida did not exist in a vacuum since nationalist discourse and market capitalism often ran parallel and intersected with established decentralized political and non-market economic systems.

Bowles came to age during the Enlightenment and subsequently witnessed the nationalist movements of the American and French Revolutions. He was a staunch supporter of the British monarch and joined a loyalist Maryland regiment in order to fight against the Continental Army and its allies. Bowles' unit went to defend West Florida from the Spanish, but he soon chafed under his superiors' authority and deserted. He was allowed to reside among a party of Lower Creeks before returning to his regiment just in time to be held captive by the Spanish. Bowles, released, later returned to West Florida where he began to propagate rhetoric of Indigenous nationalism with the goal of founding the "State of Muskogee." Meanwhile Alexander McGillivray attempted to fashion a Creek, mainly Upper Creek, national identity especially through the Treaty of New York with the United States in 1790. Bowles gained allies among the Lower Creeks and fancied himself a challenger to McGillivray's leadership. He envisioned himself as the Director General of what he probably viewed as a culturally and ethnically homogenous Creek/Seminole nation. In conjunction with these efforts to forge an Indigenous nation, the United States and Great Britain sought to extend their national control and power over a perceived vacuum in Florida Borderlands left because of Spanish weakness.

Although the discourse of nationalism and the reach of American and European states sought to assert itself into northern Florida and southeastern Georgia, the political, social, and

economic systems of the borderlands continued to shape intercultural relations, and thereby undercut the reach of the nation-state. Lower Creeks, Apalachicola Seminoles, and the Mikasuki allied at various times with Bowles in order to resist the encroachment of European and American nation-building and market capitalism. They hoped Bowles would serve as a counterweight to the U.S. and the Spanish and could even bring the eventual return of the British and thus the reemergence of imperial competition and the “middle ground.” Additionally, Bowles backers including Bahamian traders desirous of disrupting the Panton, Leslie, and Company trade monopoly were willing to offer competitive rates on manufactured goods for deerskins. Indigenous peoples became further integrated in a system that linked New Providence and London with the Southeastern Borderlands, accelerating the fluid movement of goods and people across a trans-Atlantic trade system. Although figures such as McGillivray and Bowles claimed to speak for multiple Lower Creek and Seminole settlements, these groups maintained decentralized political structures. Indigenous peoples in the Florida Borderlands generally continued to live in relatively small autonomous settlements with economic exchanges based on reciprocity. However these communities were not isolated from the discourse of political centralization and trans-Atlantic economic integration based on the safeguarding of property, especially African slaves.

3.1 William Augustus Bowles and the Florida Borderlands

At first glance the biography of William Augustus Bowles remains largely a narrative of an ambitious British adventurer and the precariousness of Spain’s hold on both Floridas. However, his life sheds light on larger currents encompassing the Southeastern Borderlands

during this period. Early scholarship emphasized Bowles and his character traits rather than the historical context of his actions.⁵ Illustrative of this early work is Elisha P. Douglass' description of Bowles as:

tall, handsome, half incorrigible rogue and half idealist, gallant leader of a lost cause, an intimate of the conspiracies of Spain and England as they struggled for empire and finally a sacrifice to the very people for whom he had devoted his life—he might indeed serve as a model for a fictioneer's hero.⁶

Scholarship after the 1960s began to devote considerable attention to the historical context of the events shaping Bowles' public career while avoiding portraits of Bowles as a skilled white adventurer leading "noble savages."⁷ With increased attention to the documents concerning the establishment of a "sovereign Indian state," Lyle N. McAlister's article "The Marine Forces of William Augustus Bowles and his 'State of Muskogee'" argues that Bowles invested considerable intellectual capital in creating the contours of a nation.⁸ Wright's scholarship offered a more complete treatment of the filibuster and provided more historical context. This chapter seeks to revisit Bowles and his activities in the Florida Borderlands while prioritizing his influence in regards to the spread of nationalistic discourse and his relationship with Indigenous allies. This requires a brief summary of the British adventurer's background and a review of his two major campaigns in northern Florida.

Maryland was the unlikely home for a historical figure claiming the mantle of leadership over an Indigenous nation in the Southeast. Bowles' father Thomas Bowles arrived from England in order to become a landowner and to accumulate significant holdings. His middling position in colonial society and access to important literature ensured his son received a well-rounded education. Although William would express an aversion to some Enlightenment philosophies and political beliefs, he "always remained an ardent pupil of the European

intellectual ferment.”⁹ However, Bowles never abandoned his loyalty for the British, especially in the face of threats stemming from the American and French Revolutions. As an aspiring leader, he did not appreciate any movements that threatened the social order. From an early age Bowles seemed to thirst for opportunities for political and social advancement rather than remaining at home in Maryland. At fourteen years of age Bowles became a low ranking army officer and was stationed in Philadelphia and later New York. In 1778 Bowles’ regiment was sent to the South as a part of the British strategy to utilize its popular support in the region. After a brief respite in Jamaica they were sent to Pensacola to protect British West Florida and threaten Louisiana because the Spanish had joined the hostilities. While in the area Bowles ran afoul of his superiors and was taken in by one of the Lower Creek parties that often came to Pensacola to receive gifts.¹⁰

During Bowles’ desertion of his military post he became acquainted with the Lower Creek and Seminoles and utilized this information in his future endeavors. While in the Florida Borderlands, Bowles allegedly had children with a Cherokee woman and with Mary, the daughter of a Lower Creek headman named Perryman. He eventually returned to his old regiment in order to fend off an imminent Spanish attack on Pensacola. Troops led by Bernardo de Gálvez captured the West Florida post and Bowles was sent with his regiment as a prisoner of war to Havana. Later, he was sent to New York where he remained until the war ended: Bowles then decided to resettle in Nassau. After working odd jobs such as partaking in theatrical performances and painting portraits, he wandered back to the Lower Creek in 1785. The British adventurer would make valuable contacts with both Nassau officials and the Upper Creek leader Alexander McGillivray and soon developed a scheme to gain political and economic power in

the Southeastern Borderlands. Bowles' 1788 expedition, funded by a couple of influential backers, consisted of a party of Bahamian mercenaries and Indigenous allies who trekked about northern Florida until deserters and lack of clear objectives dissipated their chances of success. Falling out with McGillivray, Bowles returned to Nassau and decided that his best course of action was to lead a small delegation of eight Creek and Cherokee leaders to London to meet with British officials and to propose an alliance and seek British military and financial assistance. The delegation disembarked in London during 1790 and garnered much attention from the public, but British officials sent them back. Undeterred, Bowles regrouped with his Bahamian backers and forged ahead with ambitious plans.

In his efforts to gain Indigenous support to challenge the dominant colonial order, Bowles was more opportunistic than altruistic. It is doubtful that principled notions of justice for Indigenous peoples solely drove him. Rather Bowles attempted to take advantage of one of the few opportunities that might catapult him into a position of power. He had remained an ensign in the British army and never advanced beyond the lowest rank for an officer. Wright states that Bowles illustrated a "temperament better suited to command than to serve."¹¹ What is clear from the diplomatic deputation to London is that Bowles enjoyed the status and attention he derived from presenting himself as a "white Indian chief." In future correspondence he declared himself "Director General of Muskogee." Assuredly Bowles' endeavors were designed to elevate himself to a position of high status. He would have had difficulty settling down to a quiet and insignificant life as a soldier or farmer.

Bowles was part of a long legacy of Euro-Americans seeking social and economic mobility in the frontier through the exploitation of Indigenous peoples.¹² Additionally Bowles

would not have received the attention he generated in London and elsewhere had he not been “playing Indian.” As Phillip Deloria argues, Americans constructed their identities by assuming an “Indian” persona and simultaneously defining their identities in opposition to a perceived Indianness.¹³ As a Maryland loyalist at the losing end of the American Revolution, Bowles was a man in a liminal position, existing between nations, unable to return home and a refugee among the British colonies. He sought his new identity in the Florida Borderlands by becoming a “white Indian,” but his whiteness and ability to “civilize” the Lower Creek and Seminoles privileged him to a position of leadership. Conversely, the filibuster’s “native transformation” imbued him with the frontier knowledge and “savageness” that the British lacked in the American Revolution when their European military tactics proved inadequate against guerilla warfare. Eventually Bowles sought to use this image to encourage whites to immigrate to Muskogee and to transform the territory into a British protectorate.¹⁴

It would not have been possible for Bowles to promote himself as a white “chief” of Southeastern Indigenous peoples without tacit support of the British government and concrete support by Nassau officials and merchants. For their part, the British never officially sanctioned Bowles activities but neither did they dissuade him of his plans. Political and diplomatic circumstances remained fluid and many British observers felt that a weak Spain and United States would be hard pressed to hold on to their territory in that region.¹⁵ Defeat in the American Revolution only intensified British resolve to maintain or increase their political and economic presence in the West Indies. They felt that these possessions “stood as easily Britain’s biggest overseas capital investment, no longer simply the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, but now virtually the crown itself.”¹⁶ The Florida Borderlands and the Gulf Coast had always been

interconnected with the Caribbean and factored in British strategic thinking. According to Wright they continued to seek an opportune moment to exert their influence there since the Southeast was a valuable market for manufactured goods. With the onset of the industrial revolution, increased production meant that outlets for those wares were highly prized.¹⁷ Instability and a dynamic geopolitical situation made a figure like Bowles, claiming to control all Southeastern Indigenous peoples, a potentially important ally only if war erupted in that region.

While implicit British approval was significant, Bowles would have had difficulty even attempting his plans without the support of Nassau traders. Lawrence Kinnaird argues that Bowles' campaigns amounted to "commercial warfare waged by the merchants of New Providence against the house of Panton."¹⁸ Panton, Leslie and Company had pragmatically negotiated with the Spanish government for the right to continue their trade with Southeastern Indigenous peoples. As a result they further integrated the Southeastern Borderlands with the Atlantic economy by linking Florida posts with Bahamas warehouses and London suppliers. Creek and Seminole deerskins were being exchanged for guns, ammunition, and a variety of manufactured goods. The Panton monopoly irked powerful people such as John Murray, the Bahamas Governor Lord Dunmore, and John Miller, head of the Miller, Bonnamy and Company trading firm. They came to see Bowles as their representative into the Southeastern market and began to invest in his venture. Miller sent his ships to West Florida with gifts and trade goods to the Lower Creeks and Seminoles. With competitive rates and utilizing existing complaints against Panton, Leslie, and Company, Miller sought to end his rival's grip on the region. Both firms effectively represented the expansion of market capitalism and the competition to acquire markets and tap into native knowledge of important resources.

Bahamian traders were interested in the Bowles expeditions because they wanted access to Indigenous peoples' deerskins and to satiate Indian demand for manufactured products. Lower Creek and Seminole leaders had their own motivations and strategic concerns for forming alliances with Bowles and indulging his schemes. As aptly illustrated by recent scholarship, Indigenous peoples were political, economic, and social actors who operated within a "mediated opportunism," meaning their potential agency existed within constraints due to disease, environmental conditions, and colonialism.¹⁹ Europeans perceived Indigenous peoples as especially susceptible to the machinations of nefarious European men, implying that their mental state resembled that of women and children, and that they should be treated as wards.²⁰ Nonetheless, the Lower Creek and Seminoles were quite cognizant of their geopolitical situation and attempted to address these conditions. Both groups faced increased stress from the undermining of the "middle ground" and the increased centralization and expansion of Upper Creek leaders such as Alexander McGillivray as well as land grants sought by the United States. Disputes also arose between the colonial Florida government and the Seminole over the boundaries between Indigenous peoples and settlers. In addition to these pressures, Panton, Leslie, and Company operated a trading monopoly that commodified deerskins, land, goods, and even African slaves. The British trading firm was able to keep its prices high thus placing its Indigenous clients in debt, an issue that remained a source of contention even after Bowles ultimately left the Florida Borderlands in 1803.²¹ Within this context various groups of Lower Creeks and Seminoles felt it was advantageous to form temporary alliances and befriend Bowles. Even McGillivray briefly considered cooperating with Bowles in 1788 when the Spanish and Panton, Leslie, and Company were withholding trade, the most potent weapon in the arsenal of

the colonial government.²² In this instance, McGillivray utilized Bowles as leverage in his negotiations and probably never considered an alliance with the British adventurer as viable. Whether Lower Creek and Seminoles perceived Bowles as a long-term solution to their concerns or as negotiation chip is difficult to ascertain. Depending on the situation, which could rapidly evolve, Bowles presented Indigenous people the opportunity to redress their grievances while colonial powers continued to hold the filibuster, not the Creeks and Seminoles, responsible for the turmoil.²³

Bowles' first two campaigns in the Florida Borderlands occurred in 1788 and again in late 1791 to early 1792, taking place during the controversy surrounding the 1790 Treaty of New York between McGillivray and the United States. McGillivray's father Lachlan McGillivray married Sehoy Marchand, a member of the prestigious Wind Clan and sister to the Upper Creek headman Red Shoes. The Scottish trader's marriage to Marchand gave him an important connection to the community.²⁴ His son Alexander was well primed for a leadership position and would be able to enhance his economic status. According to Theda Purdue, it should be noted that McGillivray's ascendance among the Upper Creek should not be simply based upon the fact he was a "mixed blood."²⁵ Previous scholarship conflated race with culture and thus bestowed a political and economic astuteness to "mixed blood" progeny based on their partial whiteness. However, the Creek leader owed a significant portion of his social, political, and economic position to his mother since he lived in a matrilineal society and inherited her clan and would have been supported by her male relatives. However, McGillivray's father played a larger role in his son's upbringing despite the diminished role fathers had in the lives of Creek children. Saunt writes that understanding how Creek clans and moieties functioned "provides rules of

behavior but does not describe practice; in fact, practice fluctuated over time and place.”²⁶

McGillivray is an important harbinger of the “New Order” taking root among a faction of the Creek. His life epitomized the transformations that occurred in the Southeastern Borderlands. He owned property, including African slaves, sought to construct a Creek Nationalism, and was an agent of the Spanish and U.S governments.

In 1790 McGillivray traveled to New York and signed a treaty with the United States, which caused an upheaval among the Spanish and the groups that he claimed to represent.²⁷ Treaty articles stipulated that the provisions of the agreement pertained not only to a group of Upper Creeks but to all Creeks, and the treaty even makes mention of the Seminoles. U.S. and Spanish authorities had assumed that McGillivray held influence over the Lower Creeks and Seminoles and overlooked their decentralized political structure. In 1786, the Spanish had written to the Creek leader and asked for his intercession in an incident on the St. Mary’s River presumably concerning the Seminoles. Seeking to sidestep the unpleasant issue, he informed the Spanish East Florida governor “as for the Semanologies I have but little acquaintance with the present leaders the former ones whom I knew are dead.”²⁸ Nonetheless, McGillivray’s stature among colonial powers and his employment as their agent were based on their calculation that his agreements would be uniformly accepted by the whole “nation.” Indeed rival Creek leader Hoboithle Micco was resentful of McGillivray’s attempts to centralize power and his pretensions to being the representative of the Creek.

Indigenous peoples of the Florida Borderlands were also disturbed with McGillivray’s and the United States’ attempt to expand their influence in the region. As a result Bowles became “a lightning rod who attracted many Lower Creeks dissatisfied with McGillivray’s

leadership.”²⁹ The agreement with the United States to cede Oconee lands threatened the Lower Creeks with the increased encroachment of American settlers. To make matters worse, McGillivray’s authority over the Lower Creek proved questionable, yet he sought to bargain away their hunting grounds. Saunt argues that resistance to the Upper Creek leader went beyond the Treaty of New York but had to do with his efforts to usher in the “New Order,” a shift away from Creek political, social, and economic systems. For instance, one treaty stipulation called for the U.S. to provide agricultural and husbandry assistance in order to “civilize” the Creek and end their supposed reliance on hunting. Another article required the apprehension and extradition of fugitive African slaves among the Creek. McGillivray, himself a slave owner and landholder, sought to uphold Euro-American notions of private property and orientate his community towards a market economy and a stratified social hierarchy.³⁰ Lower Creek leaders and groups accustomed to local autonomy within a loose political confederation would not accede to the “New Order.” Seminole settlements that had been in the process of politically splintering off from the Creeks would especially resist McGillivray’s attempts at centralization. Ironically, the Lower Creeks and Seminoles briefly utilized Bowles as a counterweight to McGillivray. Saunt writes that as “a hunter and warrior, Bowles outwardly differed markedly from McGillivray, the statesman and plantation owner.”³¹ However, Bowles’ eventual goal was to encourage Euro-American immigration in order to “civilize” the Creek and construct a nation based upon the principles of the “New Order.”³² He even sought the financial support of the Church Missionary Society, informing them that the Creeks stood on the verge of civilization and would readily accept Christianity.³³ His Indigenous allies undoubtedly did not share his broader designs in the Florida Borderlands.

McGillivray's multifaceted efforts to centralize power also included his interests in the Southeastern Borderlands commercial deerskin trade. In addition to his positions as a Spanish and U.S. agent, the Creek leader was also a "silent partner" in the Panton, Leslie, and Company trading firm.³⁴ His efforts were crucial in convincing the Spanish to allow the British firm to remain in *Las Floridas*, as demonstrated in his 1785 letter to West Florida governor Arturo O'Neill in which he states that the company's ability to furnish trade will ward off the influence of the United States among the Indigenous peoples.³⁵ Panton, Leslie, and Company indeed secured the trade concessions and soon monopolized the deerskin trade. Based upon the rules of the market economy Lower Creek and Seminoles had to deal with the company's high prices and ability to incur debt upon Indigenous hunters. These debts often led to the eventual cession of land grants in order to satisfy the demands of the firm for repayment. Indigenous peoples understood that competition among colonial powers and trading houses meant they had more leverage in negotiations and they could secure beneficial terms.

Bowles and his Bahamian partners offered the Lower Creeks and Seminoles an alternative to the Panton, Leslie, and Company monopoly. Seeking temporary alliances with a third party was not a novel development in the Southeastern Borderlands. Alan Gallay argues that during the British occupation of Florida after the Seven Years War, the Lower Creek were willing to lease land to the trader and planter Jonathan Bryan in order to apply leverage to the British who had little political and economic competition.³⁶ In Bowles' case the Lower Creek and Seminoles were seeking to encourage an increased British presence in order to pressure the Spanish as well as the Panton, Leslie, and Company.³⁷ In comparison to the previous British regime, Spanish gifts were inadequate in terms of their quality and quantity. Additionally, a

Spanish ordered embargo of the trade was one of the few effective tools the colonial government could implement.³⁸ Consequently Bowles' most effective sales pitch to potential Indigenous allies was that he was an official representative of the British monarch.³⁹ Although he was given no official support from the British, Bowles implied that his success would usher in the return of the British. Considering that the Spanish felt the need in their *pláticas* to discredit Bowles' status with the British government, the lure of their return to the Southeast must have resonated.⁴⁰ Eventually Bowles' downfall was caused by his inability to deliver on promises of inexhaustible trade and the unlimited support of the British government.⁴¹ Nonetheless, Indigenous people sporadically supported the adventurer in order to address internal issues, McGillivray's centralization efforts, and external pressures, rising prices and debt owed to the Panton, Leslie, and Company.

With the backdrop of a rapidly developing geopolitical situation in the region and several internal and external motivating factors driving Indigenous support, Bowles' first major campaign occurred from late 1791 to early 1792. Unlike the 1788 expedition, the events of this operation were more substantial and threatening to both the Spanish and the Panton, Leslie, and Company trading firm. However, rarely did any of Bowles' political and military endeavors unfold as he had intended. Before he could reach Florida tensions between the British and the Spanish were subsiding, thus spelling doom for the prospects of direct British intervention. Nonetheless, Bowles was gaining Indigenous allies by criticizing McGillivray and the terms of the Treaty of New York calling for the cession of Creek lands. His armed group effectively thwarted the surveyors seeking to demarcate the newly acquired U.S. lands. However, the

adventurer's primary goal remained the fulfillment of the promises he had made upon his arrival in western Florida.

Bowles' success rested upon his ability to furnish a steady and substantial supply of trade and gifts. In order to present himself as a viable alternative to his rivals, Panton, Leslie, and Company, Bowles had to match or exceed their inventory. Unsurprisingly, the campaign soon targeted one of the Panton trading posts located near the St. Marks fortification. Bowles, with the assistance of one of his underlings, William Cunningham, apprehended Edward Forrester, the store's attendant, and requisitioned goods valued at a minimum of ten thousand dollars.⁴²

Although the trading post was near the Spanish fort, the garrison lacked the strength for a punitive expedition. However, Bowles also lacked the military capacity to besiege the fort. Once Spanish reinforcements arrived, the adventurer gambled and entered the post believing that the Spanish were prepared to negotiate and would be open to abandoning the Panton, Leslie, and Company and rely on him and his partners instead. However, the Spanish commander José de Hevia convinced Bowles that Louisiana Governor Baron de Carondelet sought to confer with him. Once aboard a Spanish ship, Bowles effectively became a prisoner, a realization that quickly dawned on him as he was sent to Havana and placed in the city's prison. His rivals fully expected that Bowles would no longer factor in the political and economic struggles of the Florida Borderlands.

Exiled to Spain and then the Philippines, it seemed unlikely the filibuster would be able to pursue his ambitious schemes. Nonetheless he managed to take advantage of a chaotic situation aboard a Spanish ship that was transporting him back to the Iberian Peninsula. Approximately six years after his faulty judgment led him into the St. Marks fort, Bowles

managed to escape the clutches of his captors at sea and was rescued by an American ship and soon deposited in British controlled Sierra Leone.⁴³ Ever loyal to his dream of establishing “Muskogee,” Bowles quickly sought to return to Florida but subsequent transportation problems meant he was rerouted to London. Similar to his first trip to the English capital, Bowles sought official sanction and political and financial backing of his endeavors. Once more he had to settle for only an implicit blessing of his activities and enough monetary assistance to return to Florida. Eventually he gained passage to the Caribbean, making the rounds between Barbados, Jamaica, and the Bahamas. Much to his consternation, a political reorganization meant that Bowles’ allies, Governor Dunmore and Miller, no longer wielded the same amount of power as they had six years before. William Dowdeswell, a Panton, Leslie, and Company ally, became governor while Miller remained on the island but out of favor with the new administration. Despite the undermining of his Bahamian base, Bowles cautiously remained on the island and kept abreast of regional developments.

Bowles’ ultimate fate in the Southeastern Borderlands was partially based on the combustible political and social situation at the turn of the 19th century. In conjunction with local factors, especially the actions and motives of the Lower Creek and the Seminoles, the shifting alliances and social instability stemming from the American, French, and Haitian revolutions kept the Atlantic World in a state of flux. Bowles’ ability to coerce British officials and his attempts to negotiate with the Spanish and the U.S. were based upon arguments that he could prove useful to their larger designs. British officials continued to humor Bowles in case a war between Spain and England required the aid of Southeastern Indigenous peoples. However, stable relations between colonial rivals would doom the adventurer’s aspirations because his

support among his allies, especially his Indigenous hosts, was founded on the assumption he could guarantee official British recognition as well as political and economic support.

Furthermore, colonial powers were occupied with the wars that emanated out of the French Revolution and the social unrest in the Caribbean. There were fears that the massive slave uprising beginning in 1791 in Saint-Domingue would continue to spread. Caribbean colonies were wary of the possibility of more slave uprisings. Although Jamaica's 1795 Maroon War was the exception, David Patrick Geggus argues that slave resistance in British possessions was limited because of "exceptionally high concentrations of troops maintained in the British colonies through the years 1789-1815."⁴⁴ Numerous British soldiers had been sent to the region not only to pacify the unrest but to capture the French controlled Caribbean Islands in 1794. The French responded with emancipation for their African slaves, which assisted in the recruitment of local militia in order to reverse the British gains.⁴⁵ Although Florida was peripheral to the main theater of the conflict, it was unable to completely escape the upheaval of the period. In 1795, the French minister to the United States Edmond Charles Genet sought to implement an ambitious plan to wrest control of Florida from the Spanish monarchy utilizing American frontiersmen. Governor Quesada took the costly measure of ordering the destruction of deserted plantations and organized free African militia and Indigenous allies to ward off the offensive, which eventually faded.⁴⁶ Unlike the Caribbean where the French had utilized emancipated slaves, in Florida Genet sought the support of Euro-Americans seeking to enslave Florida's Africans. This meant that free Africans had a vested interest in assisting the Spanish colonial government. However, animosity between the French and the Spanish subsided with the Treaty of San Ildefonso in 1796, which renewed hostilities between the Spanish and the British.

Suddenly the strategic importance of Florida in conjunction with the rivalry between colonial powers offered Bowles the opportunity to pursue his ambitious designs.

A shipwreck along the Florida coast was illustrative of the complications that became commonplace during the Bowles campaigns. En route to the Apalachicola Bay, the filibuster's transport became stranded and he was forced to rely on assistance from a U.S. government representative. Ironically the American agent, Andrew Ellicott, was on his way to survey the line established by the 1795 Pinckney Treaty between the U.S. and Spain.⁴⁷ This agreement officially dissected Lower Creek and Seminole lands thus dividing the "State of Muskogee" between Spanish Florida and the U.S. Nonetheless Bowles believed he would be able to re-negotiate the agreement with the U.S. once he established Muskogee and assumed a position of strength.⁴⁸ These were issues that the British adventurer could address only after he reconstituted his base of support among potential Indigenous allies. Eventually he called for a council at Wekiva, which the Lower Creek and Seminoles attended because Bowles was distributing goods, especially the munitions that he had brought aboard his transport.⁴⁹ At the conference, Indigenous participants apparently elected him "Director of our nation" and implied that Bowles would rectify the situation concerning the scarcity of trade goods.⁵⁰ Without a steady supply of goods arriving from his Nassau partners, Bowles had to strike a blow against his commercial rivals while bolstering his own inventory. Repeating his feat of 1792, Bowles with a handful of Euro-American mercenaries and a few hundred Indigenous allies once more plundered the St. Marks Panton, Leslie, and Company store.⁵¹ It was believed that they acquired goods valued over fifteen thousand dollars as well as a number of African slaves. Bowles then

diverted his attention to the adjacent Spanish fortification in which he had been captured years earlier.

With the successful siege of the St. Marks military post, Bowles' career reached its zenith, but his rivals' response would drain his momentum. The adventurer's brief triumph occurred because of the missteps of the Panton, Leslie, and Company employee and Spanish commander Thomas Portell. Panton had sent a ship from Pensacola to support the beleaguered garrison but unknowingly resupplied his enemy when Bowles' forces captured the transport. Eventually Portell lost his nerve waiting for reinforcements and surrendered the outpost, an action for which he was heavily criticized in Spanish reports.⁵² Spanish soldiers evacuated the fort in May 1800 leaving Bowles to his prize. With San Marcos de Apalachee in his possession, the British adventurer's prospects improved and the possibility of securing West Florida for his merchant partners and Muskogee privateers remained within reach. Bowles' Muskogee "navy," consisting of a few mercenary crews, harassed Spanish ships and disrupted shipping in the Gulf of Mexico and became a source of plundered supplies.⁵³ With this initial success, the filibuster envisioned more Indigenous allies rallying to his standard and the official entry of Great Britain into the war against the Spanish. However, British troops were not on the horizon. Rather, a sizable Spanish force from Louisiana led by the West Florida Governor Vicente Folch arrived at St. Marks. Unprepared for the swiftness of the Spanish response, Bowles was forced to retreat from the fort and take up residence with his staunchest ally, the Mikasuki headman Kinache.

With the loss of San Marcos de Apalachee Bowles became dependent on his Mikasuki benefactors and would experience more hardships. He had hoped to retake the fort once Folch's forces retreated but it never became an option. However, the Spanish were also in no position to

apprehend Bowles since the Mikasuki were one of the most numerous Seminole groups and their raids upon the plantations of Spanish citizens during this period earned a healthy respect for their military prowess. Following the events of 1800 and leading up to his apprehension in 1803, Bowles remained with his Indigenous allies, desirous of a more advantageous geopolitical situation. The Mikasuki conducted raids along the St. Johns River, including a famous incident on Francis Philip Fatio's plantation, which occurred in August of 1801 and resulted in the loss of African slaves. Bowles sought to encourage slaves to join the ranks of his Indigenous allies. However, Spanish officials' *pláticas* with the Seminoles, as discussed in the previous chapter, were quick to blame Bowles for these acts. They failed to consider the possibility that the Mikasuki seizure of property was a protest to the colonial regime or the Panton, Leslie, and Company trading firm. Bowles may have served as convenient pretext for the conflict between the Mikasuki and the settlers.

Indigenous allies remained faithful to Bowles as long as it served their strategic interests. However, Bowles was losing much of his prestige due to the difficult position of his Nassau backers and the 1802 Treaty of Amiens, which established peace between the British, French, and the Spanish. This effectively ended any possibility of official British intervention into the Southeastern Borderlands. With supplies from the Bahamas not arriving as consistently as promised and with British assistance lacking, Indigenous support began to wane. In early 1803 a Creek conference was called at Hickory Ground in Upper Creek territory to discuss various issues such as Creek's trade debts. Despite the presence of his enemies; Panton, Leslie, and Company traders; Spanish officials and U.S. agents; Bowles felt he needed to make his case for leading a Southeastern Indigenous coalition against those very groups.⁵⁴ Considering that the

meeting concerned the debt that the Creeks owed and that they would probably have to relinquish land to pay the account, Bowles may have considered this an opportune time to make his appeal.

Nonetheless, the British adventurer had walked into a trap especially considering that he no longer garnered much Indigenous support. In fact he never held much sway with the Upper Creek. Wright states that while U.S. representative Benjamin Hawkins, the West Florida governor's son, Estevan Folch, and trader John Forbes were all pressing for Bowles' arrest, it was strictly a decision of the sovereign Creek council.⁵⁵ The verdict against Bowles was not taken lightly, for he was able to press his case against the parties mentioned above and the Creek council deliberated on the proper course of action. In the end the Indigenous leaders felt that stable relations with neighboring colonial powers were preferable to Bowles' leadership. Although uncertain, the Creek headmen may have also been seeking to utilize Bowles' arrest to coax concessions during debt negotiations with Forbes. The Mikasuki delegation that escorted the British adventurer to the conference would not risk confrontation with the other Indigenous groups by resisting his apprehension but were apparently disappointed by this development.⁵⁶ With the filibuster's failure in bringing competition to the commercial deerskin trade and the unwillingness of the British to officially endorse and support his endeavors, the existence of the "State of Muskogee" ended. While Bowles claimed to be a representative of all Southeastern Indigenous peoples, it was their lack of faith in his usefulness that led to his final defeat.⁵⁷

3.2 Encroachment of the Nation-State

Bowles' capture at Hickory Ground was symbolic of the larger processes developing in

the Southeastern Borderlands. Lurking beneath the issue of Bowles arrest was the settling of Creek debts with Panton, Leslie, and Company, during this period renamed the John Forbes and Company. Also present at the meeting was Hawkins, the U.S. agent to Southern Indigenous groups. He had befriended the firm and they both sought a mutually beneficial agreement.⁵⁸ In 1802, the U.S. government had received land grants from the Creek and was pressuring for more territory.⁵⁹ Forbes hoped that the U.S. would purchase a new grant with the payment being applied towards the Creek's debts. Forbes and Hawkins represented the expanding reach of the market economy and the power of the nation-state and they targeted Bowles, since he championed opposition to further land loss and indebtedness. With the advent of the commercial deerskin trade, the economy of the Southeastern Borderlands became orientated towards the commodification of goods and land. Hides exchanged at the various trading posts enabled Indigenous access to manufactured goods that the firm purchased in London and routed through the Bahamas. Traders extended credit to hunters, which led to the accumulation of debt when deliveries failed to match the value of the initial advances. When the Forbes and Company began insisting for repayment, land became a commodity and a piece of property that could be exchanged for hard currency or the cancelation of debt.⁶⁰ With the firm's cooperation with the Spanish and the U.S., the extension of the market economy became intertwined with the project of the nation-state to control its territorial borders.

Although removal efforts in the 1830s revealed the "supreme exhibition of state power over native peoples," the U.S. had already attempted to assert its power through a series of treaties, land grants, and efforts to "civilize" Indigenous peoples.⁶¹ For instance the second article of the 1790 Treaty of New York asserted that the Creeks could have no agreements with

other states and were “under the protection of the United States of America, and of no other sovereign whosoever.”⁶² Signed by various Upper Creek leaders, but mainly supported by McGillivray, the document represents efforts by the U.S. to project a Euro-American national structure upon the Creeks in order to facilitate agreements and eventually removal. Despite many objections, especially among the Lower Creek and Seminoles, McGillivray and the U.S. argued that Southeastern Indigenous groups had a degree of centralization making the agreement valid.⁶³ In other areas, the Creek leader and the U.S. hoped to further encourage “civilization” by promoting intensive agriculture, and consequently the abandonment of hunting, by supplying the Creek “with useful domestic animals and implements of husbandry.”⁶⁴ Saunt states that this stipulation resonated with McGillivray’s vision for Creek economic development, but it would “disturb, but perhaps not surprised, many Muskogeans.”⁶⁵ With McGillivray passing away in 1793, Hawkins’ appointment as U.S. agent in 1796 meant he took up the mantle of “civilizing” the Creek.⁶⁶ For this reason, he detested Bowles whose campaigns only served to encourage the Creek to resist further treaties and land grants. A majority of Creeks continued to hunt as a means of supplementing their agricultural production and few utilized intensive agriculture designed for accumulating a surplus for the market economy.

An increased U.S. presence and the spread of a nationalist discourse in the Southeast resulted in efforts to enforce borders and boundaries. Bowles had disrupted U.S. surveyors and agents that sought to demarcate the geographic borders stemming from the Treaty of New York and the 1795 Pinckney Treaty. In addition to geographical borders these agreements also touched upon metaphorical borders as well. Articles from the Treaty of New York focused on maintaining the emerging racial order in the U.S. Under the third clause of the accord the Creek

were obligated to extradite fugitive whites or African slaves to the U.S.⁶⁷ Slaves who escaped bondage and sought refuge among Indigenous groups were an acute threat to the nation-state. African and Indigenous peoples' relationships blurred racial lines that demarcated the emergent racial hierarchy/order central to the construction of the nation. As Circe Sturm's work demonstrates, nationalism is often intertwined with processes that stress racial and cultural homogeneity.⁶⁸ Especially in the U.S., a political and economic hierarchy stressed the cultural and social separation between racialized groups. The Treaty of New York sought to present the Creek as a unified nation based on a perceived homogenous racial group, thus ignoring the various ethnic and cultural divisions among the Upper and Lower Creeks. Through the efforts of figures such as McGillivray and Hawkins, Southeastern groups were being acquainted with nationalist discourses that sought to gain ascendancy.

Nationalist discourses were not solely propagated by U.S. agents or through treaty agreements: as mentioned above, McGillivray was one of the Creek elite to embrace the "New Order." Although he was racially classified as a mestizo due to his Euro-American father and Indigenous mother, under the guidelines of matrilineal decent he gained his Creek clan identity through his mother regardless of his father's status. McGillivray's life however was not typical of most Creek men of that period. For instance his father was active in his upbringing, a role usually handled by the male relatives of his mother, and as a result he interned at several trading houses.⁶⁹ As an adult he had accumulated property in the form of land, livestock, and slaves. With a position of leadership, McGillivray parlayed his connections to become a compensated agent of the Panton, Leslie, and Company, the Spanish, and the U.S. These entities were eager to find a partner who could present a single voice to "represent" the Creeks and Seminoles.

Undoubtedly colonial powers and merchants found their designs frustrated by the decentralized nature of Indigenous political systems and their need to reach consensus. In addition these groups were seeking to impose upon Indigenous peoples a political structure that resembled Euro-American governments. McGillivray adopted nationalist discourse as a way to civilize the Creek and also to consolidate his position as leader. Saunt illustrates how McGillivray's life, his plantation holdings, Western style residence, utilization of African slaves, appreciation for literature, and his treaties and service for the U.S. and Spain demonstrated his commitment to construct a Creek nationalism based upon western principles.⁷⁰ The Creek leader's fondness for reading and writing were central to his ability to consolidate power. His letters to the other Creeks, the Spanish and the U.S. placed him in a position to be the spokesperson of the nation. With this ability to communicate to various parties McGillivray was an important actor in foreign policy. After his death, being literate was seen as a prerequisite for Creek headmen seeking to take up his mantle.⁷¹ Nevertheless, McGillivray's frustrated ambitions led to his distant and disillusioned demeanor during the years of his life.⁷²

Saunt has portrayed Bowles' campaigns as resistance movements against the "New Order" promoted by McGillivray and the U.S.⁷³ The British adventurer is thus positioned as the champion of the Lower Creeks and Seminoles against Upper Creek centralization efforts. However, this narrative should be problematized when Bowles' goals and motives are considered. While Bowles rhetorically criticized McGillivray's aspirations for power and his duplicity with the U.S. and land speculators, Bowles nonetheless sought the same power as his rival.⁷⁴ Historians have even suggested that Bowles' vision for "Muskogee" was influenced by McGillivray's own designs to craft a civilized Indian nation.⁷⁵ At first glance the British

adventurer's use of nationalistic language was merely a pretext for his filibustering efforts in the Southeast in order to gain wealth and favor from Bahamian traders and the British government. However Bowles did invest considerable intellectual effort in crafting the contours of Muskogee. The project only developed superficially because his Indigenous allies never shared the desire to construct the nation of Muskogee, at least upon western terms. Nonetheless, similar to McGillivray among the Upper Creek, Bowles did propagate nationalist discourse among Lower Creek and Seminoles.

Bowles embarked upon the creation of the "State Muskogee" through his official correspondence, legal codes, and military forces. As the "Director General," the filibuster often wrote to Spanish, British, and American officials. He presented himself as the official representative of Muskogee with varying degrees of acceptance. Spanish authorities viewed him as illegitimate while the British were willing to acknowledge him only if it proved convenient to their designs. Despite skepticism in Bowles' leadership claims, the volume of letters between the East Florida governor and the captain general in Cuba prove the Spanish did take him seriously as a threat. In addition to written correspondence to colonial leaders, Bowles often issued proclamations, especially declarations of war. Against the Spanish he stated that their present state of belligerency was due to the King's "evil intentions against this nation (Muskogee)."⁷⁶ In a communiqué to the U.S., Bowles threatened the U.S. if they supported any efforts to "subvert or change the sovereignty" of Muskogee.⁷⁷ Within the same document he offers an alliance while simultaneously threatening a declaration of war. Bowles' writing is filled with legalistic language as he cites various treaties and the "law of nations." Numerous statements addressed topics ranging from the free trade status of Muskogee to disapproval of

U.S.-Spanish treaty agreements.⁷⁸ As Director General, Bowles desired to write a constitution and to begin the publication of a newspaper. Since Bowles believed that “printing was a characteristic of civilization” he sought the services of English printer John Owen.⁷⁹ However, the *Bahama Gazette* proved a more attractive employer for Owen and Bowles was left without the means to publish his documents. The loss of the newspaper was indeed a setback since scholars have discussed the importance of print capitalism in creating a national consciousness.⁸⁰ Bowles also had a respect for the creation of national laws and attempted to enforce his own legal codes.⁸¹ He had drawn up documents pertaining to the conduct of his privateers in the Muskogee Navy.⁸² In an incident over furniture with a subordinate, Hugh Ferguson, Bowles threatened him with prosecution under Muskogee law.⁸³ In addition to legal codes, the British adventurer had claimed the existence of elections, crafted symbols such as the Muskogee flag, and constructed two Muskogee ports on the Gulf of Mexico that allowed free trade with friendly nations. It is only possible to surmise the evolution of these institutions and the State of Muskogee had Bowles been more successful.

At the turn of the century, larger processes such as nationalism took root in the Atlantic World. Although both Floridas were on the Spanish imperial periphery, these territories were nonetheless accessible and in constant contact with the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa. In comparison to an interior colony such as New Mexico, Florida received relatively swift communication and reinforcements from Cuba and goods from other North American ports and even London via the Atlantic trade routes. Bowles’ travels illustrated how quickly Caribbean based ships could reach West Florida. In other words, Florida remained a borderlands yet positioned in close proximity to strong transnational political, social, and economic trends of the

period. The second Spanish Florida period is often portrayed as a respite from the processes mentioned above which took hold once the U.S. annexed the territory in 1821 thus ushering in a new order. However, this work argues that these changes were rooted much earlier and were in constant dialogue and negotiation with established structures.

3.3 Indigenous Borderlands

Despite McGillivray's and Bowles' respective efforts, neither figure managed to centralize power over Southeastern Indigenous peoples or impose a nationalist structure. Even established national powers such as the U.S. and Spain who claimed jurisdiction in Florida were unable to control its physical and social boundaries. The Southeast continued to be characterized by mobility of not only Indigenous peoples but also numerous Euro-Americans and Africans.⁸⁴ Bowles' campaigns underscored the interaction and contact between various peoples. For example, his mercenaries, although never numerous, were present among Indigenous settlements, especially in Mikasuki. When Ferguson became disillusioned with the British adventurer and eventually abandoned him, he disclosed that the filibuster had approximately twelve white followers.⁸⁵ Francis Philip Fatio Jr.'s account of his trip to Mikasuki describes a few of Bowles' Euro-American adherents as well as a ship captain bringing in trade goods from Georgia.⁸⁶ Towards the end of 1801 Edward Wanton was writing on the behalf of Lewis Joe, a Frenchman having been "an inhabitant of Latchua Amongst the Indians."⁸⁷ The man claimed he had lived among the Seminoles for three years, which would coincide with the first few months of Bowles return in 1798. In all likelihood the man may have been another partisan who withdrew to Alachua. Euro-Americans were not the only ones traversing political, social, and

geographic boundaries. African slaves and refugees through their escape from Euro-American settlements or seizure during raids subsequently gained residency among the Seminoles. Fatio Jr. recalled that in Mikasuki he encountered recently seized Africans residing there. Various Indigenous groups had long traversed the region in seasonal patterns or established more sedentary settlements. The Seminoles had already demonstrated their mobility when in the middle of the eighteenth century they had immigrated to Florida and maintained contacts with the Lower Creeks.

Nations sought to control the movements of various peoples through mechanisms such as the Treaty of New York and the 1795 Pickney Treaty.⁸⁸ However, raiding and the seizure of property represented an even more serious threat than various groups' physical mobility. Destruction and acquisition of citizens' possessions illustrated that national power was limited and control of borders illusionary. Captive taking and raiding were prime indicators of Euro-American national weakness and demonstrated that a region operated under different socio-economic systems. Brain Delay writes that Andrew Jackson utilized incidents of Indigenous raiding to condemn the Spanish for failing to uphold the "laws of nations" on the Florida-Georgia border. With this justification the U.S. invaded northern Florida and attacked Spanish, Seminole, and African settlements in what became known the First U.S.-Seminole War.⁸⁹ Delay argues that this pattern, the undermining of national legitimacy due to continued Indigenous autonomy, would be an important component of the 1846 U.S.-Mexico War.

During the Spanish colonial period in the Southwestern Borderlands, captive taking and the adoption of slaves facilitated diplomatic, cultural, and economic exchanges.⁹⁰ Indigenous groups and Europeans found a middle ground in their negotiations through shared notions of

honor and gender as well as the important roles played by captives as intercultural mediators.⁹¹

In Texas, Barr argues that the Spanish were confronted with an imbalance in the region's power dynamics and were forced to negotiate on Indigenous terms. Lacking a strong market economy in the region, Indigenous and European groups seized goods that could not be sufficiently acquired through trade.⁹²

A market economy based on the export commodity of deerskins made the Florida Borderlands different from the Southwestern Borderlands. It also explains why captive taking in the former occurred on a much smaller scale. Goods could be acquired through trade, but the Spanish and the Panton, Leslie, and Company had difficulty meeting demand and in some cases placed an embargo on Indigenous trade during periods of conflict. The suspension of trade, as was the case in 1801-1802, also provided an added incentive for further raids upon plantations.⁹³ While scholars such as Kenneth Porter and Kevin Mulroy have argued that Africans among the Seminole experienced a different type of slavery described as a form of "democratic feudalism," nonetheless slaves were still commodities with a recognized value. For instance in the aftermath of a particular raid in 1801, John Forrester questioned the Seminole leader Payne as to whether he was involved in the act. He explained that it must have been the work of white "vagabonds," likely Bowles partisans, not the Seminoles since it was horses that were stolen rather "Negroes." In his opinion, if Indigenous peoples had been involved they would have seized the slaves not the horses.⁹⁴ Payne's statement highlights the value placed upon African slaves, often a specific monetary sum. Seminoles were in constant contact with traders and lived in the vicinity of planters, groups responsible for the commodification and sale of African slaves.⁹⁵ Native peoples were frequently asked to retrieve runaway or seized slaves and received ransom

payments. Indigenous slavery had existed at the beginning of the eighteenth century but its practice soon faded and eventually only Africans were ransomed, with some noted exceptions. While it is correct to argue that the Seminoles never adopted chattel slavery, the frequent ransoming of African slaves categorized them as property similar to horses and cattle.

Spanish concern over Indigenous raiding took an urgent tone during the waning years of Bowles' final campaign. However, the impetus for the raids came from the Mikasuki and their headman Kinache, an ally of the British adventurer. Bowles' power came from his association with the Indigenous leader and not the other way around. From the Mikasuki perspective Bowles' enemies were also their rivals and they maintained an uneasy peace with the Spanish while attempting to keep their independence from the Creeks.⁹⁶ From their base in northern Florida near Lake Miccosukee, the Mikasuki were one of the most politically and militarily powerful groups that were later considered Seminoles. During the First U.S.-Seminole War, the population of the Mikasuki was roughly 1,000. Similar to Payne, Kinache owned property including cattle and African slaves. While neighboring headman John Cannard was known for harsh and oppressive treatment of slaves, Kinache did not practice chattel slavery, although his negotiations for the return of captured slaves demonstrated that he knew Euro-American commodified slaves.⁹⁷

In contrast to the Alachua Seminoles, the Mikasuki did not assign as much importance to their Spanish alliance. Relations between both groups reached a nadir with the August 1801 raid on the Fatio plantation and the subsequent capture of the Bonelli family in 1802.⁹⁸ Before the conflict, Creek leader John Galphin had warned that the Mikasuki remained the only Indigenous group in the area opposing the Spanish, although he had predicted Mikasuki fears over a possible

U.S. invasion would drive them back to the Spanish.⁹⁹ His analysis proved somewhat inaccurate and in the immediate aftermath of the Fatio slaves' seizure U.S. agent Timothy Bernard reported that the arrest of Mikasuki leader Macloggy, considered second-in-command to Kinache and probably his brother, had motivated the raid.¹⁰⁰ Cannard also wrote to Governor White informing him that the release of jailed headman would cease all hostilities and procure the release of the slaves.¹⁰¹ These accounts, though incomplete, problematize narratives that stress Bowles' role as the sole motivating factor in the turmoil. As Fatio and the Spanish would come to appreciate, Kinache not Bowles drove the negotiations for the release of the slaves.

Towards the end of August 1801, Fatio discovered that sixteen Mikasuki Seminole had left his plantation with thirty-three African slaves.¹⁰² While raids of plantations occurred throughout the Southeastern Borderlands, the Fatio case, due to the planter's prominence and the number of slaves taken, received special attention. Bernard counseled that the Spanish follow the proper channels in retrieving the slaves and meet the ransom demands.¹⁰³ In other words, Fatio and the Spanish would have to operate on Mukasuki terms. Indigenous leaders such as Cannard and Payne were prodded to intercede on Fatio's behalf. Eventually trader and Spanish agent Forrester was appointed as the representative in the ensuing negotiations, not only for Fatio but for other aggrieved planters as well.¹⁰⁴ Spanish subjects on the St. Johns River were apprehensive after the incident and more than a week later an Indigenous party claiming to be hunting were detained and warned to leave.¹⁰⁵ Colonial officials pressured their Alachua Seminole allies. The Spanish suspected Payne and Bowleg of covertly selling munitions to the Mikasuki.¹⁰⁶ A detailed account of a delegation sent to Mikasuki to negotiate the release of the slaves was recorded in letters from Fatio Jr. to his father. Despite the son's condescending tone

and his desire to illustrate to his father his capabilities, the letters provide valuable insight. Fatio Jr. traveled first to Alachua and met with Payne, Bowleg, and Forrester and was subsequently offered an escort by the Seminole headman to meet Bowles and Kinache.¹⁰⁷ Since he needed to inform his father and the Spanish governor of these developments the group did not leave until a month later.¹⁰⁸

Although Fatio Jr.'s journey to Mikasuki did not result in the release of the African slaves his experience sheds light on the Alachua Seminoles' influence with the Mikasuki, Bowles' power, and Kinache's motives behind the raid. While Payne had promised to handle the situation, Fatio Jr. wrote that the Alachua leader was ineffective and did not seem to have any authority among the Mikasuki. Bowleg seemed more concerned with carrying on a clandestine trade in munitions. When he did speak in favor of Fatio, the Mikasuki rebuked him and asked why the matter was of any relevance to him.¹⁰⁹ Fatio Jr. was then led to Bowles and the two carried on a conversation in which they discovered they had previously been acquaintances in New York. After listening to Bowles' plans for Muskogee, undoubtedly a presentation he regularly gave, Fatio inquired about the slaves. Bowles responded that he did not have the authority to release the captured slaves, implying that it was Kinache's decision. Although Fatio Jr. likely viewed Bowles' reply as evasive, in all likelihood it was the truth. Through his travels in the region, Fatio Jr. had observed that the Mikasuki with the exception of Kinache were resentful of Bowles. His presence was a source of difficulty with the colonial powers and the Mikasuki were burdened with maintaining his mercenary band. When Fatio Jr. finally received an audience with Kinache, the Indigenous leader bluntly expressed his grievances against the Spanish. He felt they had raided his settlements and harmed his people, and consequently his

brother had been sent to St. Marks to protest when he was captured and imprisoned. Kinache made Fatio Jr. aware that he had the power to hold him in retaliation but he would allow him to leave. In addition to his disdain, the Mikasuki headman disclosed that he had little respect for Spanish military prowess. They felt they were like “old women who did not dare to fight but could only scold.”¹¹⁰ During a council Kinache and the other leaders decided not to accept the ransom and continued holding the slaves.¹¹¹

By early 1802 further raids led to increased animosity between the Mikasuki and the Spanish, especially after the capture of Joseph Bonelli’s family from the Matanzas region. Bonelli had been part of the Mediterranean contingent recruited to Andrew Turnbull’s large plantation during the British Florida period. Philip Solana testified, years later, that Thomas Bonelli, Joseph’s son, had been killed in the encounter and his body taken to the San Augustine market place.¹¹² Maria Antonia Bonelli was thirteen years old when she and her mother and siblings were captured. She recounted her experience in 1835 to the St. Johns County Justice of the Peace, Joseph S. Sánchez, during hearings to determine whether Mikasuki had been located within the territorial boundaries of Spanish Florida before 1821. She describes an arduous four-day journey with a Mikasuki party that could not travel fast because they had to carry the young captives. Once they arrived at Mikasuki, Indigenous women came and met the family. Bonelli unfortunately does not delve into daily life among the Mikasuki, especially whether any of the captives were in the process of being adopted into Seminole society, a possibility for some captives. Sánchez stated that Bonelli’s experiences were so “peculiar” and “barbarous” that Bonelli will never forget them until she dies.¹¹³ However the judge did not feel it was proper to detail any specific incidents at Mikasuki, considering that as a woman living among a group

considered “barbarous” and “savage” the experience could be interpreted as a stain upon Mary’s honor and virtue. As Brooks notes, in the Southwest Borderlands redeemed captives were viewed with suspicion by their communities since they feared “barbarous” conditions meant victims were no longer “civilized” and were culturally degraded.¹¹⁴

Joseph Bonelli, similar to Fatio, utilized official channels in order to secure the return of his family. Forrester was once again the designated negotiator and the Alachua Seminoles, especially Payne, were expected to facilitate the discussions. Seven months after the raid, Forrester paid a ransom of 300 pesos for Joseph’s wife Mary and three of the children. However the Mikasuki felt the payment was not adequate and continued to hold Mary and her brother Joseph Jr.¹¹⁵ Forrester slowly began ransoming the captives from the Mikasuki, on the average paying 50 pesos per African slave. However, a notice posted in January 1803 stated that seven individuals, including Fatio and Bonelli, were still seeking thirty-three captives from the Mikasuki.¹¹⁶ Overwhelmingly African slaves made up the majority of the captives and various planters sought to have their property returned. Efforts continued to re-acquire Mary and Joseph: Forrester had written that “a great villain” and his four sons had taken Mary. The Spanish agent’s characterization of the Indigenous man as a nefarious figure aside, this does raise questions whether Mary had become integrated into a Mikasuki family before she was finally ransomed.¹¹⁷ Joseph escaped from Mikasuki and made his way to St. Marks and then Pensacola and eventually returned to San Augustine.¹¹⁸ By late 1803 another 200 pesos had been raised by Bonelli for the release of his daughter. Bowles had already been captured earlier in the year and the issue with Kenache’s brother at least in the eyes of the Spanish had been resolved. The captives were released and Jacobo Dubreuil reported to White that Kenache was satisfied with

the explanation for the death of his brother.¹¹⁹ Although Mary was released back to her family, Mikasuki and Spanish relations remained strained. In 1805 the Mikasuki seized thirty-five cattle as payment for the 160 pesos they felt remained due for Joseph Bonelli despite his escape.¹²⁰ In the ensuing years the conflict between the Spanish and the Mikasuki subsided due to U.S. invasions during the First U.S.-Seminole War.

Captive taking in the nineteenth century Florida Borderlands was mainly restricted to the seizure of Euro-American planters' slaves. In the Bonelli case, the white family only constituted a small faction of the overall captives sought by the Spanish government and local planters: the others were all African slaves and a few free blacks. Although scholars have traditionally focused more on the Seminole raids further north and runaway African slaves from U.S. citizens, Spanish subjects were very concerned with the security of their property. Raiding occurred more frequently when the normal channels of trade, access to John Forbes and Company goods, were restricted. Florida's position in the Atlantic World meant that the captive raiding was imbued with market economy considerations. However, some similarities did exist with the Southwestern Borderlands since the African captives served as important cultural intermediaries between groups whose economic survival was linked. Although it is difficult to delineate the manner in which individual Africans were introduced among the Seminoles, scholars have demonstrated that they served as important advisors, translators, messengers and scouts.

Conclusion

Bowles' life has been fodder for scholars interested in a romanticized version of colonial

Florida history. More recently, historians such as Saunt have argued that Bowles' campaigns represented Lower Creek and Seminole resistance to Upper Creek leaders' centralization efforts. This chapter argues that the events of Bowles' career in the Southeastern Borderlands offers insights into the spread of nationalist discourse, the market economy, and the commodification of land and African slaves. However, while Bowles did threaten the Spanish, U.S., McGillivray, and the John Forbes and Company, Indigenous autonomy was not his primary goal. He sought to construct the "State of Muskogee," encourage Euro-American planters to immigrate, and to "civilize" and convert Southeastern Indigenous peoples. Bowles and his Indigenous allies concentrated their efforts against the Forbes and Company since they had a trade monopoly and indebted their Indigenous clients. Muskogee's Bahamian partners endeavored to break the Forbes monopoly and insert themselves as the primary merchants in the region's deerskin trade. Economic and personal aggrandizement aside, Bowles did devote considerable intellectual capital in constructing the legal basis, symbolism, and military forces of his nation. Although he presented obstacles to the emergent political and economic order, the filibuster nonetheless sought to become a part of the same process.

Concurrently, Indigenous groups such as the Mikasuki utilized Bowles' presence to advance their own agenda against Creek rivals and colonial powers. Captive taking and raids challenged the U.S. and Spain's ability to claim political jurisdiction in the region. Fundamental to a nation's legitimacy is its ability to project power within its territorial borders and to preserve the land and property of its citizens. Mikasuki raids undermined the stability of the plantation system and disrupted the economic designs of various officials and elites. Simultaneously,

Bowles propagated a discourse of Indigenous nationalism while captive taking and raiding became native peoples' main tool to subvert the region's Euro-American nations.

The events highlighting the conflict between the Mikasuki and the Spanish also illuminate Southeastern economic processes. With the exception of the Bonelli incident, the majority of captives were Africans, a reflection of the influence of the Atlantic World economy, which had commodified African slaves. The Florida Borderlands represented a space where more recent notions concerning property, nationalism, and economic exchange collided and existed in dialogue with more established ideas of trade and political decentralization. It was an uneven process where neighboring Indigenous headmen like John Cannard and Kenache could practice different forms of slavery. While Seminoles utilized slaves as advisors and translators they also took part in a system that sold and returned African slaves to traders and planters.

Notes:

¹ William Bowles Declaration of War Against Spain, 5 April 1800, Papeles de Cuba (hereafter cited as PC), microfilm reel 436, P.K.Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY).

² Alternative spellings of the term 'Mikasuki' exist in various colonial documents. Located near Lake Miccosukee in northern Florida, the Mikasuki were initially considered Lower Creek but eventually the U.S. government classified any native peoples in Florida as Seminoles.

³ J. Leitch Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles: Director General of the Creek Nation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967).

⁴ For scholarship that does further examine Bowles Indigenous allies, albeit with a focus on the Cherokee, see: William C. Sturtevant, "The Cherokee Frontiers, the French Revolution, and William Augustus Bowles," in *The Cherokee Indian Nation, a Troubled History*, ed. Duane H. King (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979); Stephanie Pratt, *American Indians in British Art, 1700-1840* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2005). This work discusses Bowles' 1790 journey to London with a Creek and Cherokee delegation. Pratt analyzes the paintings that were commissioned of Bowles and the Indigenous leaders and their propagation of tropes associated with the noble savage and the "white Indian chief."

⁵ Duvon C. Corbitt and John Tate Lanning, "A Letter of Marque Issued by William Augustus Bowles as Director General of the State of Muskogee," *The Journal of Southern History* 11 (May 1945), 246; Lawrence Kinnaid, "The Significance of William Augustus Bowles' Seizure of Panton's Apalachee Store in 1792," *Florida Historical Society* 9 (January 1931). This work stands as an exception to early studies that emphasized Bowles' personal traits and characteristics. Minimizing the focus on Bowles' larger than life persona, Kinnaid provides a straightforward economic analysis that also includes primary source documents.

⁶ Elisha P. Douglass, "The Adventurer Bowles," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 6 (Jan. 1949), 3.

⁷ Lyle N. McAlister, "William Augustus Bowles and the State of Muskogee," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 40 (April 1962). The central thrust of this article is how Bowles' operations in Florida illustrated Spain's limited power in the Florida Borderlands.

⁸ Lyle N. McAlister, "The Marine Forces of William Augustus Bowles and His "State of Muskogee" Illustrative Documents," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 32 (April 1962), 4.

⁹ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 4.

¹⁰ David H. White, "The Spaniards and William Augustus Bowles in Florida, 1799-1803," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 54 (October 1975), 145.

¹¹ Ibid, 12.

¹² Ibid, 97. Wright Jr. argues that Bowles was not the only person devising a strategy to utilize Southeastern Indigenous peoples in order to dislodge the Spanish from the region. He cites the efforts of U.S. Senator William Blount and Indian agent John Chisholm. Additionally Bowles was not the only person of European decent to claim to speak for the Creek, the French brother-in-law of Alexander McGillivray, Louis LeClerc de Milfort, claimed he was the leader of the group.

¹³ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Although the author's analysis is mainly applied to American colonists and U.S. citizens its application to Bowles is appropriate. The British adventurer's adoption of Indigenous dress and his relationship with two Indigenous women seem to signify his immersion into Indigenous society. However, his grasp of Indigenous social and political systems seems to have remained superficial. Bowles continued to believe that once he succeeded in establishing the State of Muskogee that he would attract whites to his nation and that they would civilize the Lower Creek and Seminole. Thus he could simultaneously "play Indian" and fancy himself a great warrior and chief and also claim superiority through his whiteness.

¹⁴ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 149.

¹⁵ J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 140.

¹⁶ Michael Duffy, "The French Revolution and British Attitudes to the West Indian Colonies," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* ed. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 79. The author writes that the consequences of the French revolution on the Caribbean offered both trepidation and opportunity. With the French in a state of confusion, their colonies became vulnerable, however the revolutionary spirit causing slaves to start an uprising in Santo Domingo also raised fears of rebellion in British colonies. Eventually the French emancipated their African slaves and raised free black military units, a measure that the British would adopt as well.

¹⁷ Wright Jr., *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America*, 140.

¹⁸ Kinnaid, "The Significance of William Augustus Bowles' Seizure of Panton's Apalachee Store in 1792," 156. In particular, the author was referring to the 1792 capture of a Panton, Leslie and Company trading post in Apalachee.

¹⁹ Susan M. Deeds, *Defiance and Deference in Mexico's Colonial North: Indians under Spanish Rule in Nueva Vizcaya* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003). The author is specifically referring to Indigenous peoples resistance and agency in northern New Spain; Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). This text emphasizes how seasonal migration was an effective strategy of resistance; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²⁰ Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Seminole Headmen, 06 January 1792, East Florida Papers (hereafter cited as EFP), microfilm reel 43, P.K.Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY). During the episodes with Bowles, the Spanish governor often warned the Lower Creeks and Seminoles for supposedly following the British adventurer. The implication being that any Indigenous actions against the Spanish could not have stemmed from legitimate grievances but from blind allegiance to a white leader that had manipulated them.

²¹ William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola: University of West Florida Press, 1986), 240. Firm partner John Forbes sought to address the debt issue at the Hickory Ground council in early 1803. He sought from the Creek and the Seminoles an agreement that they would sell land to the United States and use the revenues to pay him or if that failed that he would be directly granted land in exchange for the debt.

²² Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 32.

²³ Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Manuel Rodriguez, 06 September 1790, EFP, microfilm reel 47, PKY. The governor writes that Bowles has brought Indians, without specifying which group, to the St. Johns River in order to commit depredations. He does not state their motives for the hostility beyond their association with Bowles; Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Manuel Rodriguez, 08 January 1792, EFP, microfilm reel 47, PKY; Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Richard Lang, 08 January 1792, EFP, microfilm reel 47, PKY.

²⁴ Edward J. Cashin, *Lachlan McGilivray, Indian Trader: The Shaping of the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 71. Influenced by French traders, Scottish and British traders sought to make influential connections among Indigenous peoples through marriages.

²⁵ Theda Perdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 102. Blood does not carry certain traits or determines the cultural identity of a particular group.

²⁶ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 81. The author was specifically referring to scholars who are adherents to the "New Indian History" and have incorporated anthropologists' methodologies and utilized clan and other Creek political and social structures to explain Indigenous behavior. Saunt argues this may not be accurate since actions did not always occur within those social and political parameters

²⁷ Alexander McGillivray to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, 06 September 1790, EFP, microfilm reel 44, PKY. The Spanish governor requested that McGillivray come and see him to explain his actions and the fear that the Creek are now in agreement with the U.S. McGillivray wisely declines the invitation for "health reasons" and states that any agreements with the U.S. will not impact Creek and Spanish agreements.

²⁸ Alexander McGillivray to Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, 03 August 1786, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

²⁹ Michael D. Green, "Alexander McGillivray," in *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity*, ed. Russell David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 58; Robert Leslie Declaration, 27 February 1792, PC, microfilm reel 379, PKY. As an eyewitness to the sacking of the St. Marks trading post by Bowles and his Indigenous allies, Leslie states that one of the Indigenous men associated with Bowles voiced his disgust with McGillivray and the Pantón, Leslie, and Company trading firm.

³⁰ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 82.

³¹ Ibid, 86.

³² Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 140; Ibid, 149 Bowles believed that white immigration and intermarriage with the Indigenous peoples would eventually lead to Creek and Seminole assimilation to Euro-American society. His invitation to Richard Lang, William Jones, and Dr. Reddington, ringleaders of a 1795 rebellion in East Florida, illustrates this point.

³³ Ibid, 102.

³⁴ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 79.

³⁵ Alexander McGillivray to Arturo O'Neil, 24 July 1785, PC, microfilm reel 436, PKY. McGillivray argues that for the Spanish to maintain the loyalty of not only the Creek but of all Southeastern borderland peoples they must maintain the flow of goods. Unable to produce on the scale of the British, the Creek headman argues that their best course of action is to retain the services of Pantón, Leslie, and Company.

³⁶ Alan Galloway, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 145.

³⁷ There were various examples of unauthorized traders entering Seminole and Lower Creek settlements. Around the time of Bowles early 1790s campaign, the cattle trader James Allen left his assigned trading territory on the St. Marys River and entered Alachua to exchange goods, much to the consternation of Forrester and the East Florida governor. There were also reports that he was part of a sinister plot to induce the Seminoles to commit depredations, especially against his associates; Richard Lang to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, 08 December 1790, EFP, microfilm reel 82, PKY; Ojoyasque and Sojoyane Statement, 1791, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY; John Forrester to John Leslie; August 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY; John Forrester to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, 10 August 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY; John Forrester to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, 14 August 1793, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY.

³⁸ Enriqu  White to Payne, 26 May 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY; Enriqu  White to Marques de Someruelos, 22 September 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 11, PKY. The East Florida governor suspended trade to the Alachua Seminoles during the conflict with the Mikasuki and Bowles. Once normal relations were re-established later that year the Seminole went to St. Augustine to receive their presents, which caused the Spanish some difficulty in supplying them.

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- ³⁹ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 59. The author writes that Bowles had informed the Seminoles and Lower Creeks that he had just returned from London with a greeting from the king. Wright Jr. also states that Bowles may have possibly stated that he was appointed superintendent of the southern Indians; Luis de las Casas to Arturo O'Neill, 18 November 1791, PC, microfilm reel 198, PKY. Included in this bundle of documents outlining Bowles activities is a statement by McGillivray that Bowles is not an agent of the British government. He is clearly countering the adventurers' attempts to present himself as a British representative; Vicente Folch to Thomas Portell, 17 August 1799, PC, microfilm reel 382, PKY. West Florida Governor Folch reports that Bowles is the newly appointed British agent to the Creeks.
- ⁴⁰ Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to Payne, 06 January 1792, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ⁴¹ Creek Headmen to Benjamin Hawkins, 25 November 1799, PC, microfilm reel 86, PKY. In a talk given to Hawkins, Creek leaders write that Bowles is a liar and fraud and the only reason he has not been brought to justice is that he is not Creek. However, they also write that if the British were to send a legitimate representative of their government then that person would be welcomed. In regards to the Spanish, the headmen state that as long as the Panton, Leslie, and Company continue to supply trade then they will remain on good terms with the colonial government.
- ⁴² William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola University of West Florida Press, 1986), 151.
- ⁴³ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 94.
- ⁴⁴ David Patrick Geggus, "Slavery, War, and Revolution in the Greater Caribbean, 1789-1815," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 7.
- ⁴⁵ Duffy, "The French Revolution and British Attitudes to the West Indian Colonies," 84.
- ⁴⁶ Jane Landers, "Rebellion and Royalism in Spanish Florida: The French Revolution on Spain's Northern Colonial Frontier," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 160. Many of the Euro-American conspirators in Florida were pardoned once the revolution ended. The author writes that despite the lack of success of the plot it nonetheless leveled damage to the economic development of the colony.
- ⁴⁷ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 115.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, 114; Bowles Proclamation, 31 October 1799, PC, microfilm reel 382, PKY. The British adventurer states that any persons attempting to enforce the Spanish-U.S. treaty must depart Muskogee; William Augustus Bowles to Vicente Folch, 2 July 1800, PC, microfilm reel 60, PKY.
- ⁴⁹ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 116.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid, 118. Indigenous groups' participation in the filibuster's endeavors hinged on his ability to fulfill his promises to rival Panton, Leslie, and Company's commercial activity. The "election" of Bowles was most likely an agreement that he could reside in the area in order to facilitate trade; William Augustus Bowles to Milord, June 1800, PC, microfilm reel 83, PKY.
- ⁵¹ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 233.
- ⁵² Vicente Folch to Marqués Casa Calvo, 2 June 1800, PC, microfilm reel 83, PKY.
- ⁵³ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 145. Bowles began to issue letters of marque to Nassau based ships seeking to target isolated Spanish ships near West Florida. Captains were given official commissions and procedures were created for dividing the spoils. Around twelve Spanish ships and their cargoes were seized by 1802.
- ⁵⁴ During this period the Panton, Leslie, and Company experienced a re-organization with the death of William Panton. John Forbes, also present at the Hickory Ground conference, had become the head of the company which was consequently renamed the John Forbes and Company.

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- ⁵⁵ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 167.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid, 166; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 241.
- ⁵⁷ Bowles was arrested and placed under Spanish custody and taken to Governor Folch in New Orleans. He would die over two years later as a prisoner in Havana's Morro Castle.
- ⁵⁸ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 243.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, 244. The sale of land was used to pay debts with the U.S. factory, the Southeastern trading post.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid, 247. Forbes and Company in 1804 managed to gain a land grant from the Apalachicola Seminoles in order to pay debts and claims stemming from the seizure of the St. Marks store.
- ⁶¹ Brian Delay, "Independent Indians and the U.S.-Mexican War," *The American Historical Review* 112 (February 2007), 36.
- ⁶² United States Congress, *American State Papers*, 38 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing office, 1832-1861), Indian Affairs, vol. 1, 81.
- ⁶³ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 194. Several years following the agreement, Creek leaders continued to dispute the terms of the Treaty of New York.
- ⁶⁴ *American State Papers*, Indian Affairs, vol. 1, 82.
- ⁶⁵ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 81; Claudio Saunt, "'The English Has Now a Mind to Make Slaves of Them All': Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problem of Slavery," *American Indian Quarterly* 22 (Winter - Spring, 1998), 166. The author writes that McGillivray had a history of cooperating in the enslavement of Africans, especially in apprehending runaway slaves. He had record of returning slaves for both the U.S. and the Spanish.
- ⁶⁶ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 202; Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 132; Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 19. The author writes that Hawkins often took credit for "civilizing" the Creek. He cites the creation of a police system, ending blood revenge, and establishing the Creek National Council as part of his accomplishments. However, Robbie Ethridge states that Hawkins' stature and efforts among the Creeks were minimal. The institutions that Hawkins claimed having a hand in creating were modeled after pre-existing Creek organizations.
- ⁶⁷ *American State Papers*, Indian Affairs, vol. 1, 81.
- ⁶⁸ Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
- ⁶⁹ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 67.
- ⁷⁰ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 67-80
- ⁷¹ Ibid, 188.
- ⁷² Ibid, 87. The author writes that McGillivray was exceedingly depressed over his inability to stem Bowles activities and the fact that the British adventurer was able to recruit Upper Creeks. Towards the end of his life he moved further south into Spanish territory outside of the center of Upper Creek lands.
- ⁷³ Ibid, 86.
- ⁷⁴ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 58; William Bowles Declaration, 31 October 1799, PC, microfilm reel 382, PKY. Bowles' declaration of war against the United States mirrored the charges he leveled against McGillivray, despite his death years earlier. The British adventurer writes that McGillivray was an accomplice to both the United States and the land speculators in the Yazoo Company against the Creeks.
- ⁷⁵ Lawrence Kinnaird, "International Rivalry in the Creek Country: Part I. The Ascendency of Alexander McGillivray, 1783-1789," *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly* 10 (October 1931), 73; McAlister, "The Marine Forces of William Augustus Bowles and His 'State of Muskogee' Illustrative Documents," 4.
- ⁷⁶ William Bowles Declaration of War Against Spain, 5 April 1800, PC, microfilm reel 436, PKY.

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- ⁷⁷ William Bowles Declaration, 31 October 1799, PC, microfilm reel 382, PKY. A lengthy and interesting document in which Bowles argues against the injustice of U.S. policy towards Indigenous peoples. He states that the American Revolution and the subsequent treaty with Great Britain never gave the U.S. jurisdiction over Southeastern Indigenous lands. The King of England never exercised control over these lands and could not transfer control to the U.S. Citing various treaties, such as the Treaty of New York, the British adventurer states, that the U.S. broke its promises to the Indians and failed to live up to its obligations, especially the need to stop settlers' acquisition of native peoples' land. When the colonists committed crimes against Indigenous peoples the U.S. failed to act but when natives resist they are labeled murderers. Bowles also takes note of the literature that "scandalously vilifying the character of the Indians accusing them with crimes many of which your own people alone were guilty." He then offers the U.S. the opportunity to ally against Spain or face the consequences of a war with Muskogee.
- ⁷⁸ William Bowles Declaration of Trade Status, date unknown, PC, microfilm reel 436, PKY; William Bowles Declaration Concerning U.S.-Spanish Treaty, date unknown, PC, microfilm reel 436, PKY.
- ⁷⁹ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 103.
- ⁸⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 44.
- ⁸¹ Francis Philip Fatio Jr. to Francis Philip Fatio, 12 November 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY. On a mission to Mikasuki, Fatio's son attempted to recover the family's African slaves. He spoke with Bowles and insisted on the return of the property. The British adventurer stated that he could not return the slaves because of they had broken the law of "the State of Muscogy, a free independent and sovereign nation."
- ⁸² Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 145.
- ⁸³ Hugh Ferguson to William Bowles, 29 January 1800, PC, microfilm reel 83, PKY. Apparently Ferguson responded to Bowles by asserting that he cannot be prosecuted since no laws or authority exist.
- ⁸⁴ Although the Southwest also witnessed the mobility of the Indigenous peoples and Spanish settlers, cases of African and Euro-American groups being part of this process were less frequent.
- ⁸⁵ Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles*, 134.
- ⁸⁶ Francis Philip Fatio Jr. to Francis Philip Fatio, 12 November 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY.
- ⁸⁷ Edward Wanton to Enrique White, 25 December 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY.
- ⁸⁸ United States Congress, *American State Papers*, 38 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing office, 1832-1861), Foreign Affairs, vol. 1, 547. The fifth article of the Pickney Treaty states that both the U.S. and Spain will control the Indigenous nations within their boundaries. This stipulation is referring to the raiding of property occurring on the Florida and Georgia border.
- ⁸⁹ Brian Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 3. Delay's work primarily re-conceptualizes the U.S.-Mexico War from simply a conflict between two nation-states to a broader conflict that involved autonomous Indigenous groups. Delay discusses Andrew Jackson's involvement in Florida and Texas as a context for events that later transpired in the Southwest.
- ⁹⁰ Indigenous slavery in general operated on different set of assumptions than chattel slavery, for instance the limited tenure of a slave and the fact that their offspring did not inherit the status of their parents. Especially important is the fact that slaves could be adopted into Indigenous communities.
- ⁹¹ James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 16.
- ⁹² Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 6.
- ⁹³ Enrique White to Vicente Folch, 12 September 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY; Enrique White to Payne, 26 May 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. Document alludes to potential negotiations with the Seminoles in order to restore trade; Enrique White to Marques de Someruelos, 22 September 1802, EFP,

microfilm reel 11, PKY. The governor states that Alachua Seminole headman Payne will be coming to San Augustine with 300 to 400 Indians to receive gifts, effectively ending the trade embargo.

⁹⁴ John Forrester to Enrique White, 07 July 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 44, PKY.

⁹⁵ Although the Panton, Leslie, and Company specialized in the deerskin trade they did own and trade slaves that worked on their properties or stores. Employees such as William Lawrence also participated in the importation of African slaves.

⁹⁶ James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 19. According to the author Kinache was among the Indigenous leaders upset with the British evacuation of Florida and the return of the Spanish. Although the Spanish and the Mikasuki were able to negotiate despite periods of conflict, their relationship remained tenuous; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 206. With the formation of the Creek National Council in 1800, the Mikasuki resisted Creek efforts to claim jurisdiction over their settlement.

⁹⁷ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 133. Although Saunt cites evidence that Cannard was abusive there were also cases of Cannard placing trust and authority upon his slaves.

⁹⁸ In both Spanish and U.S. documents Bonelli is often spelled as Bonelly.

⁹⁹ John Galphin to Vicente Folch, June 1800, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY.

¹⁰⁰ Timothy Bernard to Enrique White, 27 September 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. Through the use of informants and information from John Galphin, the U.S. official determined that the Mikasuki attack was motivated by the confinement of one of their leaders.

¹⁰¹ John Cannard to Enrique White, 02 October 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

¹⁰² John Forrester to Enrique White, 31 August 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. Early reports illustrate that the raid affected various planters and they had not identified the perpetrators.

¹⁰³ Timothy Bernard to Enrique White, 27 September 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

¹⁰⁴ Francis Philip Fatio Statement, 16 July 1802, James David Glunt Papers (hereafter cited as JDGP), Box 1, PKY. This document not only authorizes Forrester to act as Fatio's agent but also lists the names of the seized thirty-eight slaves. Additionally, there is a ledger of the amount of funds utilized for the ransom of slaves.

¹⁰⁵ John Forrester to Enrique White, 10 September 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

¹⁰⁶ John Forrester to Enrique White, 16 September 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY; Francis Philip Fatio Jr. to Francis Philip Fatio, 12 November 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY. Fatio's son states that he witnessed Bowleg taking munitions on their trip to Mikasuki; Marques de Someruelos to Enrique White, 19 December 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 35, PKY. In a letter from the captain general to the governor he mentions that Alachua is selling munitions to the Mikasuki.

¹⁰⁷ The Alachua Seminoles sought to demonstrate their cooperation in order to preserve stable relations with the Spanish and continued access to trade goods. On the other hand, the Seminoles then sold the munitions they acquired from the Spanish to the Mikasuki. Due to their strategic and vulnerable position the Seminoles must have become adept at balancing their relationship with various powers.

¹⁰⁸ Francis Philip Fatio Jr. to Francis Philip Fatio, 02 October 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY.

¹⁰⁹ Fatio's unflattering account of the Alachua Seminole headmen's diplomatic skills may be due to his efforts to explain or excuse his failure in returning the African slaves to his father.

¹¹⁰ Francis Philip Fatio Jr. to Francis Philip Fatio, 12 November 1801, EFP, microfilm reel 83, PKY.

¹¹¹ The Mikasuki argued that they would only release the captives once they negotiated with Fatio Sr., the true owner of the slaves.

¹¹² Gabriel M. Perpall Testimony, 07 October 1835, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (hereafter cited as BIA), RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, National Archives (hereafter cited as NA)

¹¹³ Mary Antonia Bonelli Testimony, 01 October 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA. She recalls that the ransom had been paid in dollars.

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- ¹¹⁴ Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, 102.
- ¹¹⁵ John Forrester to Enrique White, 07 September 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ¹¹⁶ Notice of Captives in Mikasuki, 27 January 1803, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ¹¹⁷ John Forrester to Enrique White, 07 September 1802, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ¹¹⁸ Mary Antonia Bonelli Testimony, 01 October 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA.
- ¹¹⁹ Jacobo Dubreuil to Enrique White, 26 October 1803, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.
- ¹²⁰ Ignacio Balderas to Enrique White, 02 June 1805, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY; Ignacio Balderas to Enrique White, 22 July 1806, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY

Chapter 4

“LA REPÚBLICA DE BANDIDOS”: CHALLENGING COLONIAL AND NATIONAL BOUNDARIES IN THE FLORIDA BORDERLANDS, 1812 to 1817

You, no doubt, have already been informed that the notorious Woodbine has recently made his appearance again at the mouth of the Apalachicola, and that he has an agent now among the Seminole Indians and negroes in that quarter, stirring them up to acts of hostility against this country; and that Woodbine himself has gone, in an armed vessel, to some part of the West Indies for supplies. Connected with this fact is another, which may serve as an intimation of the future conduct of those people, when once in possession of the supplies which it is said they expect on the return of Woodbine. About ten or twelve days ago, a small party of those Indians entered the frontier of Wayne county, and stole two horses and some cattle. They were pursued by some of the inhabitants, who peaceably demanded a restoration of the stolen property; and, instead of a compliance on the part of the Indians, they immediately fired upon the whites, who retired without returning a shot. One of the whites was mortally wounded.

David B. Mitchell, 1817¹

During the War of 1812, British alliances with Seminoles, Creeks, and Africans in West Florida ignited fears similar to those that William Augustus Bowles' expeditions had instilled among local officials a decade previously. The adventurer had promised Indigenous leaders they would receive British political and military assistance in their efforts to undermine the power of colonial authorities and the Panton, Leslie, and Company trading monopoly. However, the British were only interested in keeping Bowles and Southeastern Indigenous groups in reserve, in case the geopolitical situation warranted the need for North American allies. Despite considerable apprehension in the region, Bowles never received any substantial support and thus never fulfilled his promises to the Apalachicola Seminoles and Lower Creeks, spelling the end of his filibustering career. His downfall can be attributed, among other factors, to a lack of timing.

British foreign policy never aligned with the goals and agendas of Bowles, the Seminoles, and the Lower Creeks. Several years later, after the death of Bowles, the strategic interests of the British and Indian nations came into greater alignment as the War of 1812 convinced the British of the need for Indigenous allies.

British Royal Marine Colonel Edward Nicolls and George Woodbine, a trader and agent, had raised the threat of African, British, and Indigenous military cooperation through their alliances and recruitment. Georgia Governor David B. Mitchell and other U.S. officials viewed this coalition with much apprehension, and they perceived Nicolls and Woodbine as villainous white men who sought to manipulate naïve and unsophisticated yet dangerous Indians and Africans.² The British allied themselves with the Seminoles, Lower Creeks, and Creek Red Sticks while promising freedom to Africans willing to join their regiments. Indigenous groups from the Great Lakes region down to the Southeastern Borderlands were cognizant of the pressures of U.S. expansion and sometimes sought to maintain alliances with British forces in Canada and the Caribbean.³ Native peoples had become adept at utilizing colonial rivalries in order to gain important supplies such as weapons. The continuing British presence in North America rankled U.S. officials because the Europeans' involvement with Indigenous peoples inhibited expansionist policies. Similarly, Spain's reign in Florida was a continual threat because their tenuous or non-existent control over the Florida interior enabled the development of autonomous African and Indigenous settlements. A prime example of their autonomy in Spanish territory was the Prospect Bluff installation on the Apalachicola River, known as the "Negro Fort." Stocked with artillery and left to African and Indigenous fighters, the base further

bolstered Florida's reputation among Euro-Americans for harboring dangerous non-white groups.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, while the U.S. sought to project its power through territorial expansion, it also structured its society through racialized and gendered hierarchies. The Prospect Bluff fort was a direct challenge to this emergent social, political, and economic order. Subordinate peoples typically resisted various forms of subjugation through their ability to shape and control aspects of their lives in both subtle and more apparent actions. However, Prospect Bluff represented a rare manifestation of overt coordinated military resistance on a large scale.⁴ Due to the West Florida geopolitical situation during the War of 1812, Indigenous and African peoples were able to overcome various obstacles to mass the necessary resources to sustain a prolonged confrontation with colonial powers.

The "Negro Fort" constituted a threat to the U.S. on multiple levels. Slavery, a labor system utilized for the plantation export economy, was undermined by the presence of free Africans and runaway slaves demonstrating their capacity to live independently while constructing their own sociopolitical systems. This ran counter to planters' propaganda justifying slavery because slaves' intellectual inferiority left them unfit for self-government. More concretely, Florida offered a possible destination for runaway slaves in Georgia and surrounding territories, as had been the case during the 1739 Stono Rebellion. The more recent 1791 Santo Domingo revolt seemingly foreshadowed future violent rebellions against slaveholders throughout the entire Caribbean. Lower Creeks, Red Sticks, and Seminoles, also present at Apalachicola, compounded the threat. As the U.S. sought to consolidate its land within Georgia and organize the Alabama and Mississippi territories, the various Creek factions resisted

expansion and land displacement. After Andrew Jackson's 1814 Battle of Horseshoe Creek, the Creek Red Sticks, a group committed to warding off U.S. expansion and influence, also sought refuge in Florida and further complicated an increasingly tense geopolitical situation.

In addition to African and Indigenous peoples crossing physical borders, they also crossed metaphorical boundaries. U.S. colonialism encouraged sociopolitical divisions among and within groups it deemed subordinate. For instance, Andrew Jackson benefited from the fact that the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was part of a Creek Civil War and that he had Cherokee allies.⁵ For this reason, the multi-ethnic coalition at Prospect Bluff was alarming because it signaled the joint cooperation of various Indigenous and African peoples, which Southern planters feared would destabilize the region.⁶ The boundary-crossing evinced at Prospect Bluff undermined U.S.' efforts at defining its identity through rigid citizenship requirements based on class, whiteness and gender. A crucial part of this process was the construction and enforcement of racial categories creating clear divisions between people classified as white, Indian, and Black. At Prospect Bluff, people representing these racial groups lived in a close proximity to each other and could potentially establish kin relationships. These liaisons ran counter to and undermined the new social and racial order central to U.S. nation-building. Equally galling, U.S. officials and planters faced the possibility of having to endure the existence of the fort as a dangerous and continual symbol of resistance and racial intermixture. The fort not only represented a military threat but also highlighted the porous and superficial nature of racial categories. Since this development could facilitate Indigenous and African coalitions, the destruction of the fort became a priority.⁷

Historians of the events spanning the War of 1812, the destruction of the “Negro Fort,” and the First Seminole War, more accurately the First U.S.-Seminole War, focus on the threat, as mentioned above, that Indigenous and African peoples represented to the U.S.⁸ Scholars such as John K. Mahon, Frank L. Owsley, John Sugden, and James G. Cusick have reoriented focus over the War of 1812 from a matter of U.S. neutrality and economic interest in the Napoleonic conflicts to the desire of the U.S. to expand into Canada and the Southeastern Borderlands.⁹ The War of 1812 as the Second War of American Independence represents the decline of British influence among native peoples between the Great Lakes and Gulf Coast. In terms of the role of free and runaway Africans, scholars such as Kevin Mulroy, Larry Rivers, and Nathaniel Millett have viewed the events associated with the Prospect Bluff Fort within the history of maroon resistance. The fort’s subsequent occupation by U.S. forces spelled the end of the “African power base on the Apalachicola.”¹⁰ Historians such as Cantor Brown and Jane Landers have juxtaposed these U.S. invasions with Spanish colonial regimes in West and East Florida. They cite the latter’s fluid and culturally based notions of race which further facilitated African’s ability to assert a measure of control and power in their lives.¹¹ This includes rising up in arms against the mutual enemies of the Spanish crown and those seeking to enslave the region’s African population. Recent scholarship has rarely diverged from the standard narrative, which holds that Spanish colonialism’s less restrictive nature offered the social space necessary for Indigenous and African resistance to the U.S.

This chapter seeks to complicate the larger narrative of Florida Borderlands history through a reinterpretation of the Prospect Bluff Fort’s significance. Crucial to the chapter’s main argument are Sebastián Pintado’s accounts, written while the Spanish surveyor of West Florida

sought to reclaim the Pensacola slaves located at the outpost. The presence of recalcitrant African and Indigenous groups equally disturbed both Spain and the U.S., especially Pensacola slave owners seeking to reacquire their property. Although Millett highlights U.S. fears over this threat, many of the fugitive slaves actually belonged to Spanish subjects.¹² Pintado's presence at the fort and his subsequent reports only exist because of Spanish trepidation over property rights and territorial integrity. Spanish officials implicitly supported U.S. efforts to destroy the fort since its existence overtly undermined their authority and jurisdiction over West and East Florida. The fact that slaves were willing to leave their Spanish, and sometimes Indigenous masters to seek independence, raises questions about whether or not the liberal nature of racial discourse and slavery in Florida has been exaggerated by scholars. Rather than narrowly interpreting the events of Prospect Bluff through the prism of the African Diaspora or maroon resistance, a wider lens is needed to see a broader significance. African and Indigenous peoples were not blithely threatening U.S. hegemony: they were undermining new economic, political, and social systems taking root in the Southeastern U.S. and Spanish Borderlands.

4.1 Florida's War of 1812

Scholarly focus emphasizing African and Indigenous peoples' influence in U.S. history has yielded new interpretations of the War of 1812. Eurocentric perspectives of the conflict focused on events such as the Embargo Act of 1807, Macon's Bill Number 2, and the British impressment of American sailors.¹³ Within more established narratives of the war, the southern theater is typically highlighted during references to Andrew Jackson's victory at Horseshoe Bend and the Battle of New Orleans. He later parlayed the memory of these events into a successful

political career. This older interpretation has changed with an increased focus on Indigenous resistance to expansion and land displacement as well as African slaves' efforts to gain freedom through their escape from plantations and, though less frequently, challenging their enslavement through violent confrontations. The events occurring in the Florida Borderlands were relevant to the outbreak of the War of 1812 and stemmed from processes originating in the Southeast, then known as the old Southwest. In the year prior to the outbreak of the war, the U.S. covertly, yet somewhat transparently, tried to annex West and East Florida. Their motives included American politicians' expansionist tendencies, efforts to secure fugitive slaves, the undermining of Indigenous power in the Southeast, and the preemptive acquisition of Gulf Coast territory before feared British annexation. The Patriot Rebellion of 1811, consisting of mostly Georgian volunteers and a number of recruited Euro-American Spanish subjects, was an illegal U.S. attempt to seize the territory. Florida's involvement in the War of 1812 had little to do with questions of neutrality or trade embargos; rather it represented the nation-state's efforts to extend its jurisdiction over an area with groups whose autonomy and presence were an affront to nation's political, economic, social, and racial order. Spain represented an illegitimate nation because it could not control its borders or its "uncivilized savages," so the U.S. questioned its right to rule.¹⁴ Simultaneously, the nation is defined at its borders and frontiers where it comes into contact with the "other," in this case Spaniards, Africans and Indigenous peoples, groups labeled backward and incapable of exploiting the land's resources and thus could be justifiably displaced or destroyed.

Euro-American efforts to dislodge parts of northern Florida from the Spanish had a long history, most notably James Oglethorpe's 1739 siege of St. Augustine. Each assault took a

devastating toll on the East Florida hinterlands and plantations, but the Castillo de San Marcos repelled foreign armies.¹⁵ Respective invaders initially carried themselves with self-confidence because of the lack of Spanish resources and defenses. Nonetheless, Spanish persistence and defensive posture ensured its continued reign. In 1810 the movement to oust the Spanish began not in East Florida but in Baton Rouge, territory the U.S. claimed under the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. American residents, encouraged by U.S. agents, revolted and were quickly incorporated into the Territory of Orleans. President James Madison was encouraged by this development and sought further expansion, probably believing that the U.S. could acquire the rest of West Florida, Mobile and Pensacola.¹⁶ The Baton Rouge incident also highlighted the preferred legal pretext for annexing Spanish territory. Euro-American settlers within Spanish provinces could declare independence and then request U.S. annexation. A similar formula, combined with further expansionist discourse, resurfaced in the 1836 Texas Revolution.

With the imminent fall of West Florida, Madison and his advisors appointed George Matthews as an agent to facilitate an East Florida revolt. The aging but energetic Matthews had participated in battles against the Shawnee and the British during the American Revolution.¹⁷ After returning to Georgia as a planter he became governor and later a U.S. congressman before scandal tarnished his political career. Although Matthews, working with his fellow U.S. agent John McKee, was enthusiastic about his charge in East Florida, he was also quite conscious of the risks of being a filibuster with only implicit U.S. support.¹⁸ U.S. military officers' confusion hampered the initial operation as well as plans to quickly capture St. Augustine. General Matthews had difficulty receiving the arms and gunboats he needed to control the St. Johns River and the area outside the provincial capital. U.S. commanders were forced to perform an absurd

dance between supporting the Patriots and yet claiming neutrality in the hostilities. American forces sought to intimidate the Spanish, yet they could not act without prior provocation. In the absence of clear orders, the U.S. military were not the reliable support Mathews had envisioned.¹⁹ His success now hinged on a strategy seeking the Spanish colonial administration's quick collapse before the intervention's legality could be questioned.

With the advantage of the Patriots' early initiative and aggressiveness dissipating, Mathews focused on taking parts of northern Florida adjacent to Georgia. When Lieutenant Colonel Thomas A. Smith replaced an uncooperative military officer, Mathews gathered his allies and directed an occupation of the border city of Fernandina on Amelia Island. The figurehead of the movement was Spanish subject John H. McIntosh, recruited by Mathews to lead the "Republic of Florida." Once the invasion began, gunboats led by Captain Hugh Campbell menacingly aimed their canons at the town. When the Spanish Captain José López inquired whether the U.S. forces were a part of the attack he received evasive replies. While the show of force secured Amelia Island, the ambiguous status of U.S. forces hampered the ensuing blockade of St. Augustine. Spanish defenders refused to provide the U.S. a pretext for a larger conflict. They remained behind the Castillo de San Marcos' walls, which continued to withstand the siege. Eventually the political fallout of sponsoring a revolution against a friendly government caused President Madison to disown Mathews.²⁰ As a result, the president appointed Georgia Governor David B. Mitchell to negotiate with the Spanish and await a more favorable political climate. However, the Spanish received important reinforcements from Cuba and the active participation of their Seminole and African allies. Patriot supporters found their plantations and property vulnerable to attacks and raids. Efforts to punish Alachua and other

Spanish allies were disruptive but largely ineffective because Patriot supply lines were vulnerable and strained. When Northern Republicans refused to support a congressional bill to authorize the seizure of East Florida, Mitchell had little choice but to withdraw after April 16, 1813, when the Spanish Governor Sebastián Kindelán promised clemency for the Patriot Rebels.

While the Patriot Rebellion was unraveling in East Florida, U.S. troops sought to enforce their claims over West Florida by seizing Mobile, in present day Alabama. This occurred due to American officials' intervention in the Creek Civil War siding against the Red Sticks, an Upper Creek group that objected to U.S. influence and interference within the Creek Confederacy. U.S. military officials leveled charges against the Spanish for their supposed trade in weapons with the Red Sticks. The latter were fighting against a Creek faction that advocated adoption of Euro-American political, social, and economic structures as a response to increased pressure from U.S. state governments and settlers.²¹ Although the Red Sticks only received limited Spanish assistance, the U.S. held Spain responsible when the Red Sticks attacked Fort Mims in present-day Alabama. The outbreak of hostilities between the U.S. and the British led to an even broader military conflict in the Apalachicola region. British strategists sought to utilize alliances with the Creeks, Seminoles, and Africans to open a southern theater of operations. Consequently, Creek attacks and the British presence in Florida supplied the U.S. with the pretext to further encroach upon Spanish territory. Specifically, Spanish acquiescence to the British occupation of Pensacola, led by Nicolls, meant to deter Jackson's potential invasion. In fact the British officer went on the offensive and besieged Fort Bowyer at Mobile with his force of Red Sticks and slaves from Pensacola.²² The attack was ineffective and only served to antagonize Jackson. Upon the expedition's return to Pensacola, Governor Don Mateo González

Manrique could no longer stomach the presence of his British guests and ordered Nicolls out of the town, despite the aggressive posture of the U.S. No longer welcomed, the British officer evacuated Pensacola with much of the settlement's slave population filling his ranks.²³

Consequently Jackson took Pensacola in November of 1814 and then moved to New Orleans to intercept Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane's invasion, an engagement that famously occurred after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent.

Before the Battle of New Orleans, Jackson and U.S. forces had evacuated from Pensacola. Although the War of 1812 was over and most of West and East Florida superficially remained Spanish, the conflict clearly gauged the tenuousness of the Europeans' hold on the province. They only managed to avoid territorial dispossession because of Creek, Seminole, and African military support, as well as Americans' lack of political will in favor of annexation. The Seminoles understood that U.S. expansion guaranteed greater pressure upon their territory from Euro-Americans. Meanwhile, Africans would have had to deal with a U.S. that had the power to enforce rigid racial hierarchies and intensive labor regimes, unlike the Spanish.²⁴ Both groups played key roles in disrupting U.S. plans, yet their resistance simultaneously provided the pretext that the U.S. used to justify further intervention and eventual occupation.

Due to the Alachua Seminoles' tenuous geopolitical situation, an alliance with the Spanish had been advantageous to counterbalance larger and more powerful Indigenous groups, the Mikasuki and the Creek. Stable relations with Spain meant the Seminoles received gifts and the Spanish granted trade concessions to Panton, Leslie, and Company to consistently supply the Indian trade. In addition, Spanish weakness also meant that the Seminoles exercised sovereignty in Alachua while the Spanish were limited to the east coast of Florida. Seminole headman Payne

went to great lengths to maintain this arrangement and often mediated between larger Indigenous groups and the Spanish.²⁵ Before the War of 1812, an Alachua leader, known as Bowlegs, gained a stature similar to that of Payne, his half-brother.²⁶ He also sought to maintain the Spanish alliance but his posture was more aggressive than the cautious Payne. Although both leaders had sworn loyalty to St. Augustine in an early 1812 letter transmitted by Juan Huertas, they were still open to see what the Patriots were willing to offer.²⁷ Apparently Mathews' skills of persuasion consisted of informing the Seminoles that he was involved in "a quarrel among white people and he did not want their assistance."²⁸

General Matthews' abrasive behavior, the lack of details concerning a post-Spanish East Florida, and the uncertain status of Seminole lands under a new territorial government confirmed Seminole suspicions about the Patriots' motives. Some sources even state that the Patriots resorted to threats in a misguided attempt to intimidate Bowlegs and Payne.²⁹ In response the Seminoles crippled the Patriot rebellion by punishing its members with the sacking of their plantations in July 1812 while they had been maintaining the siege of St. Augustine. These attacks struck the invasion's Euro-American supporters close to home and demoralized their ranks. The raids were not restricted to the Spanish subjects sympathetic to the revolt but also those that remained loyal to the province. As a result the Spanish governor sent a letter to Bowlegs requesting that slaves belonging to Francis Philip Fatio and Jorge Flemming be returned.³⁰ Reacting to their dire situation, the Patriots emulated the Seminoles' strategy by attacking their enemies' settlements when they were at their most vulnerable. Payne anticipated Colonel Daniel Newnan's expedition to Alachua and warned Governor Kindelán that the Seminoles were on the verge of abandoning the war to return home, since they had been fighting

for six months and feared their women and children were exposed to attack.³¹ Once the Patriots' goal of delivering a devastating offensive failed, they ventured out to Alachua. In the ensuing battles the Seminole leader Payne was seriously wounded and eventually died of his injuries.³² Bowlegs became the principal leader and policy maker for the Alachua Seminoles and he maintained a more aggressive foreign policy which included visits to Prospect Bluff, use of African troops, and negotiations with British agents.

During Newnan's expedition to Alachua his forces encountered Africans among the Seminoles, labeled by scholars as the Black Seminoles.³³ Whether as militias among the Spanish or Seminoles, Africans were instrumental in providing the forces necessary for stopping the Patriots' advance. However, they represented a very diverse group even if they were fighting for the same basic motivation, freedom from Euro-American control and oppressive labor regimes. Black Seminoles did not solely escape from plantations in Georgia or South Carolina but also from Spanish masters in Florida. For instance, raids upon the plantations of prominent citizens such as Fatio led to the increased numbers of Africans among the Seminoles. Although planters sought to ransom back their slaves they rarely recovered all of them. In 1820, a slave named Antonio returned to St. Augustine after he had been apprehended by the Seminoles and resided with them for a few years until he was ransomed back. In relation to this case, East Florida Governor José Coppinger commented that the presence of Spanish slaves among the Seminoles undermined the authority of the government and slave owners.³⁴ During the same period an incident involving a slave woman named Rosa occurred, she left her two Spanish masters in St. Augustine. She received assistance from the Seminoles in her escape and later had children with an Indigenous man named Sam Factor.³⁵ In addition to Spanish slaves, runaway slaves from the

U.S. also supplemented Black Seminoles numbers. Porter described the relationship between the Black Seminoles and Seminoles as “democratic feudalism.”³⁶ He draws this conclusion because Black Seminoles generally lived in adjacent villages, paid a small tribute, aligned themselves with a headman, and enjoyed much sociopolitical space to manage their affairs. It was this population that Payne and Bowlegs had utilized to fight the Patriots and on occasion even sent to supplement Spanish forces.³⁷

Spanish colonial officials also utilized free black militias despite Governor Kindelán’s reservations about reinforcements from Cuba whose moral fortitude he questioned. Nonetheless their presence did much to alarm Georgian officials of a possible slave rebellion in their state. The governor preferred the use of his local black militia and Seminole allies. Militia captains Jorge Jacobo, Juan Bautista Witten, and Benjamín Seguí performed admirably in harassing the Patriots’ supply lines, which were vital to the siege. In an engagement at Twelve Mile Swamp, in the northern vicinity of St. Augustine, Witten with his fellow black militia and a few Seminole and Black Seminoles disrupted an important supply convoy, causing the Patriots to retreat.³⁸ Black militia leaders received rewards and promotions for their service. However, the situation with the Cuban militia was probably not as positive since various reports exist of soldiers deserting their units.³⁹ Despite the benefits of militia service for Blacks in Spanish Florida, it was still a very demanding occupation with little support. Kindelán tried offsetting these burdens with proposed rewards to his Black militia by establishing settlements close to the Georgia border, which he hoped would serve in the same capacity as the Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose Fort once did.⁴⁰ During the First Spanish Florida period, the base had been

established by the Spanish for its African and runaway slave population and had been instrumental in ending the 1739 Oglethorpe invasion and siege of St. Augustine.

4.2 Prospect Bluff

Although the Spanish in East Florida had previously established Fort Mose and contemplated settling members of the Black militia near the border, ironically, the “Negro Fort” did not factor into their strategic planning. Spanish Florida’s contradictory policy of utilizing Black militias yet also encouraging an increase of the Euro-American planter population, through efforts to guarantee slave property, required difficult sociopolitical maneuvering. Spanish officials were often met with disdain from U.S. planters since Florida served as an official and later virtual slave sanctuary, which undermined slave property in neighboring areas. However, the British in West Florida alarmed Spanish slave owners when they recruited local slaves to their military force. After the British evacuated from Pensacola they retreated in late 1814 to Apalachicola to a location known as Prospect Bluff. The Creek Red Sticks in the area advocated the building of a fort to ward off potential U.S. attacks.⁴¹ Various groups such as the Creeks, Mikasuki, and “fugitive” African slaves cooperated and utilized British support in order to challenge U.S. and Spanish authority. The structure came to be known as the “Negro Fort,” its name betraying a focus on the fort’s Black inhabitants, most likely due to obsessive U.S. fears of slave uprisings.⁴² Those fears were compounded by the fact that the British stocked the fort with cannons, firearms, and other supplies necessary for its effective occupation. In conjunction with the local geography, the fort promised to be a formidable challenge to any potential attacker.

Once the Treaty of Ghent had been signed in 1814, Prospect Bluff lost its value as a base of operations for British attacks into the Southern U.S. and it took on a new role as a base of power for Indigenous and African peoples on the Apalachicola River. More alarming for the U.S. and the Spanish was the lack of European supervision over the Africans and Indians, which in their minds only exacerbated the situation. Actually, there were British officials such as Nicolls, General Isaac Brock, and Colonial Secretary Earl Bathurst who spoke of protecting the interests of their Indian allies and even envisioned the creation of Indigenous nation.⁴³ However, the British lacked the political will to continue waging a war to assist native peoples.⁴⁴ British negotiators abandoned their demand of an Indian state and settled for the ninth article of the Treaty of Ghent. The clause declared that the U.S. cease all hostilities with native peoples and restore “all the possessions, rights and privileges which they may have enjoyed or been entitled to in 1811.”⁴⁵ Nicolls and the Creeks interpreted this as negating the 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson, which ceded 23 million acres of Creek land to the U.S. Determined that the Southeastern Indigenous peoples should regain their lands to prewar boundaries, Nicolls remained at Prospect Bluff to enforce the stipulation. He quickly realized that the U.S. had no intention of repudiating the Treaty of Fort Jackson and never intended to restore Creek lands. Once British forces evacuated from Prospect Bluff, U.S. officials completely ignored the treaty clause and planned for the destruction of the fort.

In recent years the events at Apalachicola concerning the “Negro Fort” have garnered much scholarly attention. The size and significance of the Indigenous and African resistance have compelled a number of authors to interpret its larger meaning. Scholars such as Saunt, Millett, Owsley and Gene A. Smith have sought to demonstrate that the fort’s history has

substantial analytical value, with Saunt arguing that the destruction of the fort was part of a larger Creek Civil War and that it represented “the end of the movement against the new order.”⁴⁶ Previous Indigenous political, economic, and social systems were replaced by political centralization, the rise of private property, wealth disparities, and rigid racial discourse. Meanwhile, Millett argues that Africans at Prospect Bluff were “aware of the language and ideas of republicanism and revolution” that had swept through North America and the Caribbean in recent decades. Additionally they learned of the “potential power of combining Revolutionary-era ideology with violent action.”⁴⁷ Smith and Owsley argue that the destruction of the Prospect Bluff Fort was part of the larger movement of Jeffersonian expansionism and ideology of Manifest Destiny usually associated with the West during the course of the nineteenth century rather than the Gulf Coast in the 1810s.⁴⁸

Although Saunt’s interpretation that the dismantling of the outpost was a key moment in the expansion of the “new order,” he did not gauge whether the incident also demonstrated that similar processes were occurring in Spanish Florida. This chapter argues that discourses of property, race, and control of territorial borders had become widespread and not strictly limited to the U.S. Spain’s Florida provinces have been characterized as the antithesis of the U.S. in terms of its racial discourse, relationships with Africans and Indigenous peoples, and a limited preoccupation with private property. However, the sociopolitical systems in the Florida territories preclude broad generalizations. While expediency forced the hand of colonial officials to rely on African and Indigenous peoples, Spanish Florida officials still believed in their superiority within a system based on whiteness, despite the fact that racial and ethnic categories were never as starkly conceptualized as they were in the neighboring northern territories.

Nonetheless, the Spanish were similarly concerned as the U.S. with the developments occurring at Prospect Bluff, where the majority of slaves had fled from Spanish subjects not U.S. citizens. Although free black militias had saved East Florida, the Spanish could not tolerate a free Black military outpost outside of their supervision or immediate control. These conflicting positions illustrate the multifaceted nature of Spanish colonial policy.

Acting within his official capacity as the surveyor general, Pintado traveled from Pensacola to the “Negro Fort” with two main objectives. He primarily sought to secure the return of the Pensacola slaves who had left their masters when the British had entered the city and then later evacuated to Apalachicola. Secondly, he sought to map out the fort and gather intelligence about its physical and demographic characteristics. Pintado was well suited for this assignment since he was an experienced surveyor and had been in command of both naval and cavalry units.⁴⁹ Thus he had a balance of intellectual skills with the physical stamina needed to partake in substantial travels. While crafting maps for treaties and land grants represented his primary profession, Pintado served as a special envoy delivering correspondence to the Captain General in Cuba.⁵⁰ He was also familiar with issues associated with the control of slave populations. As *alcalde* in Bayou Sara in the Feliciana District he had debated the increase of militia patrols to disrupt nocturnal slave meetings.⁵¹ He later became concerned with measures to confiscate weapons from slaves.⁵² In his position as a town official he often dealt with the introduction of foreign slaves into the territory.⁵³ When a position as surveyor general became available in Pensacola he moved there.

4.3 Sebastián Pintado and Prospect Bluff

After Pintado arrived at Prospect Bluff in early 1815 he immediately established communication with local British officials. His papers recounting the journey have become valuable sources for insight into the sociopolitical dynamics between the British, African, and Indigenous inhabitants, but scholars have not inferred any larger meaning to his presence there.⁵⁴ The surveyor general's mission had been proceeded months earlier by Lieutenant José Urcullo, who was given the opportunity to go among the slaves and inquire whether they were willing to voluntarily return to Pensacola. Very few had agreed to depart from Prospect Bluff, despite the dismal conditions and limited supplies.⁵⁵ This refusal to return to supposedly benevolent Spanish masters was an indication that slaves at the fort were willing to face an uncertain and dangerous future if it meant possible freedom. When Urcullo attempted to board his ship, the few who had agreed to follow him back reconsidered their decision. The reluctant slaves stated that "if they returned to Pensacola they would be slaves and here they were free."⁵⁶

West Florida Governor Manrique had essentially sent Pintado on a similar mission hoping the agent would have better results than Urcullo.⁵⁷ The surveyor general arrived in late March and quickly discovered that all the principal officials in the area were absent and he had to communicate with Captain Richard Spencer whom lacked the power to approve any slave seizures. The British officer could only offer Pintado the same proposition that was given to Urcullo: he could approach the slaves to see if they would return of their own volition to Pensacola. Spencer warned Pintado that the slaves were "very violent and say they will die to a man rather than return."⁵⁸ He felt that Pintado would be fortunate to convince more than three or four slaves to return. The following day Pintado responded to Spencer and thanked him for his

assistance while simultaneously proceeding to harangue the captain over the illegality of the British occupation of Apalachicola. He argued that the British should evacuate since they had no right to be there, especially with the end of the war. Equally worrisome were reports that the British had relocated slaves to other colonies, including areas in the Caribbean. Pintado warned that Spanish slaves must be returned to their owners and be excluded from British offers of sanctuary.⁵⁹

Besides fearing the loss of property, Pintado also had a greater concern for the security of the colony. He informed Spencer that if the British were to leave the fort intact then it would “form a new republic of bandits which will come to destabilize the King’s dominion in this part of the globe.”⁶⁰ Through his referencing of the “republic of bandits,” Pintado utilized the same language that U.S. officials used to justify their attacks against Indigenous and African peoples within Spanish Florida. Governor Mitchell of Georgia had similar fears that the “Negro Fort” would unsettle the political and social order in his state. Andrew Jackson had argued that the region would never progress until the Indians were pacified and removed.⁶¹ Owsley and Smith even argue that Spanish consternation aside, they secretly condoned the U.S. destruction of the fort a year later. Rather than bemoaning the destruction of possible allies, “they were relieved that the Americans had removed the menace.”⁶² Undoubtedly the Spanish still harbored resentment towards the British for their heavy-handed tactics in Pensacola and for Vice Admiral Cochran’s proclamations. Although targeted at U.S. runaway slaves, the British officer had issued an edict that any slaves joining his ranks would receive their freedom.⁶³ He argued that he never intended for Spanish subjects’ slaves to utilize the order as a legal basis for their freedom. Nonetheless slaves from Spanish masters frequently argued that the Cochran decree

had granted their liberty. Prospect Bluff represented a threat to the Spanish because unlike the Black militia in East Florida, which despite giving Africans a measure of agency, nevertheless operated within the colonial system, whereas the “Negro Fort” was not under Spanish control.

With these concerns in mind, Pintado urgently wrote once more to Spencer. He quizzed the British officer on a series of topics. Were Spanish territorial claims, property, and slaves to be restored? Could the British officer foresee the eventual fate of the slaves: were they to remain in Florida or continue to serve in the British Army? If the British planned the demolition of Prospect Bluff was it possible for the Spanish to gain verification? In fact Pintado insisted that the “Negro Fort” be destroyed and that if the slaves were left in the fort once the British left it would unleash a “series of evils.”⁶⁴ The letter illustrates that the recovery of the slaves, although important, was not the sole motive driving Pintado. Many of his questions were focused on the future of Apalachicola and securing the destruction of the fort as well as the disbanding of the Black troops. Spencer responded to the aggressive questioning by arguing that Nicolls and the other military officials had acted in good faith and wanted to return the Pensacola slaves to their owners. Conceding that a party of slaves had been taken to the nearby St. Vincent’s Island, Spencer assured Pintado that they would remain together and stay in the vicinity. Finally he invited the surveyor general to Prospect Bluff but warned him not to adopt a confrontational stance since the inhabitants were in a state of alarm.⁶⁵

In a subsequent letter to the new West Florida Governor José de Soto, Pintado recounted his trip to Prospect Bluff. He set off on April 7th with a surgeon, Eugenio Sierra: and a Forbes Company representative hoping to reclaim company slaves.⁶⁶ While inspecting the grounds Pintado noted that slaves from the U.S., Indian settlements, West Florida, and East Florida were

present at Apalachicola along with a number of native peoples.⁶⁷ He most likely encountered ninety East Florida slaves from an area near the Mosquito River where they embarked from for Prospect Bluff in February 1815.⁶⁸ Pintado had inquired about the overall number of East Florida slaves present at the fort only to be confronted by Nicolls' evasive answers. The British officer did concede that a number of families were making their way to Prospect Bluff but that they were from Indian settlements.⁶⁹ Turning his attention to the Pensacola slaves, the surveyor general sought to persuade them to return to their masters. He reported that 28 slaves agreed to return but a substantial number refused. Sierra only managed to convince 12 out of 128 slaves to follow him. Pintado witnessed a number of slaves coming out of hiding only to inform him that they were free and would never return to their masters. Admiral Cochran's proclamation granting slaves their freedom greatly hindered Pintado's mission. Additionally a number of slaves had received British licenses granting them liberty regardless of whether they had Spanish or U.S. masters.

The Pintado mission to Apalachicola failed to recover slaves but it did manage to shed light on British plans for the retreat. A number of slaves were to be evacuated to British colonies, some Africans would remain at Prospect Bluff, and others were to be resettled at Tampa Bay. Slave masters arriving before the evacuation could reclaim their property but without the use of force. British officials told Pintado that the outpost would not be destroyed and would remain intact. In response he protested that the whole of the Gulf of Mexico would be destabilized and the fort would become a haven for nefarious characters and piracy. Upon learning about this negative turn of events, Pintado made his last visit with Indigenous leaders. They questioned him over possible Spanish intentions to assume authority over the fort once the

British retreated. While their posture toward the Spanish official was amicable, the headmen were explicit in their stance that this should not happen and that Pintado would be best served to leave the area, for his own safety.

Although Pintado heeded the advice of Indian leaders, he continued issuing further reports to Governor Soto and to the captain general of Cuba, even after conditions changed at the fort. In May he wrote to Pensacola that the British had attempted to separate the West Florida slaves from the fort's general population but when their names were called out they refused to identify themselves. Nonetheless, the surveyor general continued to send out reports through 1816, right before the U.S. destroyed the fort.⁷⁰ As a fact-finding mission, Pintado's efforts in Apalachicola were worthwhile in the sense that his correspondence provided Spanish authorities with important intelligence. His objective of reacquiring the Pensacola slaves nonetheless faced numerous obstacles. The British officers at the fort were fairly transparent in their determination to do the minimum effort required so they could claim some semblance of cooperation. Scholars have posited that Nicolls and Woodbine had become sympathetic to the cause of African and Indigenous peoples and were not willing to release them, while others felt they sought to exploit both groups for their personal gain.⁷¹ While the British played an important part in the development of Prospect Bluff, their role has often been over-emphasized. European observers of the time would have had difficulty fathoming that African and Indigenous peoples were as important as their European allies in the decision-making process. As a result, Spencer was most likely truthful when he told Pintado that slaves' unwillingness and hostility to repatriation, not British reluctance, kept the Spanish from reclaiming their slaves. It was the slaves' decision to

reject bondage in Spanish Florida, not villainous white men, behind Pintado's failure to return the slaves.

The decision of West and East Florida African slaves to stay at Prospect Bluff must not have been made lightly. With the British defeat in the Battle of New Orleans and plans to evacuate from the Gulf Coast, they could not rely on British protection. Clearly the Patriot Rebellion and Jackson's invasion of Pensacola proved that the U.S. was willing to support future invasions to annex Florida. Africans seeking relocation to one of the British colonies also faced incredible uncertainty and required significant trust in the British to keep their promises. Nonetheless Spanish slaves weighed their options and either allied with the British or decided to independently defend their freedom from their Pensacola masters. Scholarship on the Florida Borderlands tends to focus on the movement of slaves from U.S. states to Spanish colonies, but this narrative is too simplistic. African slaves left their Spanish masters for life among the Seminoles, free black communities, or in this particular case, the Prospect Bluff Fort because these locations offered more sociopolitical opportunities. Consequently scholars have mentioned various incidents of Spanish slaves running away but rarely see any greater meaning in these actions.

The "new order" observed by Saunt stressed the security of slave property and increasingly rigid racial hierarchies, processes that were not yet dominant in Spanish Florida but influential enough to help explain African slaves' resistance in the "Negro Fort." Although the Spanish still utilized Black militias, they concurrently sought to encourage the establishment of plantations in order to develop the economy of their Florida colonies. As a result, a number of Euro-American planters had been welcomed into the province, and were even pardoned when

they participated in the revolts against the colony, such as the Patriot Rebellion. Consequently, the Spanish were torn between more established policies of utilizing Africans as military resources yet simultaneously needing to placate their slave holding population, specifically in this case Pensacola masters, by securing slave property in the Florida territories. The Prospect Bluff Fort underlined these ongoing tensions and contradictory policies and forced Spanish officials to decide whether to support a new formidable border militia or seek to protect slave owners' property.

4.4 The Destruction of Prospect Bluff and the First U.S.-Seminole War

As Pintado left Apalachicola, the British were relinquishing control of the post to its African and Indigenous defenders. Although the British left William Hambly, a former employee of John Forbes and Company, in command, he soon abandoned his post.⁷² As the fort organized its own political structure, three former Pensacola slaves, Garçon, Cyrus, and Prince, emerged as the principal figures. Their elevation to leadership positions was due to their skills, each was a carpenter and at least one, Cyrus, was literate. Furthermore, Millett argues that they were well versed in the recent political currents and were cognizant of revolutionary era discourse. He also states that in all likelihood at least one of the three had been born in Africa, which meant they had the life experiences to relate with both recent African arrivals and slaves born in North America.⁷³ Despite the pressures of limited supplies and foodstuffs, the fort was able to maintain political and military order. However, very few sources can illuminate aspects of daily life as well as the fort's sociopolitical structures, making any conclusions speculative. Undoubtedly it was a community centered on defense since its presence ignited consternation

from surrounding nations, especially the U.S. Simply existing and encouraging the growth of nearby settlements and agricultural fields along the riverbanks stood as a testament to free Africans' ability to exercise their autonomy. For U.S. slave masters the "Negro Fort" was an embodiment of their fears, a sanctuary for runaway slaves, a base for raiding plantations, and a stark rebuke to the propaganda of Black inferiority.⁷⁴

Andrew Jackson used Spain's inability to destroy or control Prospect Bluff as a pretext for ordering U.S. forces to conquer the fort and re-enslave its African defenders. By July 1816 Edmund Gaines had constructed a military post at the confluence of Apalachicola River with the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers. Supply ships from New Orleans escorted by gunboats attempted to pass Prospect Bluff on its way north to the new outpost. Confident that the fort would open fire on the ships, the U.S. sought to use the incident to justify the destruction of the fort. Simultaneously, Colonel Douglas Clinch descended south from the U.S. fort and demanded that the defenders surrender. Garçon was defiant and famously raised the Union Jack and a red flag while refusing to surrender. During a meeting under a flag of truce he contemptuously announced that he would "sink any American vessel that should attempt to pass, and would blow up the fort if he could not defend it."⁷⁵ Unfortunately for Garçon the ensuing battle did not give him the opportunity to demonstrate his military prowess. An early artillery barrage from the gunboats hit the munitions depot in the fort and caused immense destruction. Garçon was one of the survivors but the Creeks took custody of the leader and then executed him. The nature of the victory only served to bolster the opinion that the "Negro Fort" had indeed been an abomination. Undoubtedly sentiment also existed that its destruction was divinely sanctioned, ideas that would be frequently replicated during the era of western expansion and Manifest Destiny.⁷⁶

Following the reduction of Prospect Bluff and subsequent Indigenous reprisals against squatters upon on their lands, Jackson set forth to form an army to “stabilize” the region.⁷⁷ Mikasuki and Seminole attacks on the border were often in response to violence committed against them. However, U.S. officials such as Gaines overlooked the actions of the squatters and highlighted native “atrocities” in order to produce the policy that they wanted, the seizure of Florida.⁷⁸ They had been engaged in a repeated pattern of commanding troops into Florida on dubious legal grounds in hopes of producing a reaction from the Red Sticks, Seminoles, Africans, and Spanish, which would then serve as the primary justification for a future invasion. Jackson in particular managed to always find a pretext for war, often portraying Indigenous defense of their homelands as evidence of “savage” behavior. Additionally, he often sought to entangle his European rivals, the Spanish and the British, in these conflicts by charging them with collusion, supplying and supporting his Indian adversaries. Secretary of State John C. Calhoun instructed Jackson to declare war on the Seminoles but avoid attacking Spanish subjects and settlements.⁷⁹ Utilizing multiple justifications for his advance, Jackson audaciously maintained that the U.S. was allied with the Spanish and that he simply sought resolution to the problem of Indian raids since the Spanish were too feeble to do it themselves.⁸⁰

Although Jackson was a central figure in the First U.S.-Seminole War, General Gaines’ attack on Fowltown is often considered the initial campaign of the war. Disputes had arisen between Indigenous leaders and U.S. officials over squatters, loss of cattle, and land ownership. Conquering the Mikasuki towns, the Indigenous power base in the territory, was essential to the real motive of the war, Euro-American settlement and economic incorporation of those lands. Historically, the Mikasuki in the eighteenth century had been the dominant East Florida

Indigenous group over the numerically inferior Alachua Seminole. One of the principal headmen, Kinache, had garnered respect and fear through Mikasuki raids and seizure of Spanish plantation property, especially African slaves. Additionally he was said to have sent his people to help build Prospect Bluff.⁸¹ By 1817 Neamathla joined Kinache as the principal headmen of the Mikasuki, with the former headquartered in Fowltown on the Georgian side of the boundary. Neamathla challenged the U.S. claim that his settlement was located within the Creek land cession outlined in the Treaty of Fort Jackson. When General Gaines called upon him to conference at Fort Scott, Neamathla questioned his motives and rejected the meeting. Gaines utilized the Indigenous leader's refusal as the justification for the start of his military offensive, an event often viewed as the beginning of the First U.S.-Seminole War.⁸²

The opening phase of the war caused the destruction of the Mikasuki towns and led to U.S. forces entering Alachua Seminole territory. Recognizing the long odds against them in the face of significant U.S. forces, the Mikasuki and later the Alachua Seminoles began to retreat into the southern region of East Florida. As they evacuated the area, the Indian settlements were plundered and destroyed. Jackson had gathered his force and constructed Fort Gadsden on the previous spot of the recently destroyed Prospect Bluff Fort. Beginning in March 1818 he invaded the Mikasuki towns near present-day Tallahassee. However, before Jackson could descend upon the settlements, the Mikasuki had received advance warning and withdrew to the south. Jackson could not resist attacking Spanish positions as well and he advanced on the St. Marks Fort. He claimed that the retreating Mikasuki had entered the fort and that he feared they would gain control of it. In order to "protect" the Spanish base he felt he needed to occupy it.⁸³ After some communication with the Spanish commander, Jackson gained control of the outpost

and its inhabitants. One of the men in the fort was Alexander Arbuthnot, a British trader, unassociated with the John Forbes Company. He had been transacting business with the Seminoles and had become an advocate for them with the British.

With St. Marks in his possession, Jackson then advanced on Bowlegs' settlement on the Suwannee River. As his force approached they engaged Black Seminoles and Seminoles in a few skirmishes. Despite a number of disadvantages, the defenders held off the invading force long enough for the majority of the town's population to cross the river and retreat further south.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, Jackson destroyed the buildings as he had done with the Mikasuki and he also captured another British subject, Robert Ambrister. He hastily returned back to St. Marks and quickly put both Arbuthnot and Ambrister on trial in a military tribunal for being foreign agents provoking the Seminoles to attack the U.S.⁸⁵ Both defendants were executed and the trial was widely criticized, especially among the British, for its dubious legality and lack of fairness. Upon returning to Fort Gadsden, Jackson decided to once again invade Pensacola on May 28, 1818. He quickly sacked the town, marking the last major engagement of the First U.S.-Seminole War.

In a similar fashion to the aftermath of the War of 1812, U.S. forces withdrew and returned Spanish territory. However, East and West Florida would never truly recover from these repeated invasions and filibusters. The Spanish accepted the wisdom of selling the territories in the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty. It would have been difficult for the Spanish to remain, especially after the U.S. interventions proved the vulnerability of their colonial defenses. For the Mikasuki and the Seminoles, the First U.S.-Seminole War destroyed settlements that had existed for decades and demonstrated that the border between the Florida provinces and Georgia

would no longer deter the U.S. as it sought to project its power over the region and incorporate it into the nation. While U.S. annexation was forestalled for a few years, the First U.S.-Seminole War was a harbinger of a later conflict, the Second U.S.-Seminole War, which sought to completely remove Seminoles and Africans from Florida.

Conclusion

Standard narratives about the War of 1812, Prospect Bluff, and the First U.S.-Seminole War continue to have significant explanatory power. These conflicts were indeed incited by U.S. expansion into the Florida Borderlands. Various factors propelled U.S. officials to secretly covet these territories. During the early nineteenth century the U.S. was experiencing the effects of the market revolution, Northern industrialization and an upsurge of Southern cotton production. The U.S., a young nation, was in the process of defining itself, which was done through expansion and its encounters with the “other.” American society was increasingly structured along racial hierarchies. If white Americans were civilized, progressive, and modern then Indigenous peoples and Africans were “savage,” backward, and impediments to U.S. development. The U.S. viewed Florida as an area whose rich lands were destined for prosperity once Euro-American settlers could exploit its resources. Indigenous and African peoples were to be either removed or utilized for labor. Their ability to exercise autonomy and undermine many of the processes taking shape in the U.S. represented an affront to the nation and constituted a concrete danger. Consequently, the U.S. sponsored filibusters and military officials who sought to wrestle control away from the Spanish, a nation considered too weak to exert control over its borders and subordinate peoples.

Within this interpretation, Spanish Florida seems dialectically opposed to the transformations occurring in the U.S. Although the U.S. developed a rigid racial hierarchy, the Spanish are often depicted as remaining faithful to culturally based markers of identity rather than adhering to categories based on biological difference. Unlike their American counterparts, the Spanish were not averse to utilizing Indigenous and African military allies. The majority of Spanish plantations did not utilize intensive labor regimes and its moderate treatment of slaves as well as militia recruitment allowed Africans spaces for agency and a measure of autonomy.

It is nonetheless inaccurate to say that the Spanish colonial administration in Florida and the actions of its inhabitants were unaffected by the economic, social, and political changes occurring in the region. Previous liberal policies during the First Spanish period that encouraged the sanctuary of slaves, the formation of Black militias, and the integration of Africans in Spanish society did exist simultaneously and in an uneasy dialogue with emerging notions of race. This explains why Spanish officials celebrated free black militias in East Florida for their service to the crown, while simultaneously, Pensacola slaves seeking to build their own community at Prospect Bluff were viewed as bandits who menaced the Borderlands. Scholarship has focused on the movement of African slaves running away to find sanctuary in West or East Florida. Certainly the “Negro Fort” has been part of that larger narrative, a military outpost that stood defiantly for freedom against the U.S. and its institutions promoting slavery and stringent racial codes. However, the majority of the slaves at Prospect Bluff were not from the U.S. but from Pensacola, and when they were offered the ability to return to their Spanish masters they chose instead an uncertain life at a military outpost bracing for an attack from an even more powerful slaveholding nation. If slaves voted with their feet when they left the U.S. for life in

Spanish Florida, they sometimes recast those votes. The slaves at the “Negro Fort” rejected bondage under Spanish, and less frequently Indigenous, masters and rejected any system of control, especially one based on whiteness, no matter how flexible that system might have been. Consequently scholars should analyze the complexity of slave holding systems in the Borderlands and not simply position the Florida territories as a bipolar counterweight to an oppressive U.S. racial society.

Notes:

¹ United States Congress, *American State Papers*, 38 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing office, 1832-1861), Military Affairs, vol. 1, 681.

² William H. Simmons, *Notices of East Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1973), 75. Writing after 1821, William H. Simmons recalled that Woodbine was the "infamous" colonel who armed and trained a group of "Negroes" and threatened to establish the "worst of all political conditions," meaning a "government of slaves." The author clearly implies that a nefarious white man, Woodbine, controlled uncivilized natives and Africans. Simmons' writing demonstrates a preoccupation with a civilized/uncivilized dichotomy since he posits that the Seminoles and runaway Africans are clearly uncivilized and constitute a danger to the nation and a hindrance to progress.

³ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 513.

⁴ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

⁵ Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (New York: Viking, 2001), 62. Initially, Jackson sent messages to Creek and Cherokee groups, whom he felt were U.S. supporters, claiming to be acting on their behalf against rival factions.

⁶ Nathaniel Millett, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5 (Fall 2007), 375. The author argues that whites had been weary of the possible alliance between African and Indigenous peoples since the seventeenth century. Native peoples were considered uncivilized and beyond control and by seizing slaves and encouraging Blacks to runaway they compounded fears that their actions and influence could spark slave uprisings, one of the greatest fears in the hearts of planters.

⁷ The settlements in the vicinity of Prospect Bluff also threatened gender codes since Creek and Seminole women played important roles in their societies compared to the space allowed U.S. women in areas such as agriculture and politics. Southeastern Indigenous women were in charge of raising crops and handled many of the political functions of their settlements especially when men were participating in seasonal subsistence migration or military conflicts. As result, Creek and Seminole men were labeled as indolent since European American men believed they allowed or forced women to work outside the domestic sphere.

⁸ Russell Garvin, "The Free Negro in Florida before the Civil War," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 46 (July 1967), 5; The two major conflicts, respectively beginning in 1817 and 1835, between the U.S., Seminoles, and Black Seminoles, have been labeled the "Seminole Wars." This places responsibility for the war on the Seminoles and de-emphasizes the war's complexity. Meanwhile classifying these episodes as the U.S.-Seminole Wars does more to highlight U.S. belligerency and accountability for the violent outbreaks. In each war, the U.S. sought to remove African and Indigenous peoples from their Florida lands. During the first conflict, forces led by Jackson sought to remove non-white groups from the border regions. The second conflict was fought in order to remove these same groups from the Florida interior to Indian Territory.

⁹ John K. Mahon, "British Strategy and Southern Indians: War of 1812," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 44 (April 1966), 285-302; Frank L. Owsley Jr., "British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida During the War of 1812," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 46 (October 1967), 111-123; John Sugden, "The Southern Indians in the War of 1812: The Closing Phase," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 60 (January 1982), 273-312; James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

¹⁰ Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), 15. The author makes comparisons

between the Seminoles with the Jamaican Maroons, the Ndjukas and Saramaka “Bush Negroes” of Surinam, the Border Maroons of Haiti, the Garifuna of Central America, and the Miskitos of Nicaragua and Honduras; Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, 192. Rivers concurs with Mulroy that the term Black Seminoles has value in illustrating the unique history of Africans in Florida but that 75 percent of the Black Seminoles were in fact maroons; Millett, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," 379. A comparison is made between the resistance at Prospect Bluff with other black revolts such as Gabriel Prosser's Rebellion and slave uprisings in Jamaica, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti.

¹¹ Cantor Brown Jr., "Race Relations in Territorial Florida, 1821-1845," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 73 (January 1995), 288. Although the author is focusing on Florida's territorial period he argues that the nature of race relations even after U.S. annexation remained less rigid for the following two decades because of the Spanish colonial legacy. Scholars have often pointed to African slaves' ability to travel freely, work in small groups, remain outside of the most repressive labor systems, gain manumission, and have access to Catholicism and marriage.

¹² Millett, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," 391. West Florida reported that 250 slaves were at the fort and there were also substantial numbers from the Seminoles and East Florida as well. In total the fort and its hinterlands probably held 500 slaves before it was destroyed.

¹³ Jukius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812* (Gloucester: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 11. Southerners and Westerners were the main advocates for the War of 1812. Meanwhile, Northerners, despite many of the supposed affronts to their U.S. national pride, the region remained against the war. In other words, it was expansionist sentiments that drove pro-war supporters to agitate for the conflict. Pratt's discussion of the Patriot War is mainly a political and diplomatic account that presents the correspondence of the leaders involved in the scheme to annex Florida.

¹⁴ Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars*, 161. Jackson announced to the residents of Pensacola that his take over of the settlement was due to Spain's inability to stop native people's raids. Although this was undoubtedly a justification for U.S. forces to enter Florida, this line of thought provides insight into U.S. arguments for invading Spanish colonial possessions.

¹⁵ After the French-Indian War in 1763 Spain transferred Florida to the British through diplomatic agreements not because of a military takeover.

¹⁶ Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 4.

¹⁷ Mathews had been involved in the Battle of Point Pleasant, a conflict that sought to coerce the Shawnee into agreeing the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, which called for the loss of lands south of the Ohio River. In the American Revolution he participated in the Battle of Germantown and was present at the Battle of Yorktown. The veteran was uniquely experienced to lead the East Florida revolt since he had fought both for Indian removal and the defeat of the British.

¹⁸ Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, 108. The author illustrates that Mathews constantly sought to keep Madison and other U.S. officials abreast of the events of the war in order to ensure they approved of his actions. In a report to the president he writes that he had not legally compromised the U.S. nor himself during his clandestine actions in East Florida; Various works have been published which detail the U.S. government correspondence that outline the policy decisions, motives, and designs in the Patriot War. Notable examples include Rembert W. Patrick, *Florida Fiasco: Rampant Rebels on the Georgia-Florida Border 1810-1815* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954); Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*; Herbert Bruce Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida: Its History and Diplomacy* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964); Joseph Burkholder Smith, *James Madison's Phony War: The Plot to Steal Florida* (New York: Arbor House, 1983).

¹⁹ Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 68. Local U.S. military officials refused to send the troops requested by Mathews because they believed the general had overstepped the president's orders.

²⁰ Patrick, *Florida Fiasco*, 120; Owsley, Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 73; Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 137. Reports from newspapers, aligned with the Federalist Party, were countering a scandal over claims that their members were in secret communication with the British. As a result they began to question the illegal activity of Mathews in Florida and the support he received from their political rivals the Democratic-Republicans.

²¹ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 265. The author argues that much of the violence surrounding Fort Mims was associated with the Creek Civil War. He argues that many "mestizos" and Creeks whom embraced the "new order," based on centralized government and market capitalism, were the victims of the violence. In contrast, the Red Sticks are often portrayed as being culturally and politically conservative.

²² Owsley, Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 96.

²³ Ibid, 98; Owsley Jr., "British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida during the War of 1812," 119.

²⁴ Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 215.

²⁵ I am referring to the ransom negotiations with the Mikasuki concerning the Bonelli family and Francis Philip Fatio's African slaves.

²⁶ Ibid, 214.

²⁷ Juan Huertas to Juan José de Estrada, 02 January 1812, East Florida Papers (hereafter cited as EFP), microfilm reel 43, P.K.Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY). This defensive pact called upon the Seminoles to mobilize and defend the province while rejecting any separate U.S. peace overtures. Nonetheless, the Alachua Seminoles were still willing to hear whether Mathews could offer them a better proposition than their present arrangement with the Spanish; Juan Huertas to Juan José de Estrada, 02 January 1812, EFP, microfilm reel 81, PKY.

²⁸ Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 214.

²⁹ Patrick, *Florida Fiasco*, 184. The author states that the Seminoles were informed by Mathews and McIntosh that if the Seminoles interfered in the rebellion, they would "drive him from his land" and that Bowlegs would be made into a "waiting man."

³⁰ Sebastián Kindelán to Bowleg, 1812, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

³¹ Juan Huertas to Sebastián Kindelán, 08 September 1812, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY.

³² Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 10.

³³ The population of Africans that lived among and/or adjacent to the Seminoles have had various names attributed to them. Primary source documents have utilized terms such as Negroes, *Negros*, *Negros de los Indios*, Indian Blacks, and Seminole slaves. Meanwhile, scholars have also implemented a variety of terms such as Black Seminoles, Seminole Maroons, Blacks, and Africans. Which term historians choose to use provides a clue into their stance on the amount of cultural and social interaction and transculturation that occurred between Africans and native peoples. For example, Porter utilized the term "Black Seminoles," meanwhile Mulroy decided "Seminole Maroons" was appropriate, while Susan Miller simply uses "Africans," three different terms to describe the same population. Meanwhile a distinction between blood Seminoles and Black Seminoles is made in Jane Landers, "A Nation Divided?: Blood Seminoles and Black Seminoles on the Florida Frontier," in *Coastal Encounters: The Transformation of the Gulf South in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Richmond F. Brown (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, 192. This work is influenced by arguments made by Landers, Rivers, and Mulroy whom agree that the term Black Seminole does have some explanatory

power. The term is the most accurate in recognizing the distinct history of Africans in Florida and their shared resistance and relationships with Seminoles. Although the level of intermarriage is debated, it nonetheless occurred. The use of Seminole Maroons argues that Black Seminoles had more in common with African groups, that may have come from different parts of that large continent and lived in different parts of the Americas rather than with the Seminoles who they shared political and social spaces. However, there is a reason why the Black Seminoles have been identified under numerous terms, they represented a group so diverse that make anything but the broadest generalizations feasible. They came from U.S. states, Spanish settlements, and various regions in Africa and lived as free persons, slaves, and as kin with the Seminoles. It is not possible to say that Black Seminoles all had the same political and social standing among the Seminoles.

³⁴ Jose Coppingér to Edward Griffith, 28 January 1820, EFP, microfilm reel 174, PKY. The governor mentions that each slave is ransomed for 50 pesos in hard currency.

³⁵ Toney Proctor Testimony, 19 October 1843, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA.

³⁶ Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 6. Scholars have yet to challenge Porter's description of the Seminole and Black Seminole relationship as "democratic feudalism" and it has become the established narrative; Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 225.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, 226.

³⁹ Justo Lopez to Sebastián Kindelán, 10 July 1813, EFP, microfilm reel 61, PKY; Justo Lopez to Sebastián Kindelán, 13 July 1813, EFP, microfilm reel 61, PKY; Sebastián Kindelán to Thomas Llorente, 13 August 1813, EFP, microfilm reel 61, PKY.

⁴⁰ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 227; Sebastián Kindelán to Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, 04 June 1813, EFP, microfilm reel 174, PKY.

⁴¹ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 280.

⁴² John K. Mahon, "British Strategy and Southern Indians: War of 1812," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 44 (April 1966), 300. The author argues that because the fort, originally "meant for the Indians, . . . fell instead, complete with cannon and ammunition, into the hands of free, renegade Negroes" and as a result "came to be known to Americans as Negro Fort." However, it is clear that Creek Red Sticks and Seminoles around the Apalachicola region were also present at the fort.

⁴³ J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 182.

⁴⁴ Sugden, "The Southern Indians in the War of 1812," 302.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 304; The Treaty of Ghent, *American State Papers*, 38 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing office, 1832-1861), Foreign Relations, vol. 3, 747.

⁴⁶ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 289.

⁴⁷ Millett, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," 379.

⁴⁸ Owsley, Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 117.

⁴⁹ John R. Hérbert, "Vicente Sebastián Pintado, Surveyor General of Spanish West Florida, 1805-17. The Man and His Maps " *Imago Mundi* 39 (1987), 51.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Carlos de Grand Pre to Alcaldes de Nueva Feliciania, 18 September 1802, Pintado Papers (hereafter cited as PP), microfilm reel 2, frame 46, P.K.Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Carlos de Grand Pre to Vicente Pintado, 04 April 1801, PP, microfilm reel 1, frame 305, PKY. This document is related to the introduction of U.S. slaves in the area; Vicente Pintado to Carlos de Grand Pre, 16 April 1801, PP, microfilm reel 1, frame 299, PKY; Vicente Pintado to Carlos de Grand Pre, 28 May

1801, PP, microfilm reel 1, frame 324, PKY; Carlos de Grand Pre to Vicente Pintado, 17 September 1803, PP, microfilm reel 2, frame 230, PKY. Carlos de Grand Pre, from Baton Rouge, is writing to Alcalde Vicente Pintado asking that the order to prohibit foreign "Negros" be enforced. According to de Grand Pre, the introduction of foreign slaves into the province will bring about many "abuses."

⁵⁴ Millett, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," 381; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 283.

⁵⁵ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 289. Among the Pensacola slaves were Africans that belonged to the John Forbes Company. Apparently the Spanish officer only succeeded in returning four female slaves belonging to the trading company.

⁵⁶ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 281.

⁵⁷ Mateo González Manrique to Vicente Pintado, 14 March 1815, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 780, PKY. The governor issues a passport for Pintado to go to Apalachicola.

⁵⁸ Richard Spencer to Vicente Pintado, 30 March 1815, PP, microfilm reel 4, frame 254, PKY.

⁵⁹ Vicente Pintado to Robert Spencer, 31 March 1815, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 778, PKY.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Remini, *Andrew Jackson & His Indian Wars*, 101.

⁶² Owsley, Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 113.

⁶³ Alexander Cochran Edict, 04 April 1814, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 776, PKY. Although the proclamation was aimed towards U.S. slaves, Spanish slaves would seek their freedom through Cochran's edict.

⁶⁴ Vicente Pintado to Robert Spencer, 02 April 1815, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 781, PKY.

⁶⁵ Richard Spencer to Vicente Pintado, 04 April 1815, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 783, PKY.

⁶⁶ Vicente Pintado to José de Soto, 29 April 1815, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 785, PKY; William S. Coker, "Pensacola's Medical History: The Colonial Era, 1559-1821," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 77 (Fall 1998), 191.

⁶⁷ Millett, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," 381; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 283.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 279.

⁶⁹ Vicente Pintado to José de Soto, 30 March 1815, PP, microfilm reel 4, frame 254, PKY.

⁷⁰ Vicente Pintado to Antonio Ventura Bocarro, 09 February 1816, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 863, PKY; Pintado to the Captain General of Cuba, 11 June 1816, PP, microfilm reel 3, frame 875, PKY

⁷¹ Sugden, "The Southern Indians in the War of 1812," 298. The author states that while Nicolls and Woodbine viewed native peoples as inferior they developed a "philanthropic sentiment" towards them; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 291. John Innerarity, a John Forbes partner had suffered at the hands of Nicolls and would be quick to question the British officer's motives. He argued that Nicolls wanted to retain the slaves under his command so that he could remain a lieutenant colonel since his rank was based on the number of men under him; Owsley, Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 146. Woodbine was accused of attempting to steal the slaves he recruited at Apalachicola but was later cleared of these charges. Additionally there were reports that he sought to encourage Seminole and Creek resistance because he coveted a land grant from his Indigenous allies once they expelled U.S. forces from the region.

⁷² Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 283. Hambly left Prospect Bluff because did not want to be "at the head of a band of uppity rogues like the negroes."

⁷³ Millett, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," 391.

⁷⁴ Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 14.

⁷⁵ Owsley, Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 110.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 111. Clinch believed that “great Ruler of the Universe must have used [them] as his instrument in chastising the blood-thirsty and murderous wretches that defended the fort.”

⁷⁷ George Perryman to Richard Sands, *American State Papers*, 38 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing office, 1832-1861), Military Affairs, vol. 1, 681-82. Perryman informs the U.S. official that Seminole leader Bowlegs has been parading his Black Seminole and Seminole troops daily and is preparing for war in order to avenge the destruction of Negro Fort.

⁷⁸ David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Old Hickory's War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1996), 100.

⁷⁹ Joe Knetsch, *Florida's Seminole Wars 1817-1858* (Charleston Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 27; Heidler and Heidler, *Old Hickory's War*, 117.

⁸⁰ Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (New York: Viking, 2001), 148.

⁸¹ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 280.

⁸² Heidler and Heidler, *Old Hickory's War*, 103.

⁸³ Owsley, Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 154.

⁸⁴ Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 16.

⁸⁵ *Narrative of a Voyage to the Spanish Main in the Ship "Two Friends" The Occupation of Amelia Island by McGregor, Etc.; Sketches of the Province of East Florida, and Anecdotes Illustrative of the Habits and Manners of the Seminole Indians; with an Appendix, Containing a Detail of the Seminole War, and the Execution of Arbuthnot and Ambrister*, (London: Printed for J. Miller, 1819).

Chapter 5

“SHE RAN AWAY FROM HIM AND WENT TO THE NATION”: CONTESTING AFRICAN AND SEMINOLE IDENTITIES IN TERRITORIAL FLORIDA, 1823 to 1835

It is further advantage, that the Indians within our Southern limits, are now safe from the malignant influence and of our enemies, to which they were previously subject; and will be thus rendered more docile to the humane measures, that have been adopted by our Government, for their civilization and improvement.

The Negro property, also in the South, is now surrounded with greater security, and rendered less susceptible of being converted into a source of domestic danger.

William H. Simmons, 1822¹

I Samuel Factor being of a sound disposing mind and having a wife a black woman of color . . . I do grant and give my wife Rose her entire freedom to enjoy all the freedom and privileges of the tribe of Indians which they are now living with, and also my Sarah and my two sons Billy Daniel and Paladore.

Samuel Factor, 1832²

In the early 1820s a series of Euro-American men traveling into the Florida Borderlands envisioned themselves as the vanguard of civilization. They ventured into an area simultaneously considered untamed and dangerous and yet also a potential Eden because of its climate. With the expansion of the nation-state, they reasoned that Florida's resources could be secured and fully exploited. During their journeys into the interior of the territory to visit with the Alachua Seminoles and Black Seminoles, individuals such as John Forbes Grant commented on the suitability of the region for certain cash crops, especially sugar, coffee, and cotton.³

William H. Simmons echoed those sentiments. He felt the province was valuable to the United

States because “the soil and climate being well adapted to the cultivation of sugar, will contribute to render us independent of other nations, for the supply of an article, which is as well a necessary of life, as an elegant luxury.”⁴ Simmons served as an agent for the territorial government, alongside his political contemporary John Lee Williams, who also wrote effusively about the people and terrain of the newly acquired territories.⁵

These individuals sought to document Florida’s physical and cultural geography in order to assess the region’s value to the nation-state. Eric Meeks describes a similar process that occurred nearly a hundred years later in Arizona, where individuals and institutions sought “to map and classify material resources and human inhabitants according to their value to U.S. interests and their potential for citizenship.”⁶ Benedict Anderson argues that the nation-state seeks to impose its political and social order within its borders through surveillance and regulation of subordinate people’s relationship with the government. Part of the process of control and integration involved the mapping and classification of groups into distinct racial categories. The fluid ethnic and cultural identities of the peoples of the Florida Borderlands became classified simply as “Negroes,” “Indians,” and “whites,” erasing more than a century of cultural interaction and mixture. Since power was structured along racial lines, hierarchies and categories had to be enforced in order to give them any concrete meaning. As Anderson notes, “Identities imagined by the (confusedly) classifying mind of the colonial state, still awaited a reification which imperial administrative penetration would soon make possible.”⁷ Indigenous peoples such as Samuel Factor and his wife Rosa encountered this system when U.S. officials were adamant in classifying their children as either “Indian” or “Black” and were reluctant to recognize their mixed racial background.

Although the mapping and categorization of subordinate peoples is often associated with the U.S. annexation of Florida, it occurred much earlier. In fact, Forbes was born during the British colonial occupation of Florida and was named after Governor James Grant. His description of Florida included a history of British efforts to establish plantations and populate the province.⁸ When the British acquired Florida they also produced a group of authors seeking to map and classify the land and its inhabitants. Most famously, William Bartram's *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida*, became a valuable primary source for historians since Bartram visited with the Alachua Seminoles in the 1770s. Nonetheless, William Robert, William Stork, and Bernard Romans' texts concerning Florida had predated Bartram's efforts. Governor Grant's letters to the Board of Trade and Plantations also contained descriptions of the geography and called for the development of plantations.⁹ During the Second Spanish Florida period, colonial officials relied on Pantón, Leslie, and Company employees, John Hambly and John Forrester, to report on the terrain and the Seminoles.¹⁰ The Spanish endorsed Grant's economic vision by initiating policies that allowed the Pantón, Leslie, and Company to continue trading. They also allowed planters such as Francis Philip Fatio to remain in the province while simultaneously encouraging new Euro-American immigration.

Emerging ideas associated with political centralization, property, and race met and negotiated, on a situational basis, with Seminole and more traditional Spanish political and social systems. This contingency helps explain why Africans' experiences in the territory varied widely. The 1819 Adams-Onís treaty did not immediately change the power relationship between the Seminoles, Black Seminoles, and the new U.S. administration. While the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1824 portended the nation-state's efforts to enforce its social and political

order, the Seminole and Black Seminoles retained enough autonomy to negotiate aspects of the agreement. The treaty did not call for Seminole removal since the U.S. was not in a position to force the Seminoles and Black Seminoles out of the region. Additionally, territorial officials later enlarged the boundaries of the Seminole reservation. However, by 1837 the U.S. marshaled the necessary force to remove the Seminoles and Black Seminoles from Florida, utilizing the treaties of Payne's Landing and Fort Gibson. After the U.S. effectively exerted its power to enforce its physical borders it then solidified metaphorical boundaries as well. In order to make racial classifications more meaningful, Indians, Africans, and whites had to exist in separate political and social spaces. Conversely African and Indigenous peoples' fight against colonial control ranged from violent confrontation to the refusal to recognize Euro-American settlers' claims over the Black Seminoles. Both groups sought to define their own identities in the face of racialization.

The Second U.S.-Seminole War in Florida is one of the most prominent topics of scholarship on early Florida History because it is one of the most obvious manifestations of state power. Consequently, few scholars have centered their studies on the territorial period before the war began, 1821-1835. This was a critical period when borderlands, contested spaces between nations and non-state political entities, gave way to more clearly delineated borders and the "transition narrowed the scope for (subordinate peoples') political independence."¹¹ The few texts that do focus on this period have emphasized has been on the U.S.-Seminole relationship, conflicts brewing over the Black Seminoles, and tensions over Euro-American immigration into Florida. John K. Mahon's lengthy work, *History of the Second Seminole War*, devotes ample space to the treaties between the Seminoles and the U.S. prior to the conflict. He gives a

complete summary of the events that led to these agreements. Mahon's focus is on the treaties and the extent to which U.S. agents acted unscrupulously toward the Seminoles and whether Indigenous peoples were deceived.¹² George Klos and Canter Brown Jr. have written about events that foreshadowed the coming military conflict. Klos writes that the presence of the Black Seminoles and constant efforts by U.S. citizens to re-enslave them was the major cause of Seminole removal.¹³ Meanwhile Brown writes that Seminole resistance to reservation boundaries, planter protests over "depredations," and runaway slaves living among the Seminoles led to Major Francis Dade's punitive expedition in 1827. The physical and emotional toll from the attack led to resentment among the Seminoles and Black Seminoles, which they later avenged during their successful attack on Dade, which sparked the Second U.S.-Seminole War.¹⁴

Scholarship concerning the early territorial period has emphasized the causes of the Second U.S.-Seminole War, but it overlooks the larger processes associated with the expansion of the nation-state and the development of Indigenous and African identity in light of hardening racial categories. In contrast to previous scholarship, this chapter analyzes how the U.S. established an Indian agency to police and supervise the Seminoles and thus enforce slave claims on the Black Seminoles.¹⁵ It also seeks to address Susan Miller's critiques of previous scholarship pertaining to this time period. Miller argues that the focus on the Black Seminoles has de-emphasized Seminole agency while shifting focus away from other factors, not related to the Africans, that led to the conflict with the U.S. She disagrees with scholars who argue Seminole efforts "to remain in their homeland with the bones of their ancestors was of trivial or no consequence compared to their dependence on the advice of their black allies."¹⁶ While she

is correct that internal Seminole political dynamics help explain the events of the territorial period, there is a danger of falling into a similar problematic position as the scholars mentioned above by isolating only one factor for the resistance. When analyzing the Florida Borderlands scholars tend to reproduce the racialized categories of white, Indian, and Black that colonial powers sought to impose. Nonetheless, groups in the Florida Borderlands did not exist in a vacuum regarding their histories, especially in terms of their identity. African and Indigenous peoples had significant interaction with each other and engaged in transcultural exchanges, meaning neither group can be viewed as primordial. Concurrently, subordinate peoples were a part of the same struggle to resist, negotiate, and come to terms with the expanding reach of the nation-state.

In order to address some of the historiographical arguments mentioned above, this chapter analyzes the expansion of the nation-state and its impact on racialization and identity formation: two processes that are interrelated and in constant dialogue. With the transfer of Florida from the Spanish to the United States, state institutions sought in the following fifteen years to establish their jurisdiction over Seminoles and Black Seminoles. As a result, subordinate peoples had to negotiate with the U.S. through new treaties that undermined Seminole sovereignty, involved the presence of Indian agents, and included the demarcation of reservation borders. These physical borders marked the spaces reserved for a particular “race” of people, even though those people crossed the physical boundaries of the reservation as much as they transcended the metaphysical borders of blood. U.S. officials and citizens sought to impose social order based on the imposition of rigid racial categories. When planters sought to claim Black Seminoles they were perpetuating a system of chattel slavery that ignored the cultural or

racial complexity of those it enslaved. This was a marked contrast from the Florida Borderlands where Indigenous and African peoples lived in variety of relationships that included cross-cultural kinship. Through resistance, Seminoles and Black Seminoles rejected Euro-American notions of race while forging their own identity rooted in their own local cultural realities.

5.1 The End of the Second Spanish Florida Period

The U.S. repeatedly invaded Florida after the War of 1812 only to later grudgingly remove its forces from the province because they lacked sufficient legal pretext for their actions. Towards the end of the First U.S.-Seminoles War, the political opponents of Andrew Jackson had utilized his Florida activities as an opportunity to score points against him.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the U.S. general had essentially secured the territory by destroying the only competing power base in the area, the Seminole settlements of northern Florida. Many Indigenous groups migrated south of the Suwannee River away from the border areas. Spanish recognition of this situation led to the opening of negotiations between Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and Spanish minister Don Luis de Onís in order to formalize the U.S. annexation of Florida. Due to delays the U.S. did not actually take possession of the province until 1821. Although St. Augustine had never capitulated during a military conflict, the provincial capital fell victim once more to diplomatic maneuvering.

Although Indigenous and African groups had utilized the “middle ground” and negotiated within political, economic, and social spaces between colonial powers, the strategy had its limitations. Seminoles, specifically the Alachua settlements, had established close relationships with the Spanish and English colonial administrations in St. Augustine. These relationships gave

Seminole access to trade goods and mutual defense pacts that buttressed their autonomy from the Lower Creeks. And yet the prospect of forced reintegration into the Creek Confederation continued to loom over the Seminoles. It was one of the reasons they utilized borderlands areas to their advantage. However, as the Seminoles first discovered in 1783 when the British abandoned East and West Florida, colonial powers were unwilling to sacrifice their larger interests in order to fulfill their commitments in areas they considered peripheral. The British retreat from Apalachicola after the end of the War of 1812 once again illustrated this lack of political will to support Indigenous allies.¹⁸ Seminole reaction to the Adams-Onís Treaty must have been similar to the earlier cases of British withdrawal.¹⁹ Indigenous peoples had militarily resisted expansionist efforts emanating from the U.S. since 1795 and in the most recent conflict suffered incredible losses. Nonetheless they were not consulted in diplomatic talks that annexed land they clearly felt was under Indigenous, rather than Spanish jurisdiction.

With the transfer in 1821, Seminoles and Black Seminoles found that the borders of the U.S. extended into Florida. A number of U.S. citizens began to seek an advantage in the political transition and sought to seize land and enslave Black Seminoles. In fact the acquisition of Seminole land had begun under the Spanish. The John Forbes and Company had received a grant in 1810 from the Seminoles and Lower Creeks in order to collect a debt they were owed for purchases in company stores. Additionally they gained an extra 1,275,000 acres in 1818 near the Apalachicola River, adjacent to their earlier grants.²⁰ A year earlier, while U.S. forces led by Andrew Jackson were threatening to launch further attacks into northern Florida, a Spanish land grant of 289,645 acres encompassing Alachua was awarded to Don Fernando de la Maza Arredondo.²¹ Once the Arredondo family gained possession of the grant they sold parcels to

other settlers, such as Moses Elias Levy, especially as the transfer of Florida became evident. Levy's land grant would be contested by the U.S. government and settled by the Supreme Court in 1832. Forbes also sold his lands as quickly as possible and some of his buyers included merchants from Savannah, Georgia. Ironically U.S. military excursions had made it possible to secure these grants by breaking the power of the Indigenous groups that would have contested them.

Troubles gripping the Seminoles and Black Seminoles were not restricted to land displacement. According to Florida's Territorial Governor William Pope Duval, many U.S. citizens preyed on Indigenous fears over the political transfer of power. They convinced a number of Seminoles that they would be dispossessed of their "slaves, horses, and cattle, and urging them to sell in order to save some parts of their property and these advisers then became purchasers for trifling sums of valuable slaves and other property."²² Various bills of sale were completed in 1821 for Black Seminoles that Euro-Americans later sought to validate in U.S. courts. According to Duval a number of the sales were conducted in bad faith or amounted to the robbery of desperate Seminoles. He was later confronted with the difficult decision of whether or not to uphold suspicious slave claims in the face of intense pressure from U.S. citizens. Although British and Spanish Florida colonists had previously sought the return of slaves living among the Seminoles, U.S. citizens were particularly persistent in their demands that local and federal authorities act upon their grievances.

5.2 The Rise of the Nation-State

After 1824, the geographic and political borderlands shifted away from the Georgia

border to the newly established boundaries of the Seminole reservation in central Florida. Once U.S. invasions destabilized the region, state institutions sought to control the newly acquired territory. American agents, pressured by the increasing numbers of settlers and planters, quickly sought a treaty with the Seminoles. As a result, the Treaty of Moultrie Creek negotiated in 1823 and signed early the following year, strove to change the relationship between the Seminoles and the U.S. Although the Seminole were not completely powerless and were able to force concessions from U.S. agents, a shift in power dynamics had clearly occurred. With the onslaught of Indian agents, superintendents, annuity payments, contractors, and slave claimants, the Seminoles experienced the ever-increasing reach of the nation state. In the same year that the Treaty of Moultrie Creek went into effect Secretary of War John C. Calhoun formed the Office of Indian Affairs, later known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs. U.S. policy now sought to fulfill the vision laid out by the British General Jeffrey Amherst in the 1760s. Its basic tenets held that Indigenous groups should no longer be treated as fully sovereign nations completely outside U.S. political jurisdiction with the same standing as other nations. Rather, Indigenous peoples would be under the “protection” of the nation-state whose authority superseded its own sovereignty. Later in the nineteenth century, U.S. policy would alternate between recognizing “domestic dependent nations” and encouraging assimilation and acculturation, in other words “Kill the Indian, and Save the Man.”²³ However, Indian policy in the 1820s and 1830s was centered on controlling groups previously outside the state and then sponsoring removal to areas where Indigenous groups could be further controlled and monitored.²⁴

The U.S. quickly sought to make Florida’s Indians, groups accustomed to their autonomy, to accede to U.S. political jurisdiction. Although the British and Spanish had claimed

large swaths of territory their actual holdings were more limited. The Spanish often referred to land west of the St. Johns River as the “Indian nation” or “Indian country.” This language revealed the fact that the Seminoles as well as free Africans were effectively outside the reach of the Spanish. Although the Spanish did have avenues to pressure the Seminoles, especially through the Panton, Leslie, and Company trading company, the Indigenous settlements retained their autonomy and freedom of movement. U.S. officials, specifically James Gadsden, sought to curtail native people’s independence by restricting the Seminoles to reservation lands.

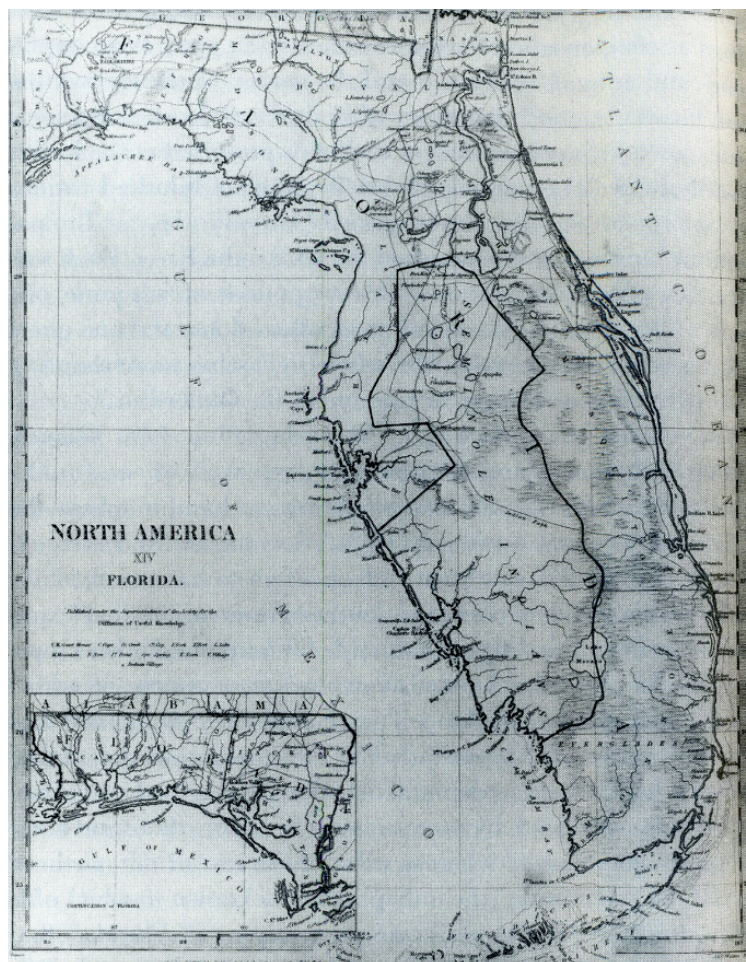


Figure 5.1 The Seminole Reservation. Source: Hoffman, *Florida’s Frontiers*, 290.

At the heart of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek was the removal of the Lower Creeks and Seminoles from Northern Florida. With Simmons, Forbes, and Williams' respective texts serving to promote the land, there was a demand for territory devoid of Indigenous peoples and other "impediments" to economic development. Preliminary discussions about removing the Seminoles from the Florida Peninsula included whether or not the Seminoles could be unified with the Creeks in Georgia and Alabama. Although acting Governor William Worthington quickly recognized Seminole hostility to being subsumed under Creek authority, this plan was constantly revisited.²⁵ Immediately preceding the treaty negotiations, U.S. negotiator Gadsden carried on a series of correspondence with Calhoun. Outlining his plans for an agreement with the Seminoles, Gadsden felt that establishment of reservations in Florida was more feasible but he hoped that removal from the territory remained a possibility. He preferred this solution because it eliminated the threat of the Seminole whom he felt were potentially "dangerous" to settlers and their property. He also cited other larger concerns when he asserted that "it is possible that all the Florida Indians might be induced to remove and if so an object so vitally important in a national or territorial point of view."²⁶ As borderlands scholars have demonstrated, the nation-state gauges its power by its ability to confront any unregulated movement and commerce, viewed as illicit, and considered a subversion of the state.²⁷ Seminole access to the Atlantic or Gulf Coast represented a national security threat because they could communicate, trade, and travel to British and Spanish possessions. Gadsden did not take this danger lightly and highlighted his fears by citing the presence of Spanish fishermen in Indigenous settlements on the west coast of Florida.²⁸ Complaints about the interaction between Cuban fisherman and Indigenous peoples originated with the British in 1769 and continued until

removal in the 1830s.²⁹ Unlike the British, the U.S. eventually allocated the necessary force to disrupt these relationships.

Calhoun agreed with Gadsden that the removal of the Seminoles was desirable but unfeasible for the immediate future. Both men were unsure where the Seminoles could be relocated. The Secretary of State recommended that the Seminoles could be sent among the Cherokee and Choctaws groups that immigrated to the Arkansas Territory in the 1820s.³⁰ Since both men already viewed removal as ideal, they probably felt the establishment of the Florida reservations was only a temporary solution. Even this strategy was problematic, since the Seminoles resisted leaving their homelands and were divided amongst the various settlements over the possible location of the reservation. In particular the Mikasuki and Apalachicola Seminole were unwilling to leave northern Florida for land in the interior.³¹ One additional impediment to enacting U.S. policy was the lack of personnel and institutional structure among territorial agencies. Governor and Florida Superintendent of Indian Affairs Duval had been out of state and Indian agent Glad Humphreys had only recently taken his post. As a result, treaty negotiations did not begin until late 1823 when Humphreys met with a delegation of Seminole headmen.

The diplomatic discussions and the subsequent 1824 treaty reveal the important political processes that distinguish the Florida Borderlands from other regions. Gadsden as the lead negotiator sent updates to his superiors in Washington, D.C. regarding the discussions with the Seminole delegation. As with previous treaties between Europeans and native peoples, Gadsden wanted to deal with one Indigenous spokesman. He must have been pleased with the designation of Neamathla, leader of a Mikasuki settlement, as the principal headman for the Seminoles.³²

The American agent opened the treaty discussions by making his case for restricting the Seminoles to reservations. He also noted that the Seminole were originally part of the Creek and had immigrated to Florida, essentially questioning the legitimacy of Seminole land claims by implying that they were not indigenous to Florida. Years later the American agent remarked that the “history of the Florida Indians is not involved in the mists of antiquity.”³³ Gadsden also asserted that the Seminoles “drove the Spaniards into Saint Augustine; ... burnt their forts, destroyed their fields and exterminated the Yamassee nation.”³⁴ He portrayed the Seminoles not as victims of U.S. expansion but rather a conquering nation whose fortunes had waned. As a result of the new balance of power Gadsden argued:

The white men are now strong and the Seminoles are weak. The white men are like the fruit and leaves on the trees which blossom and increase annually. The Seminoles like the deer of the forest that might be hunted to their destruction, the white might take vengeance for what you did the Spaniards and Yamassees but we will not. We will forget what has passed, like a kind father the president says to you there are lands enough for both his white and red children.³⁵

Following the popular belief of policy-makers during the early 1800s, Gadsden claimed that the creation of reservations was a benevolent act that showed sympathy to the Seminoles. He implied that the U.S. could simply displace the Seminoles without offering them any restitution.

The Seminole response to Gadsden’s opening remarks centered on the unrealistic portrayal of reservation lands and the refusal of the Apalachicola groups to relocate. Neamathla displayed his understanding of the political situation by utilizing Gadsden’s own fears in his rebuttal. He stated that if his people were relocated to the reservation, they would be susceptible to foreign influence from the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, specifically the Spanish and the British. Gadsden had previously confided to Calhoun his desire to isolate the Seminoles from contact with the Europeans. Neamathla warned that his “young men,” under foreign guidance and

forced by their destitute condition, due to an inadequate land base, would turn to violence. When engaging in colonial Southeastern diplomacy, Indigenous people invoked their “young men” when they wished to defuse a tense situation and avoid a wider more destructive conflict: blaming impulsive youth served to maintain peace. Neamathla invoked the possible actions of his “young men” in order to subtly threaten Gadsden if he refused to negotiate over the reservation’s boundaries. Nonetheless, the main message the headman sought to convey was the limited agricultural potential of the terrain. He insisted that the land was unsuitable for producing foodstuffs such as “hickory nut, acorn, and persimmon,” important parts of their diet. Indeed the Seminoles’ knowledge of the environment proved to be correct while Euro-American assessments proved to be exaggerated. Ultimately Neamathla argued for a reservation near Apalachicola, since “I am old and . . . too poor to move from my village to the south, my cabin has been built with my own hands, my fields cultivated myself.”³⁶ A final agreement could not be reached until various headmen secured land in West Florida. Along with Neamathla, this included leaders John Blunt, Tuski Hajo, and Econchatimico, all of whom Gadsden described as “men of industrious habits and who have made some advances in cultivation” and “rendered influential services to General Jackson” in the First U.S.-Seminole War.³⁷ Eventually the agreement called for the creation of two reservations with boundaries to be enforced by U.S. agents and the military.

Although the Seminoles managed to gain a few concessions, the 1824 Treaty of Moultrie Creek highlighted their new relationship with the nation-state. Even as the U.S. gained influence, vestiges of the language of colonial Southeastern diplomacy inflected the talks between Gadsden and Seminole leaders. The U.S. negotiator utilized many of the metaphorical

phrases meant to connote fictive kinship and peaceful intentions. For instance Gadsden stated that your “father the president” wished to smoke the “pipe of eternal peace.”³⁸ In addition to the language of the agreement, the U.S. was forced to make two major concessions, which illustrated that the Seminoles were able to maintain some leverage. The Seminoles, despite being relegated to reservation lands, were able to remain in Florida despite the desire to remove them west or force their reintegration with the Creeks. In addition, Apalachicola groups were able to further negotiate for their own smaller reservations near their homelands. Seminole refusal to relocate, and the inability of the U.S. to gather the necessary resources to evict them, meant that Indigenous peoples remained in Florida for more than a decade and some evaded removal altogether. The Treaty of Moultrie exemplifies the ever-increasing presence of the nation-state while serving as reminder that transitions in the Florida Borderlands occurred gradually and unevenly.

While Gadsden superficially followed the protocols of colonial Southeastern diplomacy, his tone and the treaty’s terms point to a shift in the relationship between the state and the region’s Indigenous peoples. Preceding the talks he sent a stern warning to Florida’s Indigenous groups that despite a possible boycott of the meeting the treaty would still be binding.³⁹ The metaphorical language in Gadsden’s speech is not as integrated into the main body of his address but rather supplements his message. In other words, adhering to Indigenous diplomatic procedure was not as vital because he felt he had a stronger position. As illustrated by Gadsden’s words cited above, he felt that the “whites” were now stronger and would impose their will as supposedly the Seminoles had done with the Spanish and the Yamassee.

Consequently the Treaty of Moultrie Creek imposed conditions on the Seminoles that could not have been imposed years earlier.

One of the most important treaty provisions stipulated that the Seminoles were now “under the protection of the United States.”⁴⁰ During the British and Spanish colonial administrations, both powers made treaties with Florida’s Indigenous peoples under the pretense that they had political jurisdiction over the entire territory. However, it was generally agreed, beginning with the 1765 Treaty of Picolata, that land west of the St. Johns River was “Indian Country.” With the exception of interactions with traders and occasional visits to St. Augustine to collect gifts, the Seminoles had autonomy within their territory. The Treaty of Moultrie Creek reflected the changing circumstances of the past few years. The U.S. placed an agency with an official within the Seminole reservation to “watch over the interests of said tribes.”⁴¹ Agents became central to the enforcement of the treaty’s article calling upon the Seminoles to deny sanctuary to runaway African slaves and to return any “fugitive” slaves to their owners. The agency would also be responsible for distributing annuity payments, which increased the involvement of the state in Seminole political and economic affairs.⁴²

Initially, the most pressing issue for the Alachua Seminoles was disputing the boundaries of their reservation. According to the treaty, the Indigenous lands began south of the “Big Hammock”; in other words the boundaries excluded the Alachua prairie, much of it now belonging in the Arredondo grant. This had been the location of the majority of Seminole settlements in the area. Micanopy and Jumper, the headmen present at the Treaty of Moultrie, knew that the land south to Lake Okeechobee was incapable of sustaining their communities. Consequently, many Seminoles refused to leave Alachua and others were immediately dealing

with hunger. Indigenous leaders began appealing to the ninth article of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek which stated that the boundary limits could be extended if U.S. Indian agents deemed the land “insufficient.”⁴³ Beyond the reluctance to leave agriculturally productive land, the Seminoles promised to resist removal since “a network of sacred obligations bound the Seminole people to the land in Florida.”⁴⁴ The Seminoles maintained an intimate connection to the land since the spirits of their ancestors resided there. As a result American officials complained that the Seminoles refused to honor the new boundaries and committed “depredations” on the property of U.S. citizens, which had recently been Seminole homelands.

For over a decade the U.S. had pressured and harassed the Seminoles, destroying their settlements, attempting to seize the Black Seminoles, and supplying native peoples with inadequate agricultural land. However, these affronts against the Seminoles were never considered when Indigenous groups refused to abide by the new boundary lines. Their actions were simply labeled as depredations without any consideration to their precarious situation. U.S. officials typically portrayed Seminoles as “savages” who attacked and murdered their citizens because of an irrational hostility toward the nation. President James Monroe utilized the discourse of Seminole savagery to justify the military interventions commanded by Jackson in 1817. In a message to Congress, the President argued that Indigenous “ravages” had been “unprovoked” and stemmed from a long running animosity.⁴⁵ Around the time of the transfer of Florida to the U.S., Jackson had planned another incursion to punish the Creek Red Sticks who that had immigrated south, and he also wanted to displace free African settlements. Advocating restraint, Jackson’s superiors did not approve the action but allied Creek factions led by Peter McQueen launched their own attacks. Consequently this caused more instability among

Indigenous settlements in northern Florida. The regional economy based on agriculture, cattle ranching, and the deerskin trade was undermined since the Seminoles were confined to the reservation with poor land and no coastal outlets.⁴⁶ These impositions increased the likelihood that the Seminoles would have to “raid” plantations to overcome their losses. Subsequently U.S. officials highlighted the loss of property to call for additional measures against the Seminoles, thus creating a cycle of violence and vengeance.

Since the Seminoles received an annuity, many settlers sought to claim property losses during “depredations” in order to be reimbursed from the government payments to the Seminoles. As a result, numerous settlers in the 1820s submitted claims to the Seminole agent and the Florida Superintendent of Indians Affairs with testimonies of apparent Indigenous attacks and seizures of property. Settlers John Day and Anthony L. Molyneux had purchased an interest in the property of Horatio S. Dexter, the original owner having mortgaged his holdings. They then enlisted the services of Peter Mitchell, the District Attorney of East Florida, to help with their claims against the Seminoles. They sought compensation for cattle, hogs, and horses that Dexter claimed the Seminoles had taken from him in 1821.⁴⁷ The situation remained tense and led to a petition signed by planters in Alachua County accusing the Seminoles of further depredations. Planters cited a case of a man in the country who was “scalped” and murdered by a Seminole hunting party outside the reservation lands.⁴⁸ Although the apparent crime lacked details, the planters nonetheless emphasized the loss of property and Indigenous “savagery.” Florida’s Indian agents thus found themselves in a difficult situation when confronted with the disputed claims.

Territorial Governor Duval often had in the politically uncomfortable task of mediating U.S. citizens' property disputes with the Seminoles. He served as both the principal Indian Agent in Florida and the territorial governor, roles often at odds with each other. Duval was flexible on certain points in his dealings with the Seminole, especially after he personally familiarized himself with their difficult situation.⁴⁹ On the larger question of Seminole removal to the newly established reservations, he nonetheless remained adamant and even threatened to arrest Seminole leaders who refused to relocate.⁵⁰ Word began to filter to him that the central reserve lands were inadequate for agriculture. Even Gadsden, the U.S. commissioner in the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, had to admit after touring the area that the current boundaries were not sufficient.⁵¹ He wrote Calhoun to tell him that the boundary should include an area known as the "Big Hammock," the site of previous Seminole settlements. Soon thereafter Lieutenant Jeremiah Yancey surveyed the countryside with the newly installed Seminole agent, Gad Humphreys. His conclusions bluntly contradicted Florida's image as an agricultural paradise and he admitted that the previous assessments of the land were inaccurate. He expressed his great disappointment and realized that the "numerous erroneous accounts given of this country, which originated in fancy rather than fact."⁵² Returning from the journey, Humphrey informed Duval that the Seminole leaders were insistent on an extension of the northern boundary as stipulated in the Treaty of Moultrie Creek. Despite the possible political fallout, Humphreys endorsed the Seminole position.⁵³

Having received considerable advice concerning the issue, Duval decided to take his own excursion into the reservation lands.⁵⁴ He came to the same conclusion as the other officials and alerted Calhoun of the need to include the "Big Hammock" in the reservation.⁵⁵ A year later the

governor further advised that the area known as the “Big Swamp” should also be added.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Duval received unending pressure from U.S. citizens to confine the Indigenous settlements within the reservation boundaries. Historian Cantor Brown Jr. describes the tension between planters and Indigenous peoples in 1826-1827 as “The Florida Crisis.”⁵⁷ Although Duval was aware of the problems facing the Seminoles, he had to contend with the territory’s emergent political and economic elite. Many of its members had been accumulating land in Alachua and establishing plantations. In Middle Florida a group known as “the Nucleus” consisted of prominent men such as Benjamin Chaires, Richard Keith Call, John Bellamy, Gadsden, and others that had acquired land and plantations.⁵⁸ It was in their interest to have the Seminoles relocated south. Due to constant pressure from U.S. citizens over “depredations” and claims for lost property, Duval called for stricter measures. In December 1825, he wrote to Secretary of War James Barbour and requested military assistance to force the Seminole onto their new reservations.⁵⁹

Although Duval and other U.S. officials advocated for policies such as the extension of reservation boundaries to alleviate the Seminoles’ displacement, landholding U.S. citizens began calling for the westward removal of Indigenous peoples. The governor exchanged talks with Seminole leaders in early 1826 to discuss the current tension. In a tone similar to that taken by Gadsden with the Seminoles in the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, the governor delivered an ultimatum. Either the Indigenous groups followed the stipulations of the treaty or they would face his “wrath.” If continued U.S. settler claims were made concerning the loss of property, then the Seminoles’ “annuity will be taken . . . to pay the white people.”⁶⁰ In comparison to Gadsden’s message years earlier, Duval utilized even fewer diplomatic metaphors, which had

been a staple of Southeastern Borderlands diplomacy. He made passing reference to “friends and brothers” and invoked the role of father for the U.S., but the shift in his language reflected a change in power relations. Statements like “listen to my words” or threats to “strike with a mighty arm,” which had never been used in diplomatic speeches in the Spanish and British Florida periods, gave new meaning to U.S.-Seminole relations.⁶¹

Apalachicola headman John Hicks, having recently staked his claim to leadership, delivered a retort to Duval’s talk. He informed the governor that the Seminoles were dealing with a failed corn crop and land displacement.⁶² He recognized that some Seminoles had seized property but that the Indigenous groups would enforce the laws regarding theft. In return Hicks referenced a future trip by a Seminole delegation, in 1826, to Washington, D.C., in which he hoped to gain more land. U.S. officials felt that a trip to the national capital would impress the Seminoles of “the power or numbers of the country” and presumably lead to their compliance.⁶³ Officials in the Office of Indian Affairs had hoped that the visit could facilitate the removal of the Seminoles to the west.⁶⁴ Much to their dismay, the visit did not produce an agreement for western removal but actually enlarged the Florida reservation by extending the boundary north to include the “Big Swamp.”

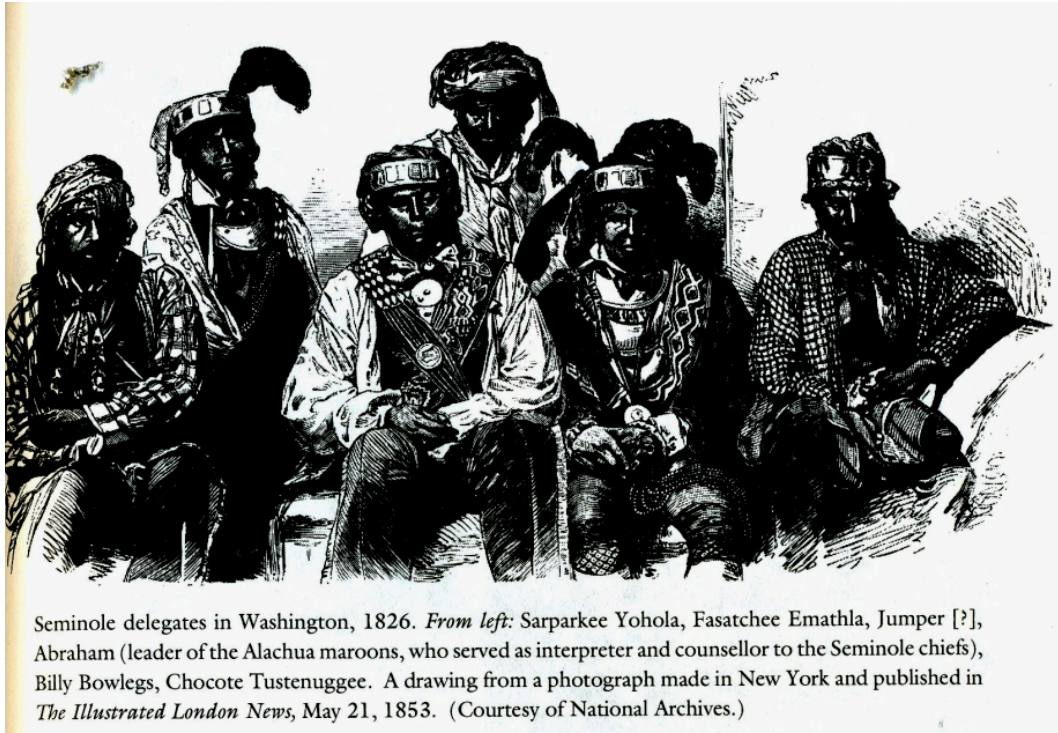


Figure 5.2 Seminole delegation to Washington, 1826. Source: Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 91.

U.S. citizens' hostility to the Seminole presence outside the reservation lands continued after the headmen returned from Washington, D.C. Planters sent the president a memorial highlighting the killing of "cattle and hogs, the robbing of their plantations, and the enticing away of their slaves."⁶⁵ A few months later, John Rodman represented a group of citizens petitioning Secretary of War Barbour to protest the withdrawal of military units from St. Augustine.⁶⁶ Many of the planters focused their displeasure on agent Humphreys for not using the military to restrain the Seminoles. Duval believed that the U.S. official half-heartedly restrained Indigenous groups, and he faulted the Mikasuki for the conflict.⁶⁷ An impending land sale near the Suwannee River motivated Florida officials to order Captain Francis Dade and a contingent of troops to secure the area. In November 1826, a report of Creek violence against two white men in Georgia gave Dade the pretext he needed to expel the Mikasuki from northern

Florida.⁶⁸ He forcibly relocated them to the reservation, despite the fact that U.S. officials had already admitted that the land could not sustain the Indigenous population. As a result, a number of Seminoles allegedly retaliated and the ensuing “depredation” narratives were used as a justification for military action and forced removal. Additionally the Seminoles were continuously threatened with integration with the Creek and the loss of their autonomy.

5.3 Seminoles and Africans

In the 1820s various factors such as land displacement, increased number of planters, settlers’ demands for Indian removal, and proposed Seminole political integration with the Creek caused considerable tension. Susan Miller argues that these issues have been overshadowed by scholars’ shortsightedness “and an exaggerated estimation of the importance of Africans to the Seminole government.”⁶⁹ Although this position correctly argues that the internal dynamics of Seminole politics and identity formation have been ignored by historians of Florida’s territorial period, Black Seminole and Seminole history cannot be separated, as has been the tendency of scholars interested in the African Diaspora or American Indian history. Even though both groups generally lived in semi-separate communities, they both resisted and adapted to the same processes of colonization and nationalism. They were respectively racialized as “Indian” and “Black” by Europeans and later the U.S. to suit the emergent social, political, and economic order structured along racial lines.

As the British realized in the 1760s, the successful development of a plantation export economy in Florida was dependent on stable relations between Euro-Americans and Indigenous nations.⁷⁰ Slave holding in the territory was impossible if agreements were not in place to

ensure peace between colonists and native peoples.⁷¹ Gadsden warned in 1823 that removal of the Seminole would be necessary since “an Indian population under these circumstances connected with another class of population (Africans) which will inevitably predominate in Florida, must necessarily add to natural weakness and endanger the security of one of the most exposed but most important section of the union.”⁷² Plantations were large financial investments that required stable sources of labor, and the ability of native people to seize cattle and slaves undermined that stability. As scholars such as Nancy Shoemaker have shown, the development of African slave labor meant the construction of blackness and consequently, whiteness. The system was based on a racial order, and for the new classifications to have any meaning a physical and social space had to be enforced between groups. Consequently, a rise of anti-miscegenation laws occurred in Virginia and Maryland during the eighteenth century, which separated various groups. The prospect of Indigenous and African relationships and alliances in Florida threatened to blur these racial lines and weaken the system. More concretely, military cooperation between groups made it difficult to remove Indigenous peoples and enslave Africans since their combined force presented a formidable challenge. A historical narrative of the Florida Borderlands solely focusing on free Africans or the Seminoles only presents a partial picture of the larger processes occurring in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Kenneth Wiggins Porter’s *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People*, published in 1996 but written throughout his lifetime, is an influential book that first interpreted the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship. Porter argued that the Black Seminoles lived in a state of “democratic feudalism.” As vassals of the Seminoles, the Africans lived in separate villages, contributed a tribute in the form of crops, and were free to manage their own affairs.⁷³

However, because of the diversity of experiences within both African and Indigenous groups, it is difficult to argue that one standard arrangement existed.⁷⁴ Within areas considered “Indian territory,” Africans lived in a variety of sociopolitical situations that included autonomous settlements, Black Seminole villages adjacent to Seminole communities, and also cases of kinship in which Seminoles and Africans lived together. Each individual’s circumstance most likely depended on a range of factors especially considering that some Africans had lived among the Seminoles for many years while others only recently arrived. Prior to 1821 a number of the Africans among the Seminoles had arrived from Spanish owners, while the newest arrivals were from U.S. owners. Interpreters and advisors, such as Abraham who served Micanopy, held important positions while others are simply mentioned in colonial documents as slaves of Seminole leaders.⁷⁵

Government sources do not provide a full account of Seminole and the Black Seminole relationships. Aside from the difficulty of gauging the range of relationships that existed, U.S. officials produced accounts that were filtered through their cultural lenses. They proved unable to comprehend individuals and groups whose lives blurred racial categories because of their dual Indigenous and African ancestry. Rather they placed most people they encountered in categories they were familiar with: Indian, Black, and White. In a few cases Euro-Americans utilized terms such as “Indian Negroes” and “Seminole Negroes” but they rarely specified whether these terms spoke to these individuals’ racial lineage, hybrid culture or their political relationship to the Seminoles.⁷⁶ Importantly, territorial officials encouraging settlement of the area and the growth of the plantation export economy had a motive to limit Black Seminoles’ ability to claim an Indigenous identity as a means to claim an identity not synonymous with enslavement.

U.S. agents frequently misunderstood the complex cultural situations that they had encountered among the people they were charged to control. In the 1820s American officials admitted that they had greatly erred in their assessments of Florida as an agricultural paradise, especially in the interior reservation lands. U.S. agent Humphrey once thought the Seminole could not distinguish between the U.S. and Spanish colonial administrations.⁷⁷ Meanwhile Florida Governor and Indian Superintendent Duval once remarked that the Seminoles could not be individually compensated for their property because the “Indians have no name.”⁷⁸ In all likelihood he rarely interacted with Seminoles beyond their leaders and misunderstood the lack of hierarchies that he could recognize as a sign that Seminoles lacked individual identities in their society. An equally troubling miscalculation was the belief of some government agents that the Seminoles could easily be reincorporated into Creek society despite their recent conflicts and the fact that the Seminoles had established their autonomy from the Lower Creek.⁷⁹ Even after the U.S. relocated the Seminoles to Indian Territory in the 1830s, the government still sought to incorporate them within Creek borders and political structure. These instances demonstrate the problematic nature of utilizing U.S. government documents to illuminate the lives of Indigenous and African peoples through the eyes of Euro-American men. U.S. agents were conditioned to see political, economic, and social structures they could recognize and often did not judge Seminole and African society on its own terms. Government officials were not motivated to gauge cultural and social nuances but rather to provide stability for the economic development of the territory, and thus they viewed African and Indigenous peoples within that context.

U.S. officials often seemed puzzled at the status of the Black Seminoles and viewed their presence among the Seminoles as a threat. Americans objected to the close proximity of African

and Indigenous peoples since they were concerned that the Black Seminoles corrupted the Seminoles and caused them to commit “depredations,” seize property, and offer sanctuary to runaway African slaves. In 1826 Governor Duval wrote to McKenney concerning an effort to persuade the Seminoles to relocate from Florida. He felt that the only way to facilitate removal was for “the Florida Indians . . . to sell all their slaves, I am convinced that it is owing to them that the Indians have not acted properly.”⁸⁰ A month later Duval chastised Indigenous leaders when he called on them to “fulfill the treaty (Moultrie Creek), you are not to mind what the negroes say they will lie and lead you astray in the hope to escape from their right owners . . . they care nothing for you”⁸¹ During the Second U.S.-Seminoles War military commanders often felt that the Black Seminoles were the true force behind the hostilities. Famously General Thomas Jesup once justified freeing a portion of the Black Seminoles because they “exercised an almost controlling influence over them (Seminoles).”⁸²

Colonial powers viewed Indigenous peoples as either noble savages or irrationally violent groups. Euro-Americans did not believe Indians were capable of actions rooted on complex calculations based on political, economic, and social factors. When resistance to removal began in the 1820s, Euro-Americans believed the Black Seminoles were the instigators of the conflict, thus ignoring Seminole displeasure with land displacement and loss of autonomy. Simmons offered an explanation for this line of reasoning. He argued that Africans were semi-civilized, owing to their previous residence among whites, and were familiar with society’s vices and evils. Meanwhile Indigenous peoples unexposed to “civilization” retained their “simplicity of character.”⁸³ Consequently, Euro-Americans believed that removing the Seminoles from such corrupting influences would make them more malleable and facilitate future assimilation.

Euro-Americans were not only concerned with Black Seminoles' influence on the Indians but also with what they perceived as the lax Seminole system of slavery. Many Euro-Americans, aside from financial considerations, felt they were protecting their own system of chattel slavery. Duval complained that Seminole slave masters "derive no advantage from their (Blacks) labor" and that "one chief who has 70 slaves has not received corn to feed his own family."⁸⁴ To Duval and other Euro-Americans in the early nineteenth century slave ownership was a sign of civilization and illustrated the ability to create a hierarchical society with elites that could accumulate wealth through the exploitation of African slave labor to produce goods for the market economy. Consequently, factions of Creek and Cherokee leaders became slave owners and acquired vast land holdings partly as a means of demonstrating their ability to adhere to principles of property and political centralization. Leaders such as the Cherokee Major Ridge and the Creek William McIntosh hoped that the restructuring of their societies would stave off U.S. efforts to remove Southeastern Indigenous groups. These maneuvers did not forestall removal since settlers and U.S. states coveted Indigenous property and land holdings. In contrast, the Seminoles' unwillingness to adopt chattel slavery served to justify their removal based on their lack of "civilization."

The Seminoles also frustrated Euro-American slaveholders by refusing to sell the Black Seminoles and impeding any efforts to recover runaway slaves. The Treaty of Moultrie Creek had stipulated that the Seminoles were required to prevent the entry of any "fugitive" slaves and assist in their apprehension. Seminole headmen usually proclaimed their adherence to the treaty stipulation. During his 1826 talk to the governor, John Hicks addressed the issue of the "runaway negroes" by stating that the Seminoles "will not keep them but bring them to the agent

that they may be given to their owners.”⁸⁵ However, Seminole leaders resented the treatment they received when they requested the return of Black Seminoles in the possession of U.S. citizens.⁸⁶ Euro-American claimants ignored these grievances and soon became resentful that despite Seminole assurances, they continued to have difficulty in reacquiring their slaves. Indigenous leaders argued that they expended great effort to recapture Africans but they experienced great difficulty finding them. Those slaves that they could locate expressed a great reluctance to return. Indian Agent Humphreys even remarked that returning slaves was a “thankless” duty in which Seminoles “risked their lives.” To illustrate this point he cited an incident in which one of the Seminole leaders was killed while trying to apprehend a slave.⁸⁷ In other occasions the Seminoles disputed the ownership of the slaves and often argued that individual Seminoles were the legal owners or had been defrauded.⁸⁸

Despite assurances to Indian agents, the Seminoles reluctantly retrieved and returned Black Seminoles. This situation provides insight into the relationship between both groups. Two main factors explain why the U.S. government, specifically the Department of War, in both 1826 and 1835, failed to purchase and remove the Africans from the Seminoles.⁸⁹ Firstly, as Humphreys’ quote above illustrates, Seminoles could not simply order runaway slaves to return to their former masters. Seminole slavery was unlike chattel slavery, Black Seminoles had the ability to shape their lives. As a result the analytical value of the term slavery, which conjures up images of chattel slavery, is called into question when examining these particular groups. Although Euro-Americans labeled the Black Seminoles as slaves, this term fails to encapsulate the complexity of their relationship, which went beyond that of master and slave. Terms such as “democratic feudalism” have more value, but any classification attempting to characterize the

wide range of relationships that were present is problematic. Secondly, the historical record underscores the reluctance of most Seminoles to remove the Black Seminoles, at least until after the Second U.S.-Seminoles War, in the 1830s. Seminole leaders probably viewed the Black Seminoles as useful resources in their struggle against removal and integration with the Creek. Thus the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship was interconnected with other Seminole political concerns.

Among the various slave claims made to the territorial government and the Seminole agency, a few cases are prime examples of the changing racial landscape. These cases illustrate the type of claims that were made, the pressures upon the Indian agents to act, Seminole resistance, and brief descriptions of the African slaves involved. The claim of Margaret Cook and her son-in-law, lawyer, John Hanson, to a slave known as either Jack or John, demonstrates the confusing nature of these cases.⁹⁰ In 1821 Samuel Cook and an individual named Francisco Ferreira apparently took advantage of the uncertainty surrounding the U.S. annexation of Florida. They convinced a man they identified as Nocusily, a Mikasuki, to sell his slaves named Kelly and her unnamed son, Peggy with her unnamed child, George, a ten year-old, and Fanny, five years his elder. Cook believed that the slaves lived “among the Indians” at a place known as Peas Creek. After purchasing the slaves, Cook felt that since they followed the condition of their mother, any children were also his property. He also claimed to have purchased rights to another slave named George from someone named Peter Rodriguez and that the slave resided at the “Big Swamp” where many Seminoles resided.⁹¹ Finally, Cook asserted that Ferreira had purchased a slave named John from an Indigenous man and that he had purchased the rights to this individual as well. One could infer that Cook had been in the province in 1821 and partnered with Spanish

subjects in order to economically exploit the geopolitical situation.⁹² Although Governor Duval eventually helped Cook settle the claim, he originally cited this case as an example of one of the unscrupulous efforts to dispossess the Seminoles.⁹³

After Cook died, his widow Margaret took up the claim and pressured the Seminole agency to retrieve all of her husband's slaves. She received all the slaves except one, whose name she knew as Jack or John, despite repeated attempts to reacquire him. Although she had received the majority of the property, Mrs. Cook remained adamant about recovering the final slave. Either she must have been determined to receive her full claim on the point of principle or as a widow she was in a difficult financial situation. Having been thwarted, Mrs. Cook and her representatives, most notably Hanson, submitted their case to the Superintendent of Indian affairs and the Secretary of War. They argued that the Seminoles were willing to deliver the slave but "it is a fact notorious in Florida that Colonel Humphreys throws every obstacle in the way of owners obtaining their negroes from the Indian Nation."⁹⁴ The agent denied his role in obstructing the apprehension of the slave and attempted to notify his superiors and Mrs. Cook of his difficulty duty in convincing the Seminoles to submit the slave to him. He simultaneously recognized that Seminole leaders were also being placed in an undesirable situation of trying to persuade slaves to return, one that had become dangerous when slaves physically resisted.⁹⁵

In August 1828, Humphreys spoke with John Hicks and other Seminole leaders concerning an order by the U.S. Secretary of War that fugitive slaves hiding within its borders must be turned in. Recently, Humphreys captured the slave involved in the Cook case near the Tampa Bay area and returned to the agency. In each occasion he escaped with the help of an "Indian Negro" and returned to the "Indian Nation."⁹⁶ While Hicks argued that the Seminoles

exhausted every avenue to present the slave to Humphreys, they nonetheless continued to contest the validity of Mrs. Cook's claim. Ferreira's original purchase of the slave had never been finalized because the man had not paid the full value. Thus Mrs. Cook owed the Seminoles some form of compensation if she desired to remove the slave. Hicks was displeased with threats from the Secretary of War to pay the Cook claim from the annuity which he already viewed as insufficient. Furthermore the Seminole headman remarked that the slave was "not a runaway but was raised in the Nation out of which he never has been, he was bought from the brother of the Indian with whom he was living at the time we caught him."⁹⁷ Hicks had utilized a diplomatic stance that both feigned compliance and yet reiterated his resistance to the seizure of the slave. The response that the man was raised in the nation and was living with an Indigenous individual speaks to a more intimate relationship than that of a master and a slave, but unfortunately little else is revealed about the man's life among the Seminoles.

Harkening back to Euro-American misconceptions of Seminole leaders' capacity to make political calculations, U.S. officials and citizens could not fathom why the Seminoles refused to release the slaves. Euro-Americans could not understand the complex relationship between Seminoles and Africans, especially in connection with this issue. Hanson remarked that he could not believe that "the whole Indian nation is afraid of one Negroe" or rather that Humphreys' statements that the Seminoles would not release the slave could be accurate.⁹⁸ Frustrated claimants such as Hanson focused their ire on Humphreys, who played the role of the nefarious white man misleading the naïve Indians. Hanson wrote to Duval to warn him of "something rotten" occurring in Humphreys' accounts with the government. Despite having no relevance to his drive to recoup his mother-in-law's slave, he disclosed information that Humphreys had used

Indigenous labor to build a sugar mill for his private use and billed the costs to the government.⁹⁹ A more serious charge would later be made that the agent was purchasing the Black Seminoles for himself.¹⁰⁰

In a similar case during roughly the same period, another widow, Mary Hannay, hired Archibald Clark to act as her representative in securing a slave named Sarah and her children. They were extremely persistent in their efforts to recover the slaves because of Hannay's impoverished state.¹⁰¹ Once more Indian agent Humphreys stood at the center of the controversy and drew the ire of the claimant. Eventually the pressure that Mrs. Cook and Hannay placed upon Humphreys led to an official investigation of his conduct. An evaluation of the Indian agent's actions and records proved inclusive, but Humphreys was nonetheless terminated from his post. John Phagan replaced him but also faced charges of insubordination before being dismissed.

The Cook and Hannay cases differed significantly in the locations of the slaves that they were claiming. Whereas the Cook slaves lived among the Apalachicola and Mikasuki Seminoles in the northern reservation, Sarah lived with the Alachua Seminoles in the central reservation. When Humphreys spoke to Hicks about Sarah, the headman excused himself from the discussion and gave the floor to a representative from the Alachua Seminoles and Micanopy, to present their position to the Indian agent. He related how Sarah entered their territory and legally belonged to a Seminole woman. Since the bill of sale that Clark presented for Sarah was thirty years old, she most likely entered Alachua at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁰² The Seminoles argued that Sarah had belonged to a man named Blount who was traveling through Alachua to St. Augustine. During his travels the sister of Seminole headman Bowlegs offered to purchase one of his slaves.

After acquiring permission from the Spanish, Blount exchanged Sarah for one hundred cattle. He was assisted by Bowleg's "black people" to Picolata, where Blount sold the cattle to a Mr. Solano and was paid in gold and silver, which the Seminoles considered the end of the transaction for Sarah.¹⁰³

Micanopy's representative emphatically stated he would "not give them up (Sarah and her children) and I will stand to it because we got them honestly." He demonstrated his grasp of the American legal system by demanding due process before being stripped of their property.¹⁰⁴ Without a tribunal or court trial, the Seminoles would not release Sarah and her children.¹⁰⁵ Seminole objections centered on the procedures for deciding the case. U.S. citizens could leave a bond at the Seminole agency and would be given the slaves while the case was being decided. The Seminoles feared that even if they won the case the claimants would flee with the slaves, demonstrating that the Seminoles valued the slaves over the bond. Conversely, U.S. officials would not allow the Seminoles to post a bond and keep slaves during litigation. Humphreys was convinced that unless the Seminoles received a trial on their terms they would not release Sarah and her offspring. Their resolve meant they "never will consent to be instrumental in a surrender which they evidently think would be construed in a measure as an abandonment of their claim, until the ownership has been decided by a judicial tribunal."¹⁰⁶ Although Humphreys believed that the Seminoles would be restrained from physical resistance to the removal of Sarah because of their small numbers, he advised against this course of action. Hannay and her agent would unsuccessfully fight to seize Sarah until 1837.

This particular episode demonstrates how the Seminoles resisted slave claims and the value they placed upon certain slaves. The Seminoles had developed a sophisticated

understanding of U.S. law. Although their status as non-citizens meant they did not have access to due process, they nonetheless appealed to American notions of justice and demanded a fair hearing before whites dispossessed them of their property. They attempted to hold U.S. officials to the legal standards that they had claimed to represent and desired to establish in Florida. This offered them an avenue to protect an individual with whom they clearly did not want to part. They could have turned Sarah over to the agent and forced the slaveholders to post a bond for her value. If the claimants refused to return with her then the bond would have been given to the Seminole owner. Indigenous refusal to submit to this system meant that they valued the Black Seminoles more than the financial compensation. Since Sarah belonged to a prominent woman in Seminole society, the sister of a Seminole headman, Sarah must have also been a valued member of her community. Unfortunately the documents do not discuss Sarah's children and whether their father had been an African or a Seminole. What can be discerned is that the Seminole were willing to sacrifice retribution from the U.S., such as the withholding of the annual annuity, in order to protect Sarah and her children, which demonstrates that their interest in her and her family went beyond financial considerations.

Slave claims such as those mentioned above provide only a limited glimpse into the lives of the Black Seminoles. The claims rarely mentioned the fathers of the African slaves that U.S. citizens sought to seize. Planters and slave owners were merely content to note that since slaves followed the condition of their mother, then the children of African female slaves were their property. One of the major exceptions, in the sense that a substantial amount of information is available, is the case of Rosa Factor, whose escape from St. Augustine around 1821 at the age of 30 initiated decades-long legal battles. An Indigenous man identified as Ystejacho apparently

sold her to Mateo Solano and Miguel Papy.¹⁰⁷ One of the witnesses on the bill of sale was Ferreira, the same man involved in schemes with Samuel Cook to purchase Seminole slaves.¹⁰⁸ In all likelihood Rosa was taken to a plantation near St. Augustine, because Solano owned a plantation about 30 miles from the settlement. During a trip to Georgia to buy cattle, Solano, accompanied by Joseph S. Sánchez, sought to sell Rosa. When his efforts proved ineffective he deposited the slave at a plantation near present-day Jacksonville where Sánchez's brother owned a plantation. Perhaps out of a fear of being sold in Georgia, Rosa and two slaves from the plantation ran away to the "Indian Nation."¹⁰⁹

Rosa travelled through Seminole lands and established herself among the Apalachicola Seminoles. Solano initially chased Rosa and soon discovered at the St. Johns River that a number of Seminoles had assisted in her escape. They freely admitted that they had given her a horse "and that she had gone on to the nation."¹¹⁰ Tony Proctor, a well-known Black Seminole interpreter, testified that he later found Rosa in Tampa Bay, the site of various Indigenous and free African settlements. He stayed in her home for three days and she admitted "that she ran away and that the Indians furnished her with a horse."¹¹¹ Rosa was in Apalachicola a few years later while Solano and Papy continued their efforts with U.S. authorities to recapture her. Their objective became more complicated when a Captain William Miller, a "Creek-white," seized Rosa in Tampa Bay and sold her to a Chilly McIntosh.¹¹² From McIntosh, Rosa became a slave of the Lower Creek leader Philatouche, known to Euro-Americans as the Black Factor. He passed away and left his slaves to a prominent Indigenous woman known as Nelly Factor. Either through negotiation or conflict, Rosa became the slave of Sam Factor.¹¹³ Sam chose Rosa as his wife and the pair had three children, Sarah, Billy, and Paladore, whom Factor freed through a

written declaration. He sought to give his wife and children “all the freedom and privileges of the tribe of Indians which they are now living with.”

Solano and Papy pressed their claim to Rosa and her children, even as Sam Factor contested their claim. Their status hinged on whether the original seller of the slave, Ystejacho, was legally Rosa’s owner, which, if he were not, would invalidate the sale to Solano and Papy. Exacerbating the situation was the fact that Solano was also pursuing other slave claims as well. He expended much energy to recapture a slave named Hannay, whom he had purchased from the heirs of an Alachua Seminole who had recently passed away.¹¹⁴ Hannay and her young son Joseph, described as a “mulatto,” born to her in the “Indian Nation,” were taken to the Solano plantation. Hannay apparently married another Solano slave named Dick and gave birth to a daughter, Maria Garcia.¹¹⁵ This would become a point of contention since U.S. officials had suspicions the girl was born before Hannay came to the plantation.¹¹⁶ This meant that Solano could not claim Maria and her later offspring; thus he went to great lengths to present testimony that she was born after he purchased the mother.¹¹⁷ The family lived on Solano’s plantation until the disruptions of the Second U.S.-Seminole War caused him to move the estate to St. Augustine. Leaving in the middle of the night, Hannay and her two children left Solano’s household. Andres Papy could only later confirm from an African that had recently returned from Seminole territory that Hannay ran away in that direction.¹¹⁸

Similar to Rosa, Hannay eventually made her way with her children to Tampa Bay. In 1840, Sánchez went to Tampa Bay and saw both Rosa and Hannay, as well as the children of the latter. To his dismay the slaves were emboldened by certificates they had received from the U.S. military declaring them free. Both Hannay and Maria Garcia had husbands serving as military

interpreters, which might have facilitated the granting of their liberty.¹¹⁹ Concurrently, the U.S. military realized in the late 1830s that freeing and relocating Black Seminoles to Indian Territory was necessary for ending the current conflict. Within a year both Hannay and Rosa would leave for Indian Territory and the Solano estate was confined to seeking financial compensation from the U.S. government. For Rosa, removal might have seemed as a positive development since the preceding years among the Apalachicola Seminoles had been harrowing.

Solano and Papy were not the only slaveholders seeking to claim Rosa Factor and her children. Despite the fact that Factor had freed his children and considered them part of his Apalachicola band, they remained vulnerable to enslavement. They lived under a headman known as Walker who had appealed to the Indian agent over the appearance of “land pirates” that used dogs to raid and capture Africans. Levin Brown was claiming Factor’s children although the governor had rejected his claim.¹²⁰ His brother Isaac had attempted to forcibly seize the family but his attack was repulsed. Ezekiel Robertson then sought to gain possession of the slaves through subterfuge, but when he failed to show the necessary records he resorted to force. He directed a group of men to capture the family and in the ensuing skirmish Rosa and Billy escaped but Sarah and her two sons were taken, and would never be recovered.¹²¹ By 1837 Rosa was in Tampa Bay, both Rosa and Billy were in the service of the U.S. military, as interpreters and guides, until they were removed to the West a few years later.¹²²

Ignoring their hybrid culture, Euro-Americans continued to see Rosa and Sam’s children as simply “negroes.” Since the children were being treated as property it would make sense that there was an inclination to ignore their Indigenous heritage. On one occasion Rosa’s grandchildren from Sarah were called “Indian boys” but in territorial Florida they were largely

considered Black. Thus in the nineteenth century Florida Borderlands, individuals were being increasingly confined to one of the rigid racial categories with little social space available to claim dual racial identities. As the slave claims illustrate, Black Seminoles lived mobile and varied lives. They intimately interacted with former Spanish subjects, Seminoles, Euro-Americans, and other Africans. Their relationships with these groups ranged from master-slave, to allies, adversaries, and kin. It would be difficult to argue that one standard identity existed among the Black Seminoles or that one uniform relationship existed with the Seminoles. Nonetheless, the discourse of property through the ever-increasing slave claims made against Africans sought to create a society structured along racial lines. Although their interactions were varied and identities fluid, the rise of the nation-state and the plantation export economy sought to enforce the creation of Indians and Blacks.

Conclusion

By the early 1830s, U.S. citizens' slave claims for the Black Seminoles represented only one of the many factors that Euro-Americans cited in their desire for the westward removal of the Seminoles. Disputed slave ownership in conjunction with "depredations" and Seminole refusal to be confined to reservation boundaries led to a crisis in the early Florida territorial period. Seminoles and Black Seminoles were increasingly placed in an untenable position that combined the encroachment of settlers and planters with an inadequate land base for subsistence. Sensing an opportunity, U.S. agent Gadsden sought to "assist" the Seminoles during their time of dire economic need by encouraging them to relocate west of the Mississippi River to Indian Territory.¹²³ In 1832, when Humphreys assembled the Mikasuki and Alachua Seminole leaders

from the interior reservation: he had already decided to deal with the Apalachicola Seminoles separately. As a result, a tentative agreement stated that if a Seminole delegation toured Indian Territory and expressed their satisfaction with reintegration into the Creek Confederation, then a new removal treaty would become legally binding. Gadsden sought to take advantage of Seminole weaknesses by offering them financial support and guaranteed their annuity for a set amount of time. Equally importantly, the U.S. offered to settle the slave claims by reimbursing claimants, an issue that had caused much consternation. However, there was one aspect of the treaty that led to resistance. The Seminoles would be under the jurisdiction of not only the U.S. but also the Creeks. Although their annuity would be guaranteed it nonetheless fell under the control of their adversaries. Since the late eighteenth century the Seminoles had been vigorously defending their independence from the Creek. This treaty stipulation as well as Seminole spiritual and cultural connection with the land sparked the Second U.S.-Seminole War.

Florida in the 1820s did not suddenly become exposed to hardening racial hierarchies, political centralization, and the centrality of private property, specifically African slaves. In fact there existed some similarities and continuity with previous historical periods. The British had been the first to envision Florida as a location for efficient and productive plantations. Authors such as Grant and Simmons mapped the territory, while British treaty negotiators desperately sought stability with Indigenous peoples in order to encourage economic growth. The diplomatic language that Gadsden had used in the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, at least superficially, had been first articulated by the British. While Americans were faulted for the tenacious slave claims made after annexation, many similar cases had previously been made by Spanish slaveholders, who then sold their rights to third parties, seeking to profit from the transfer of power. Thus the

expansion of the nation-state, market capitalism, and racialization stemming from slavery did not materialize solely after 1821 but were rooted in earlier trends. What did change shortly after the annexation of Florida was simply a shift in power dynamics. Unlike the British and the Spanish, the United States because of various factors, such as proximity and resources, could project its power onto the territory. Whereas previous colonial powers had to reach an accommodation with the Seminoles and Black Seminoles, the United States viewed these groups' autonomy outside of its jurisdiction as an affront to the nation-state and its ability to control its borders. Policing these groups was important in U.S. Southern society, since the cooperation of Seminoles and Africans threatened to undermine its racial hierarchy.

The Treaty of Moultrie Creek represented a crucial moment when the Seminoles fell under the jurisdiction of the United States. Government agents created territorial reservations that were insufficient to sustain the Indigenous population, yet they sought to restrict them within those physical spaces. Forced to resist the treaty terms in order to survive, Seminoles and Africans became "savages" lacking respect for the rule of law. This in turn fed the ambitions of Euro-Americans who promoted a much larger removal of non-white groups in the region. Partly fueling the effort to remove Indigenous peoples were efforts to claim the Black Seminoles. Various claims seeking to seize the Africans among the Seminoles illustrated the diverse positions that Black Seminoles held within Seminole society. Analyzing both the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship and the exact identities that individuals and groups held is complicated. What can be said with some certainty is that the Seminoles were willing to resist the seizure of the Africans because they represented an important resource in their shared effort to resist colonial processes that both groups were experiencing.

Notes:

¹ William H. Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1973), 53. Unlike many authors of the period, Simmons did not summarily dismiss Seminole social and economic systems. Rather he often viewed the Seminoles as noble savages; Simmons often compared Seminole and American societies in order to critique the latter. For instance he mentions that Indigenous peoples were generally more innocent and honest and they treated their slaves humanely. Simmons advocated tolerance for Seminole religious beliefs unless Christian conversation could be conducted similar to the Jesuits' conversion of South America. Additionally, the author avoids the common misconception that the Seminoles were lazy because of the role of Seminole women in agriculture. Although Simmons sees value in Seminole political and social systems, his motive is nonetheless to bring Euro-American civilization to Florida.

² Samuel Factor Declaration, 27 May 1832, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (hereafter cited as BIA), RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, National Archives (hereafter cited as NA)

³ James Grant Forbes, *Sketches, Historical and Topographical, of the Floridas; More Particularly of East Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), vii. James Covington writes that Forbes' book faced competition by the parallel release of Charles Blacker Vignoles' work which also sought to give U.S. readers a familiarity with the region and thus promote immigration and economic growth; Charles Blacker Vignoles, *Observations Upon the Floridas* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1823).

⁴ Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 53.

⁵ John Lee Williams, *The Territory of Florida or Sketches of the Topography, Civil and Natural History, of the Country, the Climate, and the Indian Tribes, from the First Discovery to the Present Time* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1837). Governor William P. DuVal appointed both Williams and Simmons to a panel meant to locate a site for the territorial capital, they settled on Tallahassee. In 1827, Williams wrote a book titled *A View of West Florida*, its success convinced him to later write a book describing the geography and demographics of the entire territory.

⁶ Eric V. Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007). Although the author is writing about Arizona at the turn of the twentieth century many of his observations are applicable to Florida since, unlike its southwestern counterpart, the area was more quickly integrated with the U.S. and its market economy.

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 165.

⁸ Forbes, *Sketches, Historical and Topographical, of the Floridas*, 19.

⁹ James Grant to John Pownall, 30 July 1763, Colonial Office (hereafter cited as CO) 5/540-49, microfilm reel 1, Public Records Office, London (hereafter cited as PRO), Library of Congress (hereafter cited as LC).

¹⁰ John Hambly Journal, 29 June to 27 August 1794, East Florida Papers (hereafter cited as EFP), microfilm reel 43, P.K.Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as PKY); John Hambly Journal, 21 April 1794, EFP, microfilm reel 43, PKY. Hambly's journals are good examples of the type of information, concerning the geography and demographic data, which Spanish agents provided to their superiors.

¹¹ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the People in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999), 816.

¹² John K. Mahon, *The War of 1812* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972); John K. Mahon, "The Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 1823," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 40 (April 1962), 372. Mahon writes that despite claims from other scholars such as Annie Abel, he does not believe the Seminole removal treaties can be considered "one of the worse Indian treaties ever made by the United States"; John K. Mahon, "Two Seminole Treaties: Payne's Landing, 1832, and Ft. Gibson, 1833," *The Florida*

Historical Quarterly 41 (July 1962), 13. Scholars have debated whether U.S. authorities bribed Black Seminole interpreters in order to impose the removal treaties upon the Seminoles. Mahon states that any coercion that occurred was due to the imbalance of power between the Seminoles and the U.S. and not necessarily due to corrupt interpreters. Mahon also correctly notes that the Seminole were hostile to U.S. efforts to submerge them politically within Creek jurisdiction after the move to Indian Territory.

¹³ George Klos, "Blacks and the Seminole Removal Debate, 1821-1835," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (July 1989), 60. Florida Governor William P. Duval claimed that the Black Seminoles were controlling the Seminoles and that their refusal to turn over the African slaves was the main cause of Indigenous groups' problems.

¹⁴ Canter Brown Jr., "The Florida Crisis of 1826-1827 and the Second Seminole War," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 73 (April 1995), 439.

¹⁵ For recent work that does substantially focus on the prewar years in Florida, see Kevin D. Kokomoor, "Indian Agent Gad Humphreys and the Politics of Slave Claims on the Florida Frontier, 1822-1830," (M.A. thesis, University of South Florida, 2008).

¹⁶ Susan A. Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones : A Seminole Saga* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 64.

¹⁷ John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 49. In particular a faction of Democratic-Republican conservatives, most notably Henry Clay, warned that Jackson's actions would have negative consequences for the nation.

¹⁸ British officials did attempt to negotiate the best possible terms for their Indigenous allies in the Treaty of Ghent but they were not willing to risk the continuation of the war over these issues. Although the ninth article of the Treaty of Ghent stated that occupied lands would be returned to Britain's Indigenous allies, the Creeks never regained their land.

¹⁹ Gad Humphreys to William P. Duval, 26 July 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA; John Hicks to William P. Duval, 23 February 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286. During talks with U.S. officials, Seminole leaders expressed their displeasure with what they perceived as Spanish treachery. John Hicks informed Governor Duval that the Seminoles' current difficulties were due to the loss of their lands for which he blamed the Spanish, presumably since the Europeans had abandoned the province to the U.S.

²⁰ William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola University of West Florida Press, 1986), 327. Forbes was able to lobby the Spanish to issue a land grant in order to compensate him for his losses throughout the Second Spanish Florida period. He also pressured officials to ensure that any treaty with the U.S. would guarantee his land grants from both the Seminoles and the Spanish.

²¹ Edward F. Keuchel and Joe Knetsch, "Settlers, Bureaucrats, and Private Land Claims: The 'Little Arredondo Grant'," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (October 1989), 202. The authors state that Arredondo was held in high regard by the Spanish crown and a member of the ruling *junta* of Cuba. Written within the grant was a stipulation that his son Joseph was also one of the land grant recipients.

²² William Pope Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 17 March 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

²³ The phrase "domestic dependent nations" originates from the 1831 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *The Cherokee Nation v. The State of Georgia* in which Chief Justice John Marshall stated that the Cherokee were a "domestic dependent nation." This was an ambiguous term but did confer a limited sovereignty for Indigenous nations but nonetheless placed them within the jurisdiction of the state; During the later half of the nineteenth century various reform movements sought to assist Indigenous peoples through

programs designed at assimilation. Most famously, the Carlisle School, located in an old Pennsylvania army base, was a boarding school for children from around the country. Its founder Captain Richard H. Pratt once summarized the school's goal in 1892 as seeking to "kill the Indian, and save the man."

²⁴ John K. Mahon, "The Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 1823," 359. Thomas Metcalfe, the Kentucky congressman, advocated privatizing Seminole land holdings as a way of assimilating them into white society. However, his ideas never gained any traction as most officials preferred Indian removal and the creation of reservations.

²⁵ Ibid, 354.

²⁶ James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, 11 June 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame 526, NA.

²⁷ See Oscar Martinez, *Troublesome Border* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1988).

²⁸ James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, 11 June 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame 526, NA.

²⁹ James Grant to John Stuart, 15 March 1769, Colonial Office (hereafter cited as CO) 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, Public Records Office, London (hereafter cited as PRO), Library of Congress (hereafter cited as LC); James Grant Correspondence, 06 December 1769, CO 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC; Patrick Tonyn to Earl of Dartmouth, 21 January 1775, CO 5/550-56, microfilm reel 2, PRO, LC.

³⁰ John C. Calhoun, 11 June 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame 526, NA.

³¹ James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, 11 June 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame 526, NA.

³² Joe Knetsch, *Florida's Seminole Wars 1817-1858* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 45. The Seminoles chose Neamathla as their spokesman before they arrived to negotiate the treaty. Whether Alachua Seminoles leaders were completely in agreement is difficult to discern but they were present at the conference.

³³ James Gadsden to James Barbour, 25 March 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

Gadsden argued that the Seminoles were an offshoot of the Creek and were not indigenous to Florida. He claims that the Seminoles exterminated the original Florida Indians and that they have no rights stemming from Spanish treaties to make any land claims.

³⁴ Proceedings of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 30 August to 16 September 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame 538, NA. This source does not specify the author but does clarify that Gadsden is the official speaking to the Seminoles. Concurrently, Neamathla is listed as the main speaker for the Seminoles. Also mentioned in reports of the treaty proceedings were the other two treaty commissioners, Governor William P. Duval and Bernardo Segui.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Treaty of Moultrie Creek Commissioners Report, 21 September 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame 547, NA. The official treaty also lists populations led by the Mulatto King and Emathloche among the few groups able to live in the Apalachicola reservation.

³⁸ Proceedings of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 30 August to 16 September 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame 538, NA.

³⁹ John K. Mahon, "The Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 1823," 360.

⁴⁰ Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 18 September 1823, BIA, RG11, M668, microfilm reel 5, frame 208-225, NA. The first article of the treaty stated that Seminole leaders whom signed the document acceded to being under the protection of the United States.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Susan A. Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones: A Seminole Saga* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 31.

⁴⁵ United States Congress, *American State Papers*, 38 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing office, 1832-1861), Foreign Relations, vol. 4, 183.

⁴⁶ Canter Brown Jr., "The Florida Crisis of 1826-1827 and the Second Seminole War," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 73 (April 1995), 421.

⁴⁷ Peter Mitchell Deposition, 25 June 1828, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA.

⁴⁸ Memorial from the Inhabitants of the Territory of Florida to the U.S. Government, Undated, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA. Although this document is undated it does make reference to the 1823 signing of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek. Also see Francis P. Fatio, 19 February 1829, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA. The Swiss planter was one of the only settlers to have lived in the province during the British, Spanish, and U.S. administrations. In this testimony he states that the Seminoles are constantly on his land and that he holds the Indian agent Humphreys responsible for refusing to address the situation.

⁴⁹ William P. Duval to John C. Calhoun, 11 April 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. Neamathla was able to successfully argue that his people needed to harvest their latest crop before they could relocate. Duval would agree with this position and made allowances for additional time.

⁵⁰ William P. Duval to John C. Calhoun, 12 July 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA; William P. Duval to John C. Calhoun, 29 July 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. The governor states that an impressive military force is necessary to compel the Seminoles to vacate areas in Northern Florida.

⁵¹ James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, 20 March 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA; James Gadsden to William P. Duval, 05 May 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

⁵² Jeremiah Yancey Report, 30 June 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. Few areas were deemed suitable for agriculture according to Yancey. He stated that there was not "two hundred acres of good land" in the Seminole reservation lands.

⁵³ Gad Humphreys to William P. Duval, 26 July 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. Humphreys writes that the Seminoles are wary of whites and that they cannot distinguish between Americans and Spaniards. This seems unlikely since the Seminoles, especially their leaders, always had a sophisticated understanding of the region's geopolitical situation. Their foreign policy was based on the utilization of colonial rivalries in order to gain leverage in their own negotiations. The Seminoles had been fighting U.S. excursions since the late 18th century partly because of their alliance with the Spanish. Therefore it seems questionable that they would not be able to differentiate between both governments. More likely, the Seminoles may have sought to make the point that they wanted the same relationship with the U.S. that they had with the Spanish, despite their eventual disappointment with the latter.

⁵⁴ Benjamin Chaires to William Duval, 13 January 1825, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. This report to the governor states that the Indian reservation is the "poorest part of Florida." The general assessment is that there is not "one spot of good land sufficiently large for one of several of the tribes or towns of Indians."

⁵⁵ William P. Duval to John C. Calhoun, 11 February 1825, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

⁵⁶ William P. Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 22 February 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. According to Duval he visited "every spot where any lands were spoken of as being good and I can say with truth I have not seen three hundred acres of good land." In fact conditions were so difficult that the governor could not complete his visit since the heat, drinking water, and insects, caused him to shorten his itinerary. In order to rectify this situation the area known as the Big Swamp was added to the Seminole reservation but it was only considered temporary. The U.S. reserved the right to reclaim the land at a later date.

⁵⁷ Brown, "The Florida Crisis of 1826-1827."

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 424.

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- ⁵⁹ William P. Duval to James Barbour, 16 December 1825, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.
- ⁶⁰ William P. Duval to Seminole Headmen, 23 February 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² John Hicks to William P. Duval, 23 February 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.
- ⁶³ William P. Duval to James Barbour, 02 March 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. In addition to providing a description of the Seminole delegation to Washington D.C., Duval tells Barbour that Hicks and the other leaders can be controlled with the exception of the Mikasuki. Various documents accuse the Mikasuki of committing the majority of “raids and “depredations” in the territory.
- ⁶⁴ William P. Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 07 April 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. The governor writes that Secretary of War James Barbour should attempt to convince the Seminoles to remove west but that the topic should not be approached until the Seminole delegation arrives in Washington D.C.
- ⁶⁵ Memorial of the Inhabitants of Florida, 28 April 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. A number of the planters who signed the petition were previous Spanish subjects such as Francis Philip Fatio, George Fleming, and Mateo Solana.
- ⁶⁶ John Rodman to James Barbour, 19 July 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.
- ⁶⁷ William P. Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 05 April 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.
- ⁶⁸ Brown, "The Florida Crisis of 1826-1827," 434.
- ⁶⁹ Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones*, 64.
- ⁷⁰ The term Euro-American is being utilized in this instance to refer to the British, Spanish, and U.S. administrations in Florida.
- ⁷¹ José Coppinger to Edward Griffith, 28 January 1820, EFP, microfilm reel 174, PKY. Towards the end of Spain's reign in Florida, Governor José Coppinger interviewed an African named Antonio who had been apprehended and lived among the “Indians” for a few years. The Spanish official would comment that the number of Africans living among the Indians undermined both the authority of slaveholders and the government.
- ⁷² James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, 11 June 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame 526, NA. When Euro-Americans spoke about the dangers of Indigenous and African relationships it was usually in vague terms that implied the destabilization of the region and its societal order.
- ⁷³ Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1996), 6.
- ⁷⁴ Klos, "Blacks and the Seminole Removal Debate," 59; Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1999), 133. The author notes that John Cannard was reported to be a cruel master, however, other accounts stated that he afforded his slaves relative freedom. Saunt then notes that Mikasuki leader Kinache and Seminole headman Payne practiced a different kind of slavery where Africans enjoyed rights such as trading property.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid, 6; Jeremiah Yancey Report, 30 June 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. In his report Yancey writes that the population of the Black Seminole settlement Pilaklikaha consisted of seventy slaves belonging to Micanopy.
- ⁷⁶ Gad Humphreys to William P. Duval, 20 January 1825, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. Humphreys writes that “Indian Negroes” were utilized in the building of a road to the reservation agency; Thomas Jesup to Richard Keith Call, 15 March 1838, BIA, RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, frame 112, NA. U.S. General Jesup is writing to the Florida governor to inform him that he has separated the Seminoles from the “Seminole Negroes.”
- ⁷⁷ Gad Humphreys to William P. Duval, 26 July 1824, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

⁷⁸ William P. Duval to John C. Calhoun, 26 October 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. According to the U.S. official "the chiefs are named, but the common men generally must perform some serviceable act before they receive any name . . . hence it will be impossible in many instances to obtain the name of the Indians."

⁷⁹ James Gadsden to James Barbour, 25 March 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. Andrew Jackson upon becoming the Florida governor ordered that the Seminoles be returned to the "country from which they had absented." However, Georgia refused to allow the Seminoles to be relocated within its borders. Had Jackson's plan been implemented it would have meant political re-integration of the Seminole with the Creek; John K. Mahon, "The Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 1823," 352; Thomas L. Judge to T. Hartley Crawford, 10 February 1843, BIA, RG 75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA. This document refers to U.S. attempts in the 1830s and 1840s to remove the Seminoles to Creek lands in Indian Territory.

⁸⁰ William P. Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 12 January 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

⁸¹ William P. Duval to Seminole Headmen, 23 February 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

⁸² Thomas Jesup to Marey, 03 April 1848, BIA, RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, frame 93, NA.

⁸³ Simmons, *Notices of East Florida*, 45.

⁸⁴ William P. Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 12 January 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. Governor Duval writes that the Black Seminoles are a negative influence among the Seminoles and he states that they supply the Seminoles with whiskey. He argues that the U.S. government should work to encourage the Seminoles to sell their slaves before they emigrate out of Florida. He notes that the Seminoles continue to refuse to sell their slaves.

⁸⁵ John Hicks to William P. Duval, 23 February 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286.

⁸⁶ William P. Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 20 March 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

⁸⁷ Gad Humphreys to Thomas L. McKenney, 07 March 1828, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 287, NA. Humphreys is writing concerning an order from the secretary of war that the agency deliver a slave belonging to Margaret Cook.

⁸⁸ Gad Humphreys to William P. Duval, 23 September 1828, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 287, NA. Seminole leaders demanded the formation of a tribunal to both hear evidence and make a decision concerning Mary Hannay's slave claims.

⁸⁹ William P. Duval to Harris, 12 January 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA; Wiley Thompson to C.A. Harris, 17 June 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, N.A. The department of war debated whether the Seminoles should be forced to sell their slaves before removal to Indian Territory. Thompson states that the sale of the Africans will make it more difficult to remove the Seminoles, he advises against this action. He believes the reason that the Seminole will not abide a separation from the Black Seminoles is that the former exert a strong influence over the latter.

⁹⁰ Kokomoor, "Indian Agent Gad Humphreys and the Politics of Slave Claims on the Florida Frontier,"

82. The author presents a good summary of Margaret Cook and Mary Hannay's respective slave claims. He focuses on the conflict among U.S. officials especially the pressure placed upon Indian agent Humphreys to deliver the slaves in question.

⁹¹ William Pope Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 17 March 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA.

⁹² Spanish subjects also sought to enter Seminole lands and purchase slaves, which they often resold to Americans, especially in 1821. Although slave claims and efforts to enslave the Black Seminoles are associated with Euro-Americans, a number of claims originated with Spanish subjects.

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- ⁹³ Ibid.
- ⁹⁴ Margaret Cook to James Barbour, 21 December 1827, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 287, NA.
- ⁹⁵ Gad Humphreys to Thomas L. McKenney, 07 March 1828, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 287, NA.
- ⁹⁶ Kokomoor, "Indian Agent Gad Humphreys and the Politics of Slave Claims on the Florida Frontier," 106.
- ⁹⁷ John Hicks to Gad Humphreys, 15 August 1828, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 287, NA.
- ⁹⁸ John Hanson to Charles Downing, 30 April 1828, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 287, NA.
- ⁹⁹ John Hanson to William P. Duval, 27 July 1828, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 287, NA; Kokomoor, "Indian Agent Gad Humphreys and the Politics of Slave Claims on the Florida Frontier," 102.
- ¹⁰⁰ William P. Duval to John Eaton, 07 April 1830, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 287, NA. Florida Governor Duval is writing to the secretary of state to inform him of Humphreys' illegal activities while he was the Seminole's Indian agent.
- ¹⁰¹ Kokomoor, "Indian Agent Gad Humphreys and the Politics of Slave Claims on the Florida Frontier," 87.
- ¹⁰² Council between Gad Humphreys and Seminole Headmen, 28 February 1830, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm 287, NA.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid. The Alachua Seminole representative specifically mentioned Judge Joseph Lee Smith in St. Augustine as the appropriate official with the legal power to hear evidence and make a ruling.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁶ Gad Humphreys to James D. Westcott Jr., 28 April 1830, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA.
- ¹⁰⁷ Joseph S. Sanchez Deposition, 19 April 1843, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA. In his testimony over Rosa Factor, Sanchez confides that he had witnessed many slave purchases by Spanish subjects transacted in a similar manner as Solano and Papy's had completed their purchase.
- ¹⁰⁸ Bill of Sale for Rosa Factor, 23 April 1844, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA. Both Papy and Solano went to St. Augustine and sought permission to purchase the slave and then created a bill of sale with witnesses. Through the use of Indian interpreter Antonio Huertas they negotiated a price of 400 dollars for Rosa.
- ¹⁰⁹ Joseph S. Sanchez Deposition, 19 April 1843, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.
- ¹¹⁰ Tony Proctor Disposition, 26 April 1841, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA. The Black Seminole interpreter writes that he had known the slave as "Big Rose."
- ¹¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹¹² Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 132. The author provides a summary of Rosa Factor's experiences among the Apalachicola Seminoles. He also includes a discussion of the events associated with her son Billy in Indian Territory who sought to make his own slave claims on the family of the Black Seminole interpreter Abraham.
- ¹¹³ Matthew Arbuckle Testimony, 23 April 1844, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA. It should be noted that Samuel Factor is alternatively identified as Jim Factor in various documents. While some sources list Sam as Rosa's husband, others mention that she is married with Jim; Apalachicola Headmen Testimony, 27 May 1832, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA. The decision of the five principal Apalachicola leaders that Rosa belonged to Sam Factor effectively settled the question of Nelly Factor's rights to the slave.
- ¹¹⁴ Felipe Solana Deposition, 17 December 1840, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.
- ¹¹⁵ Andres Papy Deposition, 19 April 1842, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.
- ¹¹⁶ William J. Worth to T.S. Brown, 19 December 1842, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.

¹¹⁷ Peter Masters Disposition, 27 December 1842, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA. Masters states that he was the manager of Solano's plantation. He testifies that his wife served as the midwife to Hannay when she gave birth to Maria Garcia. Undoubtedly Solano sought to prove that the girl was born after he purchased the mother. Through Masters' testimony Solano hoped to strengthen this claim.

¹¹⁸ Andres Papy Deposition, 19 April 1842, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.

¹¹⁹ Joseph S. Sanchez Deposition, 19 April 1843, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.

¹²⁰ Wiley Thompson to Elbert Herring; 23 September 1835, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA.

¹²¹ John Bird to David Boyd, 15 July 1838, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.

¹²² Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen*, 132.

¹²³ Mahon, "Two Seminole Treaties," 8.

Chapter 6

SEPARATING AFRICANS AND INDIANS: DEFINING PHYSICAL AND RACIAL BORDERS, 1835-1850

I would respectfully recommend that some measures at once be adopted for the removal of these misfortunate people from the vicinity of the Indian Country. Their presence is an evil which will continue to increase the longer they are permitted to remain where they are. And I consider the plan suggested, their transportation to Liberia, a very good one, and one, too which as it appears to meet their wishes, is fully entitled to the serious and favorable consideration of this department.

Matthew Arbuckle, 1848¹

By 1850 the United States government successfully removed the majority of Seminoles and Black Seminoles to Indian Territory, in present-day Oklahoma. Although the U.S. strove to divide and conquer both groups, efforts to physically separate the Black Seminoles from the Seminoles were ineffective.² U.S. officials remained motivated to seize Blacks because they viewed their “evil” presence among native peoples as a disruptive force. Brigadier General Matthew Arbuckle felt that the situation called for a drastic solution such as the colonization of the Black Seminoles to Liberia, an African colony established by the American Colonization Society to settle freed slaves from the United States.

This proposed plan of action highlights the larger project of reinforcing and strengthening racial categories in the U.S during the nineteenth century. U.S. officials desirous of repatriating the Black Seminoles to Liberia were essentializing their cultural and racial identity as simply African or Black. They ignored or were unaware that the slaves living among the Seminoles came from diverse origins. Black Seminoles and/or their ancestors came from various African

regions and subsequently from U.S., Spanish, and Indigenous settlements. U.S. racial discourse allocated limited space for individuals' dual racial identities or for the larger hybrid culture to which they belonged. Although Black Seminoles had lived in close proximity to Indigenous and Euro-American groups, Arbuckle had assumed that they remained culturally pure Africans and thus could be simply transplanted to Liberia.³ Since Africans were viewed as "Black" this also meant that their political and legal rights were severely constrained, with the possible exception of free Blacks. However, U.S. officials and planters were often wary of free Black populations as well and placed limitations on their liberty. They served as a subversive influence to slaves because autonomous Black communities undermined planters' rhetoric of African inferiority. Furthermore, Seminole-African cooperation represented a viable obstacle to the nation-state's project to bring both groups within its jurisdiction and control. Part of this project involved the enforcement of racial hierarchies which kinship between African and Indigenous groups threatened to destabilize by blurring racial lines and problematizing existing classifications.

While Arbuckle contemplated African repatriation, the U.S. had already subjected the Seminoles to a similar process. Although Florida's territorial officials were aware that the Seminoles were independent of the Creeks, they continued to pursue a policy of reintegration. In Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma, U.S. officials sought to relocate various Indigenous peoples, such as the Creek, Cherokee, and Seminoles and ideally witness the eventual "extinction of tribes, and their amalgamation into one mass . . ."⁴ Placing the Seminoles within Creek designated lands in Indian Territory not only failed to recognize the Seminoles' distinct identity but also threatened their political and economic autonomy. Equally galling, Seminole leaders displayed hostility toward the Creek for their participation in recent U.S.-Seminole conflicts.

Creek parties were encouraged by the U.S. to conduct raids into Seminole territory. They had claimed ownership over the Black Seminoles and been granted bounties by the U.S. for each African they captured. Thus it seems perplexing that the U.S. expected the Seminoles to accept subservience to their rivals who occasionally viewed the Seminoles as a subordinate component of the Creek Confederacy. However this episode can be explained in light of the broader process that sought to homogenize not only Africans but also Indigenous peoples. To U.S. officials they were considered “Indians” and thus their settlement with other Indian groups made sense despite existing sociopolitical divisions.

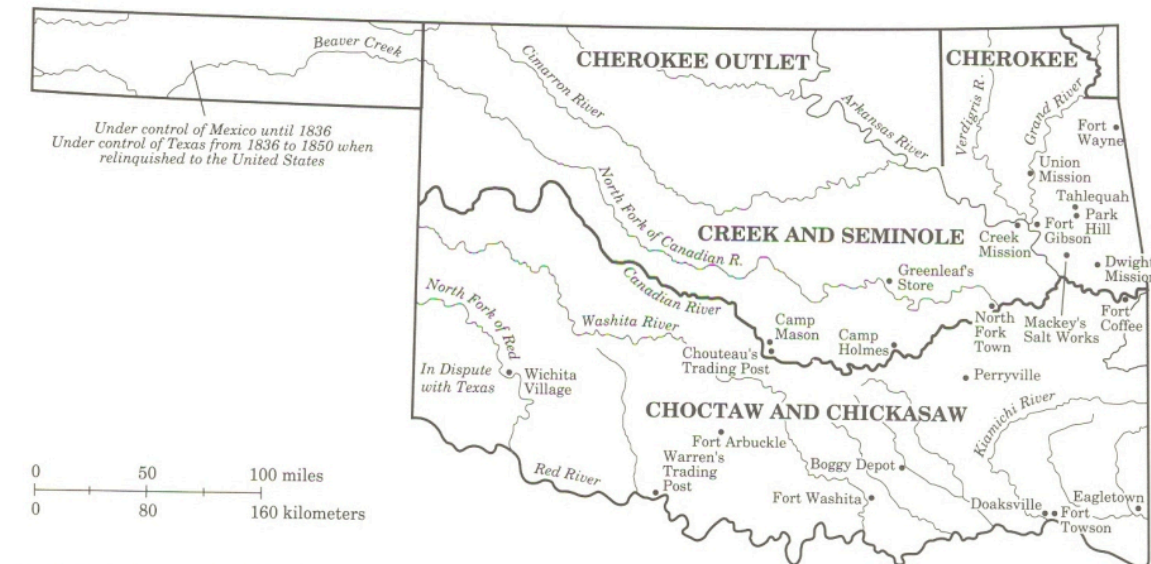


Figure 6.1 Map of Indian Territory, 1830-1855. Source: David La Vere, *Contrary Neighbors: Southern Plains and Removed Indians in Indian Territory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 65.

During the Second U.S.-Seminole War, the military developed a strategy based on weakening the Seminole and Black Seminole resistance by separating the interests of both groups and firmly placing them in categories of “Indian” and “Black.” The Treaty of Fort Dade offered to guarantee Seminoles’ slave property, while a year later a contradictory policy offered

slaves their freedom if they surrendered. Until the 1830s, Africans' status in Florida had greatly varied due to the fact that they were kin, advisors, interpreters, neighbors, and slaves to the Seminoles. They alternatively lived in maroon communities, settlements adjacent to the Seminoles, and within Seminole settlements. Politically their status varied between independent settlements, tribute-paying members of Seminole society, to being associated with a Seminole master. For Africans, being racialized as "Black" had concrete political and social consequences. After removal to Indian Territory they faced a greater possibility of being confined to the status of chattel, thus limiting the range of relationships open to them.

Concurrently, Indigenous groups throughout Florida enjoyed relative autonomy and were only loosely affiliated with each other. While the discourse and rhetoric of political centralization and Indigenous nationalism had been introduced respectively by figures such as William McGillivray and William Augustus Bowles among the Lower Creek and Seminoles, individual Seminole leaders continued to retain much power.⁵ In fact, the Apalachicola, Mikasuki, and Alachua settlements largely became known as Seminoles because each colonial power considered them all to be Seminoles. Native peoples' settlements on the west coast of Florida disputed their classification as Seminoles and accordingly argued that U.S.-Seminole treaties did not apply to them. The U.S. government refused to make any exceptions and sought to ignore Indigenous political and cultural diversity through Creek reintegration. During the 1830s Euro-American notions of race became the region's dominant discourse coinciding with the contraction of Florida's geopolitical borderlands.

The Second U.S.-Seminole War was a central event in the displacement of Africans and Seminoles from Florida and brought these groups completely within the political boundaries of

the nation-state. Unfolding U.S. policy and developments in Indian Territory furthered the official project of creating “Blacks” and “Indians.” Nonetheless, this process of racialization has been given scant attention in previous historiography dealing with Florida during the removal period. Rather, previous historians focused on the military campaigns of the Second U.S.-Seminole War. The conflict produced a substantial textual record for historians to examine. John K. Mahon utilized these materials to produce a comprehensive account of the war. He addressed a historiographical oversight by scholars of the early nineteenth century that had focused on topics such as Jacksonian democracy rather than U.S. wars of conquest against Indigenous peoples.⁶ Mahon emphasized the significance of the conflict by noting its cost of 40 million dollars as well as the 1466 U.S. casualties. Kenneth Wiggins Porter, as noted in earlier chapters, emphasizes Black Seminole participation in the wars.⁷ Both Mahon and Porter strove to illustrate that protecting U.S. slavery was a significant motivating factor in the commencement of hostilities. They presented various quotes from military commanders expressing their fears of the Black troops and that the conflict was “a negro, not an Indian war; and if it be not speedily put down, the south will feel the effects of it on their slave population before the end of the next season.”⁸ Porter also produced a number of articles on Black Seminole interpreters, prominent figures, and advisors such as John Caesar.⁹ More recent work from scholars such as Kevin Mulroy examines the events of the war to gain insight into the Seminole-Black Seminole alliance.¹⁰

This chapter seeks to emphasize key events during the Second U.S.-Seminole War associated with the enforcement of Euro-American racial categories and hierarchies. While prior scholarship has already provided a comprehensive treatment of the conflict’s military events,

certain crucial decisions speak directly to the process of racialization. Most prominently, the 1837 Treaty of Fort Dade between Thomas Jesup and various Seminole and Black Seminole bands was a significant event since it began to reshape the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship in terms of master and slave, Indian and Black. Similarly, episodes such as the removal of Indigenous settlements on the west coast of Florida, attempts to seize the Black Seminoles, and the debates over Creek-Seminole reintegration inform the simultaneous processes of removal, colonialism, and the imposition of Euro-American notions of race.

6.1 Removal Treaties

During the 1820s the U.S. lacked the political will and military capability to remove the Seminoles from Florida. However, the situation changed when Andrew Jackson was elected president and the Indian Removal Act passed Congress in 1830.¹¹ The favorable national climate bolstered Florida officials and citizens' chances of realizing their goal of Seminole removal. Residents incessantly protested against Indigenous seizure of their property and filed claims for slaves they argued Seminoles illegally possessed. An area known as Middle Florida, consisting of lands in the region of previous Apalachicola and Mikasuki settlements, witnessed an increase of planter immigration. Prominent families from other southern states established primarily cotton but also tobacco and sugar plantations.¹² Planters throughout the territory began to pressure Governor William P. Duval over the security of their property.¹³ Although the governor initially demonstrated a measure of sympathy over the Seminoles' plight, political expediency led to his staunch support for removal. Indian Agents such as Gad Humphreys were effectively neutralized as Seminole advocates because of accusations of corruption and

obstruction in slave cases involving Seminoles and U.S. citizens. Without any active government supporters Indigenous groups were susceptible to the discourse of the “savage” Indian threatening white families, which eventually created the political will for removal.

James Gadsden was appointed by the War Department in 1832 to be a commissioner in a new treaty seeking Seminole removal. Having presided over the 1824 Treaty of Moultrie Creek, he had previously harbored a desire to relocate the Indigenous population from the new territory. Gadsden viewed native peoples’ presence in the territory as a threat to national security.¹⁴ With President Jackson in charge of crafting policy, the commissioner had free rein to pursue the expulsion of the Seminoles. He also sought to further control the Seminoles by relocating them to Creek lands and placing them under the authority of the latter.¹⁵ The Creeks, unlike the Seminoles, were more uniform in their treatment of Africans since slaves in Creek society were likely to be considered chattel. Creek groups had already made efforts to acquire Black Seminoles, both through raiding expeditions and through their arguments that the Africans legally belonged to them.

Creek attorney John Winslett wrote to the Secretary of War Lewis Cass in 1832 asserting the Creek claim over the Black Seminoles. The Creeks argued that many of the Black Seminoles were actually descendents of runaways from their settlements. Additionally, any Africans that ran away from Georgia planters were also Creek property since the fourth article of the 1821 Indian Springs Treaty provided restitution for those slaves and effectively purchased the slaves for the Creeks.¹⁶ Although the Creek claim stood on dubious legal grounds, it nonetheless created trepidation among the Seminoles. For example, Winslett aggressively pursued William Cannard’s and Stephen Richards’ slave claims. Cannard felt that he was the heir to the Lower

Creek leader Black Factor's slaves. The Apalachicola Seminole Sam Factor was quite concerned with Winslett's activities since his African wife Rosa had been the property of his father, the Black Factor.¹⁷ As a representative for various slaveholders, Winslett made excursions to Florida and Tampa Bay in search of their property.¹⁸ Reintegration with the Creek meant that the seizure of the Black Seminoles from the Seminoles was more likely.

Seminole leaders were displeased with Gadsden's proposals for various reasons, such as Creek hostility, Black Seminole vulnerability, and land dispossession. Unlike previous treaty conferences, the agent did not keep notes of the negotiations.¹⁹ Nonetheless, it can be inferred that the treaty was unpopular since Gadsden only secured a conditional agreement and Alachua Seminole leader Micanopy denied signing it. The basis of the agreement called for the Seminoles to cede all their lands in Florida for 15,400 dollars and remove to Indian Territory. A couple of the stipulations dealt with compensation for property, mainly cattle, and financial support during and after the relocation. Article six relieved the Seminoles of territorial settlers' claims of lost property and slaves. Claimants' cases and monetary settlements were now the responsibility of the U.S. government. This was significant because attempted seizures of the Black Seminoles caused much tension and resistance. The possibility of removing both Seminoles and Black Seminoles was now available since the U.S. could compensate claimants. However, the most controversial treaty article stipulated that the Seminoles were to become "a constituent part of the Creek nation, and be re-admitted to all the privileges as members of the same."²⁰ Undoubtedly threatened by this prospect, the Seminoles could take solace in the fact that the treaty was not binding if a Seminole delegation to Indian Territory returned dissatisfied with the land and the deposition of the Creek.

A number of Seminole headmen, the Black Seminole interpreter Abraham, and the new Indian agent Major John Phagan were selected to inspect the treaty lands.²¹ They were sent on a long journey to present-day Oklahoma and arrived at Fort Gibson. A clear record of the ensuing events remains elusive but certainly a level of coercion occurred. Seminole leader Jumper and the rest of the delegation expressed concern over the location of their assigned land, prospective Indigenous neighbors, the Seminole annuity, and they requested separate territory from the Creek. According to second-hand accounts, Phagan, and possibly Arbuckle, pressured the delegation in order to coax their approval to the Treaty of Payne's Landing.²² Given the larger political climate favoring removal, U.S. officials were unwilling to allow the Seminole to nullify the treaty. The Indigenous diplomatic mission was barred from returning to Florida and conferring with their fellow headmen. Seminole leaders could only return once until they signed the Treaty of Fort Gibson, which they did in March 1833. The substance of the pact reaffirmed the earlier Treaty of Payne's Landing and meant the Seminoles had three years to prepare for removal.²³

6.2 Second U.S.-Seminole War

Shortly after the return of the Seminole delegation to Florida, U.S. officials began planning for the removal of all Indigenous groups from the territory.²⁴ Gadsden quickly reached an accord with the remaining Apalachicola bands that had managed to keep small tracts of land near the Apalachicola River. They had the option of either joining John Blunt's group heading to Texas, remaining in Apalachicola under the jurisdiction of territorial officials, or relocating to Indian Territory under the terms of the Treaty of Payne's Landing.²⁵ Facing pressure from Euro-

American raids and the seizure of his African slaves, Blunt eventually decided to move to Texas where his uncle resided.²⁶ He nearly changed his mind, however after other Apalachicola bands refused to follow him and were adamant about staying in Florida.²⁷ These settlements remained and subsequently assisted the U.S. during the Second U.S.-Seminole War before also facing their own removal.²⁸

Seminole located in the larger interior reservation began to mount a protest against the approaching removal deadline at the end of 1835. During the Fort King Council, Seminole headman argued that since the annuity payments for the Treaty of Moultrie Creek were scheduled for twenty years then the agreement remained valid for another ten years.²⁹ They argued that the Treaties of Payne's Landing and Fort Gibson illegally breached the previous accord and were thus voided.³⁰ Some Seminole leaders such as Holata Emarthla, Coihadjo, and Jumper later claimed they had not signed the Treaty of Fort Gibson. Meanwhile, those admitting to signing the document argued that it should not have been binding unless the remaining Seminole headmen signed as well.³¹

While the Seminole leadership questioned the legitimacy of the new treaties, they also critiqued the manner in which the diplomatic process had occurred. Specifically, Black Seminole interpreter Abraham was criticized for his inability to accurately explain the treaty stipulations, especially the proposed union between the Seminoles and the Creek.³² Porter argues that Abraham's ineffective performance as an interpreter was due to miscommunication as well as the Indian agent Phagan's nefarious schemes.³³ Nonetheless, Miller asserts that treaties "abused the interests of the Seminole Nation and suggests clearly that the interpreters accepted bribes to betray their 'allies.'"³⁴ Central to the matter is the amount of 200 dollars paid

to both Abraham and another interpreter named Cudjo from the U.S. for their services during the negotiations.³⁵ Scholars have debated whether the payment was simply compensation for their work or an incentive that caused the Black Seminole interpreters to align their interests with the U.S. rather than the Seminoles. Clearly sympathetic to Abraham, Porter insists the translator feigned his cooperation but continued to make secret war preparations such as encouraging slaves to leave plantations and join the resistance movement.³⁶

Although some scholars argue that the Seminoles and Black Seminoles were simply allies out of expediency and maintained a socio-cultural distance, they nonetheless concede that Abraham had strong ties to the Seminoles. He was an important advisor to the Alachua Seminole leader Micanopy and married one of his close female relatives. Abraham is considered to have been adopted within Seminole society and was given a ceremonial name.³⁷ While his exact intentions and motives are difficult to ascertain, what is clear is that Abraham's situation is informative of the larger process occurring to Seminoles and Black Seminoles. Increasingly he was being integrated into a society and racial order that did not recognize his status in Seminole society. Despite his elated position with Micanopy and marriage with a Seminole woman, his status as Black and a slave remained. Accordingly, the Black Seminole leader had to remain cognizant of his racial classification and its consequences for his family. Whether Abraham was bribed at the Treaty of Payne's Landing can be debated. Nonetheless he later offered his services to the U.S. during the Second U.S.-Seminole War and secured his freedom through a decree by General Jesup.³⁸ Many other Black Seminoles and Seminoles faced a changing reality and difficult decisions.³⁹



Figure 6.2 Abraham. Source: Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 135.

Seminole headmen not only voiced their immediate concerns about the recent treaties but they also harbored larger objections. They generally highlighted three main issues including the seizure of the Black Seminoles, the Seminole-Creek relationship, and land displacement. U.S. policies demonstrated an ignorance or unwillingness to see the sensitive nature of these Indigenous positions which further flamed resistance. Eventually the U.S. made concessions once it realized the full extent of Seminole and Black Seminole opposition. However government officials only recognized the necessity of adjusting their strategies and course of action after the beginning of the Second U.S.-Seminole War.

Among Seminole leadership, safeguarding the Black Seminoles only represented one component of the ensuing conflict to protect their autonomy. However, U.S. officials and citizens demonstrated an unending preoccupation with the Black Seminoles. They could not abide the presence of Indigenous and African communities where chattel slavery was not the dominant labor system. Indigenous and African settlements not based on rigid racial hierarchies

undermined territorial Florida, which in the 1820s passed legislation to control its African slaves.⁴⁰ Consequently in January 1834 Florida citizens issued another memorial accusing the Seminoles of being in breach of the Treaty of Payne's Landing. They argued that Indigenous leaders failed to apprehend runaway slaves as outlined in the agreement. Criticism was not limited to Seminoles' passive noncompliance but also active efforts to aid "such slaves to select new and more secure places of refuge."⁴¹ Under the protection of the Seminoles, the estimated 500 Black Seminoles were accused of seeking to assist recent runaways because of their shared "sympathies." The memorial asserts that nearly all the Black Seminoles were runaways or descendents of fugitive slaves.⁴²

Removing the Seminoles and Black Seminoles from Florida was not the full extent of U.S. strategy. Efforts were underway that sought to completely separate both groups whether they resided in Florida or Indian Territory. Newly named Indian Agent Wiley Thompson believed that problems with the Seminoles stemmed from negative influences from "likely Negroes in this nation."⁴³ He also identified some "whites" that, contrary to the majority of U.S. citizens, wanted the Seminoles to stay in the area until they fell under the jurisdiction of the Territory of Florida. At the Fort King Council Thompson warned Seminole leaders that once this occurred then claims on the Black Seminoles, fraudulent or legitimate, could be more easily executed.⁴⁴ In 1835 Thompson wrote to Secretary of State John Eaton that a movement in the Florida territorial legislature sought to contest federal oversight over African slave claims against the Seminoles. He believed that if Florida, rather than federal, courts presided over the cases then territorial claimants would most likely succeed in gaining possession of the slaves.

Although the agent did not believe that the maneuver was legal he nonetheless noted the agitation it caused among the Seminoles.⁴⁵

Despite local officials and planters' protestations over federal government interference in the slave claim cases, War Department and Office of Indian Affairs officials did encourage seizure of the Black Seminoles. As mentioned above, the relationship between African and Indigenous peoples was considered a destabilizing force to the nation-state. Aside from metaphorical concerns over the blurring of racial categories and social hierarchies, U.S. officials worried about Seminole-Black Seminole military cooperation. The Acting Secretary of War C.A. Harris feared Seminole resistance because of the "comparatively wealthy negroes mingled with them and in the facilities for concealment which the extent and character of the country afford."⁴⁶ In 1835 the Department of War debated whether they should encourage the purchase of the Black Seminoles from the Seminoles. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring felt that no approval was needed from his agency for civilians to acquire slaves because the Seminoles were sovereign and could make their own decisions.⁴⁷

Indian Agent Thompson came to disagree with the Office of Indian Affairs and sought to convince them of their error in judgment. He wrote the Secretary of War to inform him that under the 1834 Indian Intercourse Act, U.S. citizens could not engage in trade with Indigenous peoples without a license or permission from the agent.⁴⁸ In addition Thompson argued that the Black Seminoles held considerable influence over the Seminoles. As a result, the Africans refused to abandon their "present state of ease and comparative liberty, to bondage and hard labour under overseers on sugar and cotton plantations." He believed it was inhumane to sell the Black Seminoles since they were not accustomed to the rigors of chattel slavery. A number of

Africans lived in autonomous settlements and had the ability to own property. Thompson emphatically emphasized Seminole disdain over the selling of slaves by arguing that an “Indian would almost as soon sell his child as his slave, except when under the influence of intoxicating liquors.”⁴⁹ Thompson’s warning that the sale of the slaves only served to antagonize the Seminoles met with citizens’ skepticism and accusations that the agent simply coveted ownership of the slaves.

A month later President Jackson weighed in and rebuffed Thompson and ordered a reversal of policy. Acting Secretary of War Harris communicated the president’s position to the Indian agent. Never afraid to make the rule of law bend to his will, Jackson disputed Thompson’s interpretation of the Indian Intercourse Act by arguing that the law never envisioned “the possession of slaves by the Indians, and contains therefore no security for property of this kind.”⁵⁰ He desired that the proceeds from the sales of the Black Seminoles would assist in funding removal and the reunion of the Seminoles and Creeks.⁵¹ In a subtle threat, Jackson inferred that Thompson could only exonerate himself from corruption charges if he proceeded to allow the sale of the slaves to U.S. citizens.

In an act of political courage, Thompson defied Jackson’s recommendations but he began to feel pressure from multiple parties. Responding to the president’s positions, the agent reiterated the impossible task of convincing the Seminoles to sell the Black Seminoles.⁵² Government legalization of the transactions did nothing to alter Seminole resolve regarding the dispossession of their slaves.⁵³ Thompson argued that the U.S. would be well advised to offer guarantees to the Black Seminoles that their relationship with the Seminoles would be maintained. He disagreed that the slaves were a source of conflict between the Seminoles and

Creeks, since the latter's argument for their ownership of the Black Seminoles was convoluted. In addition to the displeasure of the U.S. government, Thompson began to draw the ire of Seminole leaders who also questioned his motives. When a census of the native population was undertaken the headmen felt the agent sought to seize the slaves.⁵⁴ Surprisingly Thompson won the policy debate when Harris wrote to him that he indeed could restrict the sale of Seminole slaves under the provisions of the Indian Intercourse Act. Apparently the Jackson administration reversed its position when the president's confidant James Gadsden verified that the Seminoles were unwilling to dispose of the Black Seminoles.⁵⁵ With his bolstered standing, Thompson was reassured of his authority to regulate Seminole-U.S. trade.

Policy debates within the Department of War highlighted efforts by the nation-state to restructure Seminole society and the status of Africans. Thompson clearly illustrated in his correspondence that the Seminoles offered their slaves a measure of autonomy. He informed Harris and Jackson that the Africans had their own settlements, could own and sell property, and were influential with their masters. Seminole slavery did not serve to duplicate U.S. racial order and represented a threat because it illustrated an alternative to rigid racial categories and the oppressive political status of Africans. On the contrary, chattel slavery was not simply a labor system but served to enforce political, economic, and social hierarchies along racial lines. Although Jackson revised his policy because it endangered Seminole removal, the U.S. government did not terminate its efforts to seize the Black Seminoles and pressure Seminole communities to conform to the U.S. racial order.

As mentioned above, the attempted seizure of the Black Seminoles was interrelated with efforts to re-integrate the Seminoles within the Creek political structure in Indian Territory. The

latter's claim to the Black Seminoles was one aspect of their effort to assert their authority over the Seminoles. In a May 1835 report the Choctaw agent Frank Wells Armstrong outlined a dreary situation for the Creek in Indian Territory.⁵⁶ This was a result of Southeastern native peoples' conflicts with Indigenous groups in the Southern Plains. The Osage, Pawnee, Wichitas, Comanches, and Kiowas viewed the relocated Indians as strangers having no prior kin relationship with them.⁵⁷ Southern Plains Indians viewed the Creeks, Cherokees, and other groups as trespassers on territory considered within their sphere of influence. Consequently Southern Plains groups raided Southeastern native peoples, which caused much hardship during their difficult transition in the Indian Territory. Seeking more secure homelands, especially after Osage attacks, the Creeks began encroaching on territory assigned to the Cherokee and Seminoles, causing further disputes. Additionally, the Cape Girardeau Shawnee from Missouri remained on Creek territory. Herring outlined measures, such as the arrest of Indigenous headmen, until reparations were made to the Creek thus highlighting the seriousness of the situation.⁵⁸ Similar to other groups, the move to Indian Territory was fraught with various difficulties, which led to external and internal Indigenous conflicts.⁵⁹ Having access to the Seminoles and the Black Seminoles in terms of additional population or resources, such as the proceeds of slave sales, may have factored in Creek willingness to accept the Seminoles in their lands.

Safeguarding the Black Seminoles was part of the effort to ensure Seminole independence. Scholars have estimated that Florida's Indigenous population at the time of removal roughly totaled 4,500 people, including the Black Seminoles.⁶⁰ However, the Creek population was over 20,000 persons, with around 14,000 Upper Creeks and 8,500 Lower

Creeks.⁶¹ U.S. officials recognized that Seminole concerns about the Creek were understandable since it is “natural for the weak to fear the strong.”⁶² A further loss of 500 to 1,000 Black Seminoles would have constituted a significant setback for Indigenous groups in need of military and economic resources. Seeking to establish an effective resistance against removal required as many fighters as possible to ward off Creek and U.S. attacks. Conversely, potential Creek ownership of the Black Seminoles simultaneously sought to deprive the Seminole of allies while supplementing Creek financial assets.

Despite the Seminoles’ numerical disadvantage, threats of Creek re-integration nonetheless fueled the resistance. In particular, the presence of the Upper Creek Red Sticks, who had only years earlier fought a civil war within Creek Confederacy before moving south and joining the Seminoles, galvanized sentiment against rapprochement with the Creek.⁶³ In late 1835 the Seminoles sent a letter to President Jackson in which they emphatically refused to remove to Indian Territory without guarantees that they could remain autonomous of the Creeks. They requested a separate agency, a blacksmith, and the ability to appoint their Indian agent.⁶⁴

Perhaps one of the least emphasized causes of the Second-U.S. Seminole War was simply what the loss of the Seminole homeland signified. Gadsden had argued that Florida’s Indigenous peoples were recent immigrants to the territory and were really breakaway Creeks from Georgia.⁶⁵ This argument delegitimized Seminole ownership of Florida lands and conceptualized them as a transient people accustomed to resettlement. Serving as a justification to remove the Seminoles, U.S. observers deemphasized accounts of Seminoles protesting the loss of the land and focused on the issues mentioned above. Nonetheless, Miller writes that the Indigenous leaders’ responses during the October 1834 Fort King Council focused on the

cultural meaning of land displacement. Seminoles' intimate relationship with the land was based on the location of the final resting places of Indigenous ancestors. These sites were significant since the "graves of a community link the dead forever to the landscape, for the spirits of the deceased remain at or return to the site of the burial."⁶⁶ U.S. officials underestimated Seminole resolve to remain connected to the land of their ancestors.

Indian Agent Thompson had informed the Seminoles that they should assemble by the end of 1835 to sell their cattle and make their way to Tampa Bay. Towards the end of January of the next year he sought to send the Seminoles to New Orleans and eventually to Indian Territory. In preparation for removal Thompson had sought to gain Indigenous headmen's assurances to abide by recent treaties.⁶⁷ He only managed to gain the acquiescence of a few leaders, most prominently Charley Emathla. In an attempt to gain more support from the leadership, the agent contemplated deposing unsupportive figures. Acting Secretary of War Harris warned Thompson of the hostility that his actions engendered from non-cooperative Seminole leaders. Towards the end of November Asin Yahola, known as Osceola, killed Emathla for cooperating with U.S. officials.⁶⁸ Shortly thereafter Thompson was found murdered as well for his part in promoting Seminole removal.

Initial skirmishes of the Second U.S.-Seminole War underscored the nature of the conflict as the Seminoles and Black Seminoles utilized guerrilla warfare. While Thompson was meeting his demise, U.S. forces had already been massing and mobilizing to the Seminole agency and Tampa Bay. They had been ordered to the area as a demonstration of force to facilitate removal scheduled for the beginning of 1836. An African informant, Luis Pachecho, served as a guide for Major Francis Dade as his troops moved through the Withlacoochee River.⁶⁹ Pachecho

apparently sent ahead intelligence to Seminole units, which consequently planned an ambush. At the end of December, Seminoles and a smaller contingent of Black Seminoles managed to kill Dade and a significant number of his men in what became “Dade’s Massacre.” Concurrently, John Caesar, a Black Seminole advisor to King Phillip of the St. John’s River Seminoles initiated a raid on nearby plantations. Their efforts devastated the territorial economy and led to the recruitment of slaves to join the war effort.⁷⁰ Caesar apparently returned to the Withlacoochee River in early 1836 to negotiate with General Gaines during a siege of entrenched U.S. troops. The force withdrew to Fort Drane as the Seminoles moved their families to safer locations in the south.

During the next year General Winfield Scott and Richard Call would respectively lead major armies in a conventional strategy to produce a decisive victory. They managed to destroy Seminole settlements and entered the Black Seminole town of Peliklakaha, the residence of prominent headman Micanopy. U.S. commanders soon learned that the terrain and the environment afforded the Seminoles the ability to stage brief skirmishes and strategic retreats. Adapting to the circumstances, 750 allied Creek soldiers were guaranteed plunder if they assisted in tracking and defeating the Seminoles.⁷¹ Nonetheless, the U.S. was frustrated with the inability of its military leaders to quickly defeat a relatively small number of Indigenous and African fighters.

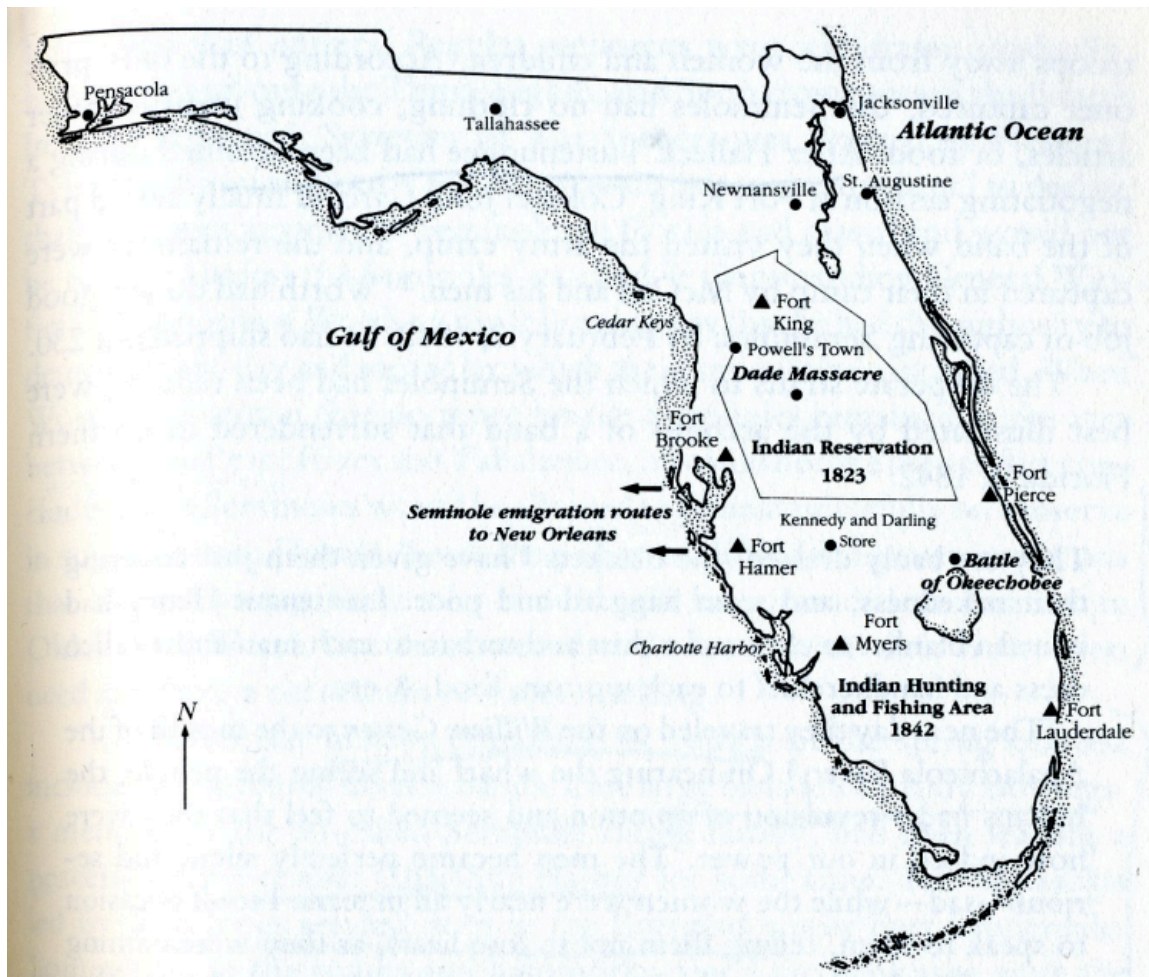


Figure 6.3 Second U.S.-Seminole War. Source: Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 105.

6.3 The Treaty of Fort Dade

General Jesup attained military command of the war in order to reverse the protracted nature of the struggle. His recent suppression of resistant Creek factions in Georgia led to his Florida assignment.⁷² He emphasized on capturing Indigenous hostages, both men and women, in order to gain leverage during negotiations. U.S. troops continued to either destroy or harass settlements, denying the Seminoles supplies and any respite. The general came to the conclusion that the Black Seminoles were the true instigators of the war and that their cooperation was necessary to end it. He famously remarked that he perceived the present conflict being primarily

“a negro, not an Indian war.”⁷³ This mindset led Jesup to share Thompson’s conclusion that Seminole emigration could only occur if the Black Seminoles were guaranteed their freedom.

Simultaneously Black Seminole leader Abraham’s personal fortunes began to wane. He had been temporarily separated from his family, his property seized, and he was dispossessed of his certificate of freedom. Jesup had sent word that he wanted to meet with the interpreter. When Abraham entered the general’s camp he overheard the soldiers remarking that he was “the niger who was going to hang.”⁷⁴ This comment exemplified the transformations occurring in Florida and the restrictive cultural and racial space available to individuals perceived as “Black.” There is a consensus among scholars that Abraham had adapted to Seminole culture on a far greater scale than other Black Seminoles. He was an advisor to one of the leading headmen, married a prominent Seminole woman, spoke an Indigenous language, and received a ceremonial name.⁷⁵ Within U.S. society his status among the Seminoles held little significance since Abraham was imbued with blackness due to a system based on perceived innate biological difference.

Racial discourse in the 1830s was in a transitional phase as scholars debated multiple origins of races and whether these groups were products of their environment or the result of “inherent physical differences.”⁷⁶ Previous to the nineteenth century, scholars generally agreed that humankind shared an origin group but racial differences were the result of their respective environments. This position also reconciled Christian beliefs stemming from the Book of Genesis that all humans were descended from Adam and Eve. By the 1830s the rise of scientific racism was evident with the popularity of Phrenology, the examination of racial groups and their respective traits through the size of their skulls. Although later discredited, the study enjoyed

academic legitimacy for the first couple of decades of its existence. More importantly authors such as Charles Caldwell, Thomas Cooper, Thomas R. Dew respectively began to argue for the existence of four distinct species of humans that were superior and inferior in relation to each other. They believed that Caucasians were on the apex of a racial hierarchy and that other races were incapable of “improvement” and “civilization.”⁷⁷ Consequently in the 1840s the miscegenation of different races was viewed as a debasement and weakening of the original pure racial stock and should be avoided. Protecting whiteness was important since emerging white working class identity was based on its juxtaposition with slavery and blackness.⁷⁸ In the West these ideas would support wars of expansion while in the South they served to justify the continuation of slavery. During the early 1830s the Virginia legislature debated the gradual emancipation of African slaves. Various speakers argued that Blacks were inherently inferior to whites and could not be capable of being free members of society.⁷⁹ As scientific racism became more prevalent by the mid-nineteenth century, racial designations became more rigid and stressed biological and cultural separateness.

A significant number of the U.S. officers and troops fighting in the Second U.S.-Seminoles War were southerners. Volunteer regiments were raised from the states surrounding territorial Florida.⁸⁰ In New Orleans a newspaper sought to arouse the local population by stoking racial fears with the image of “1,000 able-bodied negroes, and about 600 runaways or outlaws” among the Seminole ranks.⁸¹ Similar to the preceding military commanders Scott and Call, General Jesup was also from the South. Undoubtedly these leaders and their troops viewed the Black Seminoles through their cultural lenses. This would explain the racial epithet directed against Abraham as he walked into Jesup’s camp. The Black Seminole interpreter realized that

under U.S. society he was simply perceived as Black, and it was imperative for him to secure his freedom if he was to survive his incorporation into the nation. Jesup was cognizant of Black Seminoles' fear of re-enslavement and would utilize these sentiments when seeking to strain the Indigenous-African alliance.

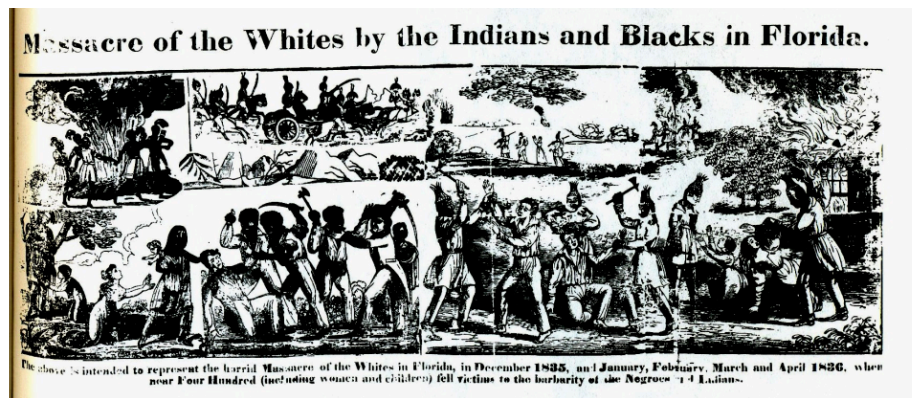


Figure 6.4 Second U.S.-Seminole War description, 1826. Source: Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 91.

Early negotiations between Jesup and the Seminoles were mired in distrust and only a few representatives of the major Indigenous leaders went to the first meeting. Eventually Abraham managed to arrange a meeting for March 4, 1837 which Jumper and representatives of the prominent headmen attended. They met Jesup at Fort Dade on the Withlacoochee River. Two days later both parties emerged with an agreement often referred to as the Treaty of Fort Dade. As part of the accord there was an immediate ceasefire and the Seminoles agreed to relocate by April. An important clause of the treaty guaranteed Seminole property, especially their African slaves. Additionally, ambiguous wording in the treaty calling for peace between “the Seminoles and their allies” implied that recent runaways were guaranteed their freedom or passage to Indian Territory.⁸² While Jesup was within reach of ending the conflict in Florida he nonetheless bent to pressure from planters to seize any African slaves among the Seminoles that were not explicitly shown to have Indigenous masters. The general arranged with some

Seminole headmen to turn over the slaves immediately before relocation commenced. Due to the ensuing presence of Florida planters, many of the Africans became predictably alarmed and began resisting their apprehension.⁸³ Younger leadership, notably Asin Yahola, Coacoochee, known as Wild Cat, and Black Seminole John Horse organized the departure of many of the prominent Seminole leaders from the designated relocation areas. While Jesup managed to capture a number of Seminoles and Black Seminoles he failed to end the war.⁸⁴

Continuing Seminole militancy after the Treaty of Fort Dade was based on securing the best possible terms, specifically a Florida reservation in the southern extremes of the territory. Jesup had alluded to this possibility but in reality remained focused on capturing the Seminole and Black Seminole military command and enforcing removal. He began utilizing the unscrupulous method of using flags of truce and parleys to seize negotiators that had been assured safe passage. Through this manner the U.S. managed to jail Asin Yahola, Coacoochee, and John Horse in the Castillo de San Marcos, now renamed Fort Marion, in St. Augustine. Micanopy had also entered into negotiations and was incarcerated and pressured to order his followers to surrender. Concurrently, Coacoochee and John Horse mustered a daring escape and after gathering support resumed their opposition. After a few indecisive engagements Jesup had sought a negotiated peace instead of a protracted and costly struggle. In March 1838 the general called together a number of Seminole and Black Seminole fighters and contemplated offering them a Southern Florida reservation. Once his superiors dismissed the idea, orders were issued to simply seize the groups that had congregated while awaiting the end of the negotiations.

Jesup had further fueled controversy when he offered freedom to any Seminole slaves that surrendered. In so doing he directly contradicted the Treaty of Fort Dade, concluded the

previous year, when the general had guaranteed the Seminoles their property rights. This led to a confusing situation in which Seminoles having surrendered under the treaty maintained their slaves in Indian Territory, and Africans that accepted the 1838 amnesty were to be relocated west as free individuals and remain “part of the Seminole tribe.”⁸⁵ Jesup’s decision to emancipate a number of Black Seminoles proved to be an unpopular measure with local planters and later ignited debate over the Black Seminoles in Indian Territory.⁸⁶ He had already established a precedent of sending captured Africans to Indian Territory, including the groups seized by Creek forces.⁸⁷

Years later, in the 1840s when the status of the Black Seminoles in Indian Territory remained contentious, Jesup, then quartermaster general, wrote to the Secretary of State William Wilkins. Jesup informed him that he had welcomed a delegation headed by Coacoochee and Eufaula Micco, known as Alligator, who notified him of unfulfilled treaty stipulations. The general’s letters to his superiors contained his recounting of his history in the Second-U.S. Seminole War. He felt that U.S. mishandling of the removal process and the “constant interference with their (Seminole) negroes” made his controversial decisions necessary.⁸⁸ He admitted his policies had caused much consternation but asserted the necessity of guaranteeing the Africans their freedom and passage to Indian Territory. Convinced of their active part in fostering resistance, Jesup argued that the Seminoles would not surrender unless the Black Seminoles also submitted. He then elaborated on their service to the U.S. army as guards, scouts, and interpreters, which he felt merited special consideration. Finally, the general constructed a dubious legal argument to support his decision to free a number of Black Seminoles. This rested on the Africans’ status as Seminole property when the U.S. army seized

them. Jesup claimed that under the “laws of nations” as head of the army in Florida he was entitled to the enemy’s property, apparently as spoils, and could dispose of the slaves as he saw proper. He also felt that the decision “comported with the peace and honor of the American people.”⁸⁹

As commander of U.S. forces during the war, Jesup simply sought to divide the interests of the Seminoles and Africans, effectively ending their cooperation and subsequently the war. He was convinced that the Black Seminoles would force the Indigenous groups to resist as long as they faced the threat of re-enslavement. Jesup quickly discovered that he was constrained from seeking the outright seizure of the Africans because it would unravel any potential peace negotiations. Tellingly, the general could not resist an attempted apprehension of the slaves after the conclusion of the Treaty of Fort Dade. Since this episode led to another intense year of fighting, he probably concluded that he would have to guarantee the Africans passage with the Seminoles to Indian Territory.

Nonetheless Jesup’s policies served to restructure the varied and multifaceted relationships between the Seminoles and Black Seminoles. Within the Florida Borderlands, Africans and Indigenous peoples had been allies, kin, master-slave, with various variants in between. Once the U.S. through the Second U.S.-Seminole War extended its power and jurisdiction over the entire territory, it sought to make both groups adhere to its racial order. Black Seminoles such as Abraham had spent their lives interacting with Indigenous peoples and other Africans, both recent runaways and others who had lived among the Seminoles for an extended amount of time. These groups exhibited a great deal of racial and cultural diversity depending on their specific situation. Many terms utilized for African and Indigenous peoples

were inadequate for conveying the complex nature of identity and race during this transitional period. Although utilized in this work, the designation of “African,” while rightly highlighting African cultural contributions, de-emphasizes the cultural exchanges and adaptations that certainly occurred. Simultaneously, the use of “Seminole” to describe all the Indigenous peoples of Florida also glosses over the diversity among the Apalachicola, Mikasuki, Alachua, and Gulf Coast peoples who become known as the “Seminoles.” Gauging a general identity that accurately reflects all the Indigenous and African peoples in the region may not be feasible. More certain is an examination of the identity and racial categories that colonial powers sought to impose on subordinate peoples.

General Jesup’s peace overtures to the Seminoles and the Black Seminoles were couched in the language of master and slave. Previous colonial powers had sought to project their power over Indigenous and African peoples, but only the U.S. could devote the necessary resources to do so. Even with significant military spending and numbers of troops, Jesup still needed to separate Seminole and Black Seminole interests to accomplish the removal of both groups. The Seminoles under the terms of the Treaty of Fort Dade were convinced to emigrate because as slave owners they were guaranteed their property. A year later, the general offered Africans their freedom from the Seminoles if they surrendered. These propositions placed both groups in diametrical opposition with separate interests that ruptured previous interactions and cooperation. Consequently in Indian Territory the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship became increasingly strained, especially since they lived in closer proximity to other groups, such as the Creek, who did practice chattel slavery and viewed the Black Seminoles more strictly as property.

6.4 Removal of the Ranchos

Racialization served to homogenize the sociopolitical diversity among African and Indigenous people. While the U.S. sought to coerce the re-integration of the Seminoles with the Creeks in Indian Territory, Florida's Gulf Coast native peoples were also being forcibly placed within the Seminole political structure. Since the British period in the 1760s, government officials had been aware of a trade that existed between Southeastern Indigenous peoples and Cuban fishermen. Commercial contacts had existed since the 1650s, when inhabitants of the southernmost coast made quick voyages to Cuba to trade organic materials utilized for perfume and received in return various iron implements.⁹⁰ Over the next hundred and fifty years a constant communication and exchange occurred between Cuban fishermen and various Gulf Coast Indigenous peoples. This included the establishment of seasonal fishing bases or *ranchos* comprised of members of both groups. The ranchos stretched from Tampa Bay and wrapped around to the territory's Atlantic coast. Gulf Coast towns traded deerskins and dried fish in Havana for coffee, sugar, tobacco, and rum. A number of the Cuban sailors began to stay at the *ranchos* on a year around basis and were known to have Indigenous wives. It was later reported that children of these unions were sent to Havana to be educated and baptized.⁹¹ When the British had reviewed the situation they determined the settlements posed little threat but still occasionally garnered suspicion.⁹² British officials remained largely unconcerned especially since their colony had not yet matured to effectively exploit these resources themselves.

Indigenous-Cuban fishing *ranchos* continued to operate after U.S. annexation in 1821 and proved to be a source of consternation to government officials. American fishermen as far

as the U.S. Northeast began to ply their trade in Florida waters and even agitated for fees on their foreign competition. William Bunce was one of an increasing number of U.S. citizens who established fisheries on the west coast. The Maryland native was based in Tampa Bay and had established one of the more successful ventures by selling dried and salted fish to Havana. He employed ten Spaniards and twenty seamen Bunce labeled “Spanish Indians,” either because they demonstrated a level of Spanish acculturation or were the progeny of Indigenous and European parents.⁹³ Local rancho populations were said to include Cuban men, their Indigenous wives, children, and even grandchildren, which spoke to the longevity of the settlements. In Charlotte Harbor, another active area south of Tampa Bay, there lived respectively sixty-five Indigenous and Spanish men, thirty Indigenous women, and fifty to one hundred children.⁹⁴ U.S. officials suddenly focused on these groups as part of the larger movement of Seminole removal.

Indigenous fishing bases had demonstrated their independence from Apalachicola, Mikasuki, and Alachua leadership and refused to abide by recent treaties. Indian agent Wiley Thompson learned that the coastal settlements were refusing to live within the Seminole reservation, which excluded any areas adjacent to the ocean. More significantly they disowned any affiliation to the Seminoles and asserted that the Treaty of Moultrie Creek and Payne’s Landing had no relevance to them. Judge Augustus Steele stated that the fishing villages had never received part of the annual annuity and they were not “claimed by the Seminoles.”⁹⁵ William Sturtevant’s ethnographic study of the Indigenous fishermen was unable to pinpoint the ethnicity of these groups. He posits that they may have been descended from the Calusa, a group that suffered a severe demographic decline in the previous century. Early theories suggested that the fishermen were immigrants from groups such as the Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles.⁹⁶

Contemporary accounts were unanimous in their assessment that the coastal towns had adapted to seafaring subsistence patterns and to their Spanish partners, especially in terms of language. In all likelihood there was more contact between Havana and the *ranchos* than the villages had with the Seminoles. Steele remarked that the “Indians and half-bloods,” were excellent sailors and depriving them of their occupations created an untenable economic situation.⁹⁷

Gulf Coast Indigenous peoples attacked the legal basis for their removal. However, officials such as Thompson were hostile to these challenges because they threatened to unravel the entire removal effort. Seminole leaders would be less willing to relocate if a substantial group of Indigenous settlements were allowed to remain. Thompson informed Commissioner of Indian Affairs Herring that he considered the principal headman of the coastal Indians to be a man named Phillip. While the leader had not personally been given a part of the annuity, he had been a recipient through “proxy.” Further, the agent argued that the fishermen represented an entity within the larger Seminole political structure and that the Indigenous population was accustomed to seasonal migration thus their presence on the coast did not signify their separate status. Anticipating the contention that the population was Spanish and could not be sent to Indian Territory, the agent held that the Spanish were “incorporated with the Indians not the Indians with them.” Moreover Thompson demonstrated his disgust at what he perceived as racial co-mingling by calling both groups “degraded.”⁹⁸

By 1837 the Gulf Coast fishing outposts became Jesup’s concern as he sought to end the Second U.S.-Seminole War and compel all Indigenous peoples to relocate. In March he had negotiated the Treaty of Fort Dade and by April was anxiously watching the Seminoles enter relocation centers in Tampa Bay. While this tenuous plan later unraveled because of efforts to

seize runaway Africans, it was the *ranchos* that represented the first stumbling block to removal. The general was confronted with a number of Indigenous women refusing to break up their families by moving west. U.S. officials suggested that the women and children remain with their Spanish husbands and that the men register as American sailors. This proposal failed to gain traction because in a matrilineal society a husband lived with his wife's family. Leaders from the *ranchos* stated that they would not leave their female relatives behind and threatened to defy Jesup. In response the commander decided to apply a precedent established with the Creek in which "Indian families of Americans were compelled to remove."⁹⁹ He wrote to Bunce informing him that the Indigenous fishermen were indeed Seminoles and under the Treaty of Moultrie Creek they must be seized and taken west.¹⁰⁰ During the year U.S. troops began raiding the *ranchos* and forcing the Gulf Coast groups upon transports to New Orleans. Bunce's facilities and the other *ranchos* were raided and had their buildings razed.¹⁰¹

Around one hundred and fifty of the "Spanish Indians" were eventually taken to Indian Territory while only a few individuals managed to avoid the voyage. The political, economic, and social interaction between Southwestern Florida and Havana had been irreparably disrupted. The nation-state no longer accepted the unregulated commerce and contact between a subordinate group and a foreign power. Indigenous peoples were being transported to Indian Territory where they could be better monitored and controlled. With little hope of success, Spanish husbands of the Indigenous women sent a memorial to U.S. Secretary of State Joel Poinsett requesting the return of their families. They claimed that as Spanish citizens prior to 1821 they legally could marry Indian women. After annexation they then became U.S. citizens through the provisions of the Adam-Onís Treaty. However, rather than having their rights

respected, the U.S. seized their relatives “sparing none in whom any Indian blood was found.”¹⁰² This last appeal also failed to reunite the Spanish fishermen and their Indigenous partners and children.

Jesup and U.S. policy sought to delineate and enforce the racial designations of “Black” and “Indian” among Florida’s subordinate peoples in order to facilitate removal. In the Treaty of Fort Dade, the agreement ignored the multifaceted political and socio-cultural arrangements that characterized Seminole and Black Seminole communities. Jesup restructured their relationship to one as master and slave, more closely approximating chattel slavery, and separated what had once been their joint interests. Concurrently, the general then used military force to homogenize independent Indigenous fishing *ranchos* with other Seminole settlements in order to remove them. Intermarriage between the Florida Gulf Coast native peoples and the Spanish demonstrated the threat of blurring racial lines and hostility directed towards mestizos. If the Spanish were successful in arguing for their citizenship and in effect their whiteness then they would have been able to afford protection to their Indigenous wives and children. However, these families threatened the entire removal effort since their Indigenous relatives refused to sever kinship networks. Jesup had decided that the success of the relocation was contingent on being able to place individuals in rigid racial categories while undermining possible fluidity and complexity. Although the Rancho populations had developed coastal subsistence patterns, close connections with Havana, and political autonomy from the Seminoles, removal essentialized them as “Indians.”

6.5 Indian Territory

When Jesup relinquished his Florida command in 1838 to Zachary Taylor the war continued as a protracted struggle with rarely any major engagements. Few Black Seminoles remained among the Seminole fighters, while figures such as Abraham worked for the U.S. Army. Africans served as interpreters and scouts charged with convincing or forcing recalcitrant Seminole leaders to accede to removal.¹⁰³ Abraham had assisted in convincing Eufaula Micco to enter negotiations and remove in 1838. The Indigenous headman later returned from Indian Territory to assist the U.S. by convincing the remaining leaders to emigrate. After a few more years of the war, Coacoochee, one of the remaining resisting Seminole leaders, was seized and transported west with his band.¹⁰⁴ A parade of generals beginning with Taylor sought to end the war but only managed to slowly gain a small number of prisoners, which they sent west. However the protracted war proved costly, and U.S. officials yearned for its conclusion. Consequently military commanders resorted to different tactics such as the use of Cuban bloodhounds to track Seminoles in difficult terrain.¹⁰⁵ U.S. agents had always known that the most expedient method for ending the conflict was offering the remaining Seminoles a Florida reservation. Although hesitant to utilize this option, in 1842 the U.S. ended its active military operations and declared an armistice, content to allow the remaining bands to occupy southwestern Florida lands, isolated from the Euro-American population. This was the case until the 1856 Third U.S.-Seminole War resulting in headman Billy Bowlegs' surrender to U.S. forces further reducing the Seminole population in Florida.¹⁰⁶ Once U.S. military efforts ended in 1858, the Seminole leader Arpeika and scattered settlements were able to elude capture and remained in the region of the Florida Everglades.

Although Seminole delegations had been sent from Indian Territory back to Florida to convince resisting bands to relocate, they often disclosed the appalling conditions in the west. They struggled to grow a suitable crop in the early 1840s as food subsidies were dwindling. A statement from Micanopy to Alex Cummings explained that the Seminoles had not been given the territory they were promised and that various bands were living upon the present-day East-Central Oklahoma lands of the Creek, Cherokee, Choctaws, and the Chickasaws. The Seminoles were assigned alternative territory near the Deep Fork of the Canadian River but the terrain suffered from “the scarcity of wood and water.”¹⁰⁷ Creeks continued to occupy the area the Seminoles expected to inhabit and various leaders such as Coacoochee refused to live among them and instead resided near Fort Gibson within the Cherokee’s domain. Unrelenting fears of Creek political dominance continued but did not completely displace internal leadership power struggles, especially after the death of Micanopy in 1848. Interrelated with these issues was the status of the Black Seminoles, who continued to draw the attention of Creeks and whites seeking to gain possession of them. Seminole and Black Seminole settlements were now in close vicinity to groups that practiced chattel slavery and viewed Africans simply as property.

Similar to debates in the 1820s, the U.S. government once more sought to clarify the status of the Black Seminoles. Much of the confusion stemmed from Thomas Jesup’s handling of the Second U.S.-Seminole War. Seeking to defuse the potency of the resistance he offered guarantees to Seminoles under the Treaty of Fort Dade that their property would be protected while later granting a number of slaves their freedom if they surrendered. In theory, individual Black Seminoles’ status was dependent on the manner that they entered U.S. custody and emigrated. However, many Africans claimed freedom through Jesup’s proclamation, but

verification remained difficult without extensive documentation. Once the Black Seminoles were in U.S. custody, officials contemplated whether the Africans were prisoners of war or whether they should be considered the seized property of the combatants of the Second U.S.- Seminole War. Shadowing these deliberations were constant complaints from Creek and U.S. citizens seeking to claim the slaves.

When the first waves of Black Seminole fighters were transported to Fort Pike, New Orleans, officials deliberated whether the Africans would proceed to Indian Territory. Early arrivals consisted of the Black Seminoles that had been both captured by the Creek expedition and Jesup's initial military operations. White claimants in the city appealed to the civil authorities and forced General Edmund P. Gaines to act as a defendant for the slaves and argue that they were prisoners of war not under the jurisdiction of local courts.¹⁰⁸ Orders from the District Attorney of the United States Benjamin Franklin Butler held that all parties in the case remain in New Orleans until the matter was settled. Eventually the Africans were sent to Indian Territory but the matter of their status remained unsettled. U.S. officials still considered various options even Jesup's suggestion to Secretary of State Poinsett that "they (Black Seminoles) be sent to one of our colonies in Africa."¹⁰⁹

Once greater numbers of Seminoles and Black Seminoles were sent to Indian Territory, both groups were anxious to cement their status. Seminoles sought to have their ownership of the slaves legitimized since they were vulnerable to the machinations of nearby slave holding groups. This situation also motivated Black Seminoles such as John Horse to press the government to validate Jesup's offer of freedom. In midst of these difficult decisions Colonel Gustavus Loomis, stationed in Fort Gibson, wrote Jesup informing him that the Black Seminoles

wanted to leave their Seminole masters. He felt that the colonization of Liberia with the Black Seminoles was an attractive option. Financial backing for the scheme, he reasoned, could come from persuading charitable groups to demonstrate their “benevolence in transporting them (Black Seminoles) to Africa where they can be free.”¹¹⁰ Brigadier General Arbuckle supported the initiative and forwarded the letter to Adjutant General Roger Jones and suggested the possible involvement of the American Colonization Society.¹¹¹ Although colonization plans never gained traction, they appealed to several officials and spoke to the racial attitudes of the period.

When the U.S. had experienced a rising number of free Blacks and slaves after the American Revolution, African colonization emerged as a middle ground solution that had the potential to unite sectional divisions. Virginia politician Charles Fenton Mercer formed the American Colonization Society in 1816 because he feared the inability of free blacks to improve their position in society. He predicted that they would then form a permanent vice-ridden population that would de-stabilize the country. In contrast he believed that education could uplift working-class whites.¹¹² The American Colonization Society received support from a broad section of the country. To abolitionists, the creation of the Liberia colony for free Blacks represented an opportunity to promote absolute liberty. Meanwhile slaveholders were attracted to the idea of expelling free Blacks, whom they perceived as a serious threat to the control of their slaves. Unifying these respective groups was the underlying belief that “due to innate racial differences, polarized societal statuses, and pervasive racism (whites and blacks) could not live together in social harmony and political equality within the same country.”¹¹³

Colonization proposals contained many of the broader racial arguments that characterized the debates over the status of the Black Seminoles. It served to unite both Loomis, a northerner

from Vermont concerned with the improvement of the Black Seminoles, and Jesup, a Virginian seeking to limit free Africans' ability to disrupt the slave holding system.¹¹⁴ From various sociopolitical perspectives the Black Seminoles represented a threat that various officials sought to address. Indian agents worried that the slaves caused unending conflict between the Seminoles and the Creeks, since the latter had shown interest in acquiring them. Regional slaveholders objected to the subversive influence of autonomous free African communities upon their own slaves. Racial discourse increasingly embraced the belief of innate racial differences based on biology. U.S. officials believed that Africans' inferior mental capabilities meant that free Black settlements could be detrimental to the "civilizing mission" of uplifting natives from savagery in Indian Territory. Simultaneously, sending Black Seminoles to Liberia, a region whose cultural and political systems they were unfamiliar with, somehow made sense to Jesup, Loomis, and Arbuckle. Accepting notions of innate racial characteristics meant that groups maintained primordial sociocultural attributes that easily facilitated integration within essentialized African societies. Conversely, this view also dictated that innate racial differences meant that Black integration in white or Indigenous societies was difficult or impossible.

Although colonization appealed to many white Americans, it proved unfeasible for the Black Seminoles. U.S. officials in the 1840s were still left to deal with individuals claiming freedom through Jesup's 1838 proclamation. They had sought and received shelter in Fort Gibson as the Attorney General of the United States contemplated their eventual fate. Jesup had become a defender of the Black Seminoles, writing justifications for his proclamations in hopes that they would be honored while instructing the Fort Gibson commander not to release the slaves to any claimants.¹¹⁵ Concurrently Harriet Bowlegs wrote to Subagent Marcellus Duval

requesting that her slaves be returned to her since she had surrendered to Jesup and was guaranteed her property.¹¹⁶ In 1847 Duval received the power of attorney from Seminole leaders to secure the release of the slaves to their Indigenous masters.¹¹⁷ He embarked in zest upon his lobbying of officials since he sought to gain financially once the Seminoles recovered their slaves.¹¹⁸ These efforts were rewarded when Attorney General John Y. Mason nullified Jesup's 1838 agreement because the "negro slaves had no power to contract, and therefore could not enter into any treaty or convention."¹¹⁹ Central to Mason's argument, the Black Seminoles were considered property and not prisoners of war. Indigenous groups could enter into nation-to-nation arguments but African slaves were given no legal rights.

President James K. Polk and Secretary of War William L. Marcy endorsed the ruling and asked that preparations commence to enforce its findings. In January 1849 Arbuckle released the slaves from Fort Gibson, where a number of Seminole owners had gathered. Additionally a number of Cherokees, Creeks, and Euro-Americans were present and claimed to have bought the rights of a number of Black Seminoles.¹²⁰ After the initial handover, 150 Black Seminoles under the direction of John Horse were expected to travel to Seminole territory and settle at a designated spot. When they finally left Fort Gibson in April they decided to establish a settlement at Wewoka Creek contrary to the wishes of Seminole leadership. Duval soon became irritated at the Black Seminoles' independence and defense capabilities and promptly declared them in a state of rebellion and proposed the use of the army to suppress them.¹²¹ Although Kevin Mulroy argued that the Seminole-Black Seminole arrangement remained largely intact from pre-removal era, U.S. policies had clearly racialized Africans as "Black" and only legally recognized them as property.¹²² While colonization proved untenable and did not solve the

dilemma of the presence of the Black Seminoles, Mason's ruling did restructure their relationship with the Seminoles to more fully comply with the U.S. racial order.

Seizure of the Black Seminoles represented only one of the many complications that the Seminoles faced in Indian Territory. Potential Seminole subjugation to Creek authority remained a major concern. In 1843, Seminole Subagent Thomas Judge informed Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hartley that Creek headmen were unsatisfied with Seminole settlement patterns. Little integration had occurred between both groups and the Seminoles were not abiding by Creek laws. Many of the Seminoles in fact had refused to enter Creek territory altogether.¹²³ Judge proposed withholding the Seminole annuity in order to pressure the Seminoles from Cherokee lands to assigned areas. During the following year Coacoochee, Eufaula Micco, and John Horse led a delegation to Washington, D.C. primarily to seek a separate territory from the Creek. In 1845 a new treaty essentially reinforced the existing arrangement, which meant Seminole integration within the Creek Confederacy. In exchange for Seminole promises to relocate, the agreement provided them more latitude in deciding specific locations for their settlements within Creek territory. Although the Creek retained legal jurisdiction over the Seminoles in terms of national policy, headmen were guaranteed authority over local matters.



Figure 6.5 John Horse. Source: Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 135.

Micanopy's death in late 1848 raised the question of succession and internal divisions while the Seminoles continued resisting Creek authority. Although the new treaty was ostensibly written to solve the Creek-Seminole impasse, it failed to give the Seminoles the level of autonomy they desired. For Coacoochee the situation became unbearable when Jim Jumper had succeeded him as the principal headman. Concurrently, John Horse and the Black Seminoles under his command continued to suffer from insecurity and slave raids. Famously in 1849, Coacoochee and John Horse led groups of Seminoles and Black Seminoles to Mexico and reached an understanding with the Mexican government for both groups to serve as a border militia. In the 1870s a detachment of Black Seminoles returning from Coahuila, Mexico to Indian Territory were enlisted in the U.S. military near the U.S.-Mexico border. In effect these bands of Seminoles and Black Seminoles were shifting with the border until they straddled the

Southwestern Borderlands. They had come from a tradition of exploiting ambiguous political and social spaces in which the power of the nation-state was marginal. Similar to Florida at the turn of the nineteenth century, Indigenous and African peoples leveraged competing powers in order to negotiate their own autonomy.

Conclusion

Coacoochee and John Horse's decision to relocate to Mexico marked their strategic withdrawal from Indian Territory where both leaders felt increasing pressure from internal rivals and the nation-state. The U.S. had expended a great deal of resources in the Second U.S.-Seminole War and the subsequent effort to remove the Seminoles and Black Seminoles. Undoubtedly the war and U.S. officials' policies represented the pivotal event when the geopolitical Florida Borderlands were reshaped and the nation could project its power within its territorial borders. Nonetheless Seminole resistance surprised and frustrated military commanders who never grasped the significance of removal for Florida's Indigenous and African peoples. American rhetoric had justified relocation since the Seminoles were perceived as being nomadic and recent immigrants to the area. Indigenous leaders contested that argument when they spoke against removal and re-iterated their intimate connection to the land of their ancestors. Equally significant, the U.S. continued to insist that the Seminoles become subsumed under the authority of the Creeks. The latter represented a more numerous and potent political entity and a number of their members had served as fighters in the Second U.S.-Seminole War. They had captured a number of Black Seminoles and led the U.S. army to Seminole positions in southern Florida. Continuing Creek claims of legitimate ownership over the Black Seminoles

constituted a part of the larger struggle to rein in the Seminoles. Being affiliated with the Africans gave the Seminoles an important resource, especially in terms of troops, in the continuing effort to preserve their autonomy. Concurrently, the Black Seminoles were combating their classification as “Black” and being consigned to the status of slaves and property.

Racialization was central to the project of removing the Seminoles and Black Seminoles and facilitated its success. General Jesup sought to end the conflict by separating the interests of both groups and restructuring the nature of their relationship into strictly master and slave. Abraham’s decision to assist U.S. negotiators to secure his freedom represented the difficult choices that awaited the Black Seminoles. Although Abraham was an important advisor to a principal Seminole leader and had adapted to Indigenous sociocultural systems, under U.S. law his status was relegated to being chattel. While Jesup sought to create political and social space between groups that had interacted frequently, he also homogenized Florida’s Indigenous peoples as Seminoles. Rancho populations had witnessed much contact and intermarriage between Gulf Coast peoples and the Spanish, which posed a threat to removal. Their ability to assert independence from the Seminoles and the removal treaties nearly unraveled the relocation of Indigenous peoples. Jesup decided to ignore their racial and cultural fluidity in order to clearly delineate racial categories. The creation of Indian Territory and the discussion over African colonization represented the dominant discourse of innate racial difference. U.S. policies had sought to relocate subordinate peoples on the premise that essentialized “Black” and “Indian” races existed. This social order replaced the diversity, complexity, and fluidity that had characterized the Florida Borderlands at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Notes:

¹ Matthew Arbuckle to Roger Jones, 29 January 1848, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (hereafter cited as BIA), RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, National Archives (hereafter cited as NA).

² Scholars have closely examined the U.S. strategy of influencing Black Seminole interpreters during treaty negotiations. They have debated whether these individuals acted against Seminole interests, specifically the interpreter Abraham during the Second U.S.-Seminole War. Concurrently, the U.S. utilized Indigenous rivalries as well in order to create divisions that proved advantageous in securing Seminole removal. For instance, Creek groups were encouraged to launch campaigns against the Seminoles, especially during the early stages of the war. Among the Seminoles, headman Charley Emathla was executed for advocating emigration while other leaders continued to promote resistance. Additionally, U.S. officials approached the Cherokee to send a delegation to convince the Seminoles to remove from Florida. For more information on this episode see Gary E. Moulton, "Cherokees and the Second Seminole War," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 53 (January 1975).

³ For work that highlights African influences among the Black Seminoles but nonetheless discusses elements of non-African cultural adaptation in Florida, see Rebecca N. Bateman, "Naming Patterns in Black Seminole Ethnogenesis," *Ethnohistory* 49 (Spring 2002), 243. Black Seminole naming patterns primarily exhibit characteristics present in the Kongo-Angola region. However, Bateman does cite the Bowlegs, Coody, Factor, and Payne families which took the surnames of their Indigenous masters. In addition she cites the rare cases of John Horse and John Kibbetts, Black Seminoles that incorporated Seminole titles or names. Bateman also found cases of Black Seminoles combining Seminole and African first names and surnames; Terrance M. Weik, "A Historical Archaeology of Black Seminole Maroons in Florida: Ethnogenesis and Culture Contact at Pilaklikaha," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 2002), 5. Black Seminole ethnogenesis led to "unique sociocultural groups and a distinct material record that can be differentiated from enslaved people of African descent and Seminole Indians." Weik also advises against a devaluing of the social and cultural interactions between Seminoles and Black Seminoles since this ignores the nuances of identity formation.

⁴ David La Vere, *Contrary Neighbors: Southern Plains and Removed Indians in Indian Territory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 54. Secretary of War James Barbour in 1826 outlined his goals for the removal of Indigenous groups to Indian Territory. He hoped to isolate them in present-day Oklahoma where they would merge into one "mass." Property would then be distributed to each individual.

⁵ Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Alexander McGillivray and William Augusta Bowles both preached and spread the discourse of Creek and Seminole nationalism. Additionally, a number of Seminole leaders did elevate themselves to positions of spokesmen when they held conferences with colonial powers.

⁶ John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War 1835-1842* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1986); For the earliest treatment of the Second U.S.-Seminole War, see John T. Sprague, *Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1848).

⁷ Susan A. Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones: A Seminole Saga* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 64. Miller has critiqued the historiography of the Second U.S.-Seminole War and its overemphasis on the Black Seminoles, which diverts focus from Seminole issues. She argues that historians have focused on sources written by U.S. officials concerned with slavery, which has skewed the historical record.

⁸ Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "Florida Slaves and Free Negroes in the Seminole War, 1835-1842," *The Journal of Negro History* 28 (October 1943), 400; Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1996), 67.

⁹ Kenneth W. Porter, "Negro Guides and Interpreters in the Early Stages of the Seminole War," *The Journal of Negro History* 35 (April 1950); Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "John Caesar: Seminole Negro Partisan," *The Journal of Negro History* 31 (April 1946).

¹⁰ Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993).

¹¹ James Gadsden to Andrew Jackson, 04 November 1829, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA; Bruce Vandervort, *Indian Wars of Mexico, Canada and the United States, 1812-1900* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 123. John Quincy Adams' insistence that Indigenous nations be treated as sovereign entities and could not be removed unless negotiated through treaties delayed removal. However, this policy was in sharp contrast with Andrew Jackson's belief that Indians were under the jurisdiction of the United States and thus an act of congress could force their removal.

¹² Larry Eugene Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 10. Many of the immigrants to Middle Florida arrived from Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Early plantations experimented with sugar cane and tobacco but eventually cotton became the dominant crop.

¹³ William P. Duval to Thomas L. McKenney, 05 April 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA; Memorial of Florida Citizens, October 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. Florida planters wrote and signed several memorials to territorial and federal officials; William P. Duval to James Barbour, 14 December 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA; William P. Duval to George M. Brooke, 27 December 1826, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 286, NA. The presence of new plantations in traditional Mikasuki lands fueled conflicts. Settlers usually complained that groups of Seminoles refused to live in the boundaries of the reservation, these Indigenous groups were reluctant to leave their longtime northern settlements.

¹⁴ James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, 11 June 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame number 526, NA.

¹⁵ James Gadsden to Lewis Cass, 10 March 1832, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA.

¹⁶ John Winslett to Lewis Cass, 08 May 1832, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 288, NA. The lawyer argued that the Black Seminoles were the descendants of slaves that the Seminoles had taken when they first left Lower Creek territory and immigrated into Florida in the 18th century. Slaves that later escaped U.S. owners and lived among the Seminoles were also their property since U.S.-Creek treaties compensated masters for those slaves because the Seminoles were considered part of the Creek Confederacy. Consequently the Creeks believed that due to the fact that the planters had been paid under their treaty meant they were now the legitimate owners.

¹⁷ Stephen Richards to Judge Popy, 04 November 1834, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 288, NA. In this particular episode, Richards felt that Sam Factor could be convinced to relocate to Indian Territory since his wife Rosa was vulnerable.

¹⁸ John Winslett Disposition, 21 December 1833, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 290, NA. Being deposed at the Seminole Agency, Winslett stated that he feared venturing further into the Tampa Bay area without force, he was specifically searching for James A. Emmitt's slaves.

¹⁹ John K. Mahon, "Two Seminole Treaties: Payne's Landing, 1832, and Ft. Gibson, 1833," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 41 (July 1962), 9.

²⁰ Treaty of Payne's Landing, 09 May 1832, BIA, RG11, M668, microfilm reel 6, frame number 447, NA; Treaty of Payne's Landing, 09 May 1832, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 2, NA. Under the first article of the Treaty of Payne's Landing the Seminole annuity would be combined with the Creek fund and the Seminoles would be paid as members of the Creek Confederacy. This would raise fears that the Seminoles would lose control over their economic resources.

²¹ Mahon, "Two Seminole Treaties: Payne's Landing, 1832, and Ft. Gibson, 1833," 14. The Seminole delegation included Jumper, Charley Emarthla, Coihadjo, Holati Emarthla, Yahadjo, John Hicks, and Nehathoclo.

²² Ibid, 17. Phagan confronted the delegation and insisted that they sign a document stating their willingness to remove to Indian Territory. In response, the Seminole leaders retorted that they were only there to inspect the land and bring their report to the other Seminoles. The Treaty of Payne's Landing was ambiguous about whether the delegation or the larger Seminole nation would have to signal their approval.

²³ The Treaty of Fort Gibson, 28 March 1833, BIA, RG11, M668, microfilm reel 7, NA. Specified within the agreement was the proposed plan for Seminole political submersion under the Creek in Indian Territory. A recent U.S.-Creek treaty had included a clause that formalized the inclusion of the Seminoles upon Creek land and within their government structure.

²⁴ James Gadsden Report, 01 May 1833, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA. The American agent weighs the value of potential land or sea routes for removing the Seminoles to Indian Territory. Additionally Gadsden writes that he seeks to discuss a removal treaty with the Apalachicola bands, specifically James Blunt.

²⁵ Treaty with the Apalachicola Seminole, 18 June 1833, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 3, NA.

²⁶ Jones to William P. Duval, 16 June 1833, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA. The Apalachicola leader James Blunt's home was attacked and his slaves were sent into hiding. In light of these incidents he is convinced that removal is the best option; Virginia Bergman Peters, *The Florida Wars* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1979), 128.

²⁷ James W. Covington, "Federal Relations with the Apalachicola Indians: 1823-1838," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 42 (October 1963), 135; James Blunt to Stephen Richards, 13 August 1833, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA. In a letter from James Blunt to Stephen Richards, the headman states that he will be delayed in his relocation to Indian Territory. Many of his people are currently ill and in the process of building 50 canoes, which is time consuming. Indigenous leaders, Walker and Challimico stated that they would not emigrate west, which has encouraged others to stay. Blunt places the responsibility solely on Gadsden for failing to get the other Indigenous peoples to follow him; John Johns to James D. West, 17 August 1833, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA; This letter was written for Seminole headman James Blunt to acting Governor of the Territory of Florida, James D. West to present various grievances. Apparently, Blunt is dismayed by reports that the United States Commissioner James Gadsden has made a separate agreement with Walker Hachapu. The rumored deal allows the rival leader to stay in Florida rather than relocating to Indian Territory. Blunt felt that he extended nothing but friendship to Gadsden and was betrayed. Many of his people are flocking to Walker's standard, even his slaves. The headman is very distressed that his "Negroes" are saying that they will not go north with him. He insists that Gadsden promised to secure his property until they are beyond the "reach of the bad white men and Indians who are persuading his Negroes." Removal is still possible but there must guarantees of the "Negroes" and that more Seminoles are willing to go.

²⁸ Covington, "Federal Relations with the Apalachicola Indians: 1823-1838," 125-141.

²⁹ Fort King Council, 23 October 1834, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA; Wiley Thompson to Elbert Herring, 24 November 1834, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA.

³⁰ Fort King Council, 23 October 1834, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA.

³¹ Mahon, "Two Seminole Treaties: Payne's Landing, 1832, and Ft. Gibson, 1833," 16. Charles Emarthla had conceded that he had signed the Treaty of Fort Gibson.

³² James Gadsden to Lewis Cass, 01 November 1834, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm 806, NA. Seminole leaders claimed that the interpreters had misled them. Gadsden points out that the Seminoles were able to

use the interpreter of their choice, Abraham, “an old domestic of Micanopy,” rather than the U.S. translator.

³³ Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 32.

³⁴ Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones*, 67.

³⁵ Treaty of Payne's Landing, 09 May 1832, BIA, RG11, M668, microfilm reel 6, frame number 447, NA; Treaty of Payne's Landing, 09 May 1832, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 2, NA. The second article of the Treaty of Payne's Landing stipulated that Abraham and Cudjo will be compensated two hundred dollars; Payment Invoice for Abraham, 14 October 1833, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 288, NA. Indian Agent John Phagan wrote a receipt for a 282 dollar payment to Abraham; Porter, "Negro Guides and Interpreters in the Early Stages of the Seminole War," 175. The article highlights Cudjo's background and work with the U.S. military during the Second U.S.-Seminole War.

³⁶ Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 33.

³⁷ Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones*, 66.

³⁸ Thomas Jesup Decree, 15 May 1838, BIA, RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, frame number 106, NA.

³⁹ Porter, "Negro Guides and Interpreters in the Early Stages of the Seminole War," 174. A number of Black Seminoles served as interpreters for the U.S. military, the article also gives a brief sketch of the careers of Cudjo, Nero, Ben Wiggins, and Primus.

⁴⁰ Larry Eugene Rivers, *Acts of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, Passed at Their First Session, 1822* (Pensacola: Floridian Press, 1823), 181. The legislation dealt with the punishment and discipline of slaves as well as the apprehension of runaways.

⁴¹ Memorial of Florida Citizens, January 1834, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 288, NA. Similar to other memorials from Florida planters, complaints are leveled at the Seminoles presence outside the reservation and the issue of runaway slaves.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Wiley Thompson Report, 28 October 1834, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA.

⁴⁴ Fort King Council, 23 October 1834, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA.

⁴⁵ Wiley Thompson to John Eaton, 20 January 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm 800, NA.

⁴⁶ C.W. Harris to Wiley Thompson, 20 May 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm 806, NA. Acting Secretary of War Harris is responding to the recent correspondence from U.S. officials that mentioned the willingness of eight Seminole headmen to relocate while five leaders refuse. He believes that the president will approve the use of force to remove the resistant Seminoles. Thompson advised deposing uncooperative Seminole headmen, although he does not have the right to do so, Harris thinks it may be an advantageous maneuver. However, a rigorous response from the Indigenous leaders is expected, because their positions are threatened.

⁴⁷ Elbert Herring to Richard K. Call, 26 March 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring is writing to General Richard K. Call concerning official policy over the Seminole slaves. He felt there was no need to seek Department of Indian Affairs' approval for civilian purchase of Seminole "Negroes." The department has no jurisdiction in the matter, since Indian nations are sovereign.

⁴⁸ Wiley Thompson to Lewis Cass, 27 April 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA. Under the Indian Intercourse Act the U.S. created trading factories and licensed merchants for Indigenous peoples. Officially sanctioning trade was theoretically done to protect Indians from unscrupulous whites that sought to exploit a naïve and "uncivilized" population.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ C.A. Harris to Wiley Thompson, 22 May 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA. Jackson argued that the Indian Intercourse Act could not regulate Indigenous sale of slave property because the law did not specifically address it. Indigenous peoples were declared free to dispose of their property.

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- ⁵¹ Jackson concurred with other officials that the presence of the Black Seminoles in Indian Territory would exacerbate tensions between the Creek and Seminoles.
- ⁵² Wiley Thompson to C.A. Harris, 17 June 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm 800, NA. According to the Indian agent, he could not recall of an instance when a Seminole sold a slave without the buyers resorting to unscrupulous methods.
- ⁵³ Wiley Thompson to Andrew Jackson, 14 June 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm 806, NA.
- ⁵⁴ Wiley Thompson to C.A. Harris, 17 June 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm 800, NA.
- ⁵⁵ C.A. Harris to Wiley Thompson, 11 July 1835, BIA, RG75, M21, microfilm 16, NA. Acting Secretary of War Harris is writing to the Indian Agent Thompson concerning the sale of Seminole slaves. He states that Colonel Gadsden and Captain Thorton's opinions are that the Seminole will not sell or immigrate without their slaves. They are dissatisfied with the number of people showing up to purchase their slaves. Thompson is given authority under the Indian Intercourse Act to stop any transactions and only allow traders with permits from the agency to conduct business. Public notice and word to the Seminole headmen will be given of this order. Thompson is given free reign to decide which, if any traders, may enter or reside in Indian Territory.
- ⁵⁶ Elbert Herring to Frank Wells Armstrong, 28 May 1835, BIA, RG75, M21, microfilm reel 16, NA.
- ⁵⁷ David La Vere, *Contrary Neighbors*, 66. Partly explaining the strained relations between Southern Plains groups and Southeastern Indians were their different economic, social, and political systems, which bred a sense of foreignness. Specifically, the Creek and other removed Indigenous peoples were distinct from the Southern Plains groups since they followed a matrilineal line of descent and their economy was based on agricultural production.
- ⁵⁸ Elbert Herring to Frank Wells Armstrong, 28 May 1835, BIA, RG75, M21, microfilm reel 16, NA.
- ⁵⁹ J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 274. During removal, civil conflicts erupted among Creek and Seminole factions.
- ⁶⁰ James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 72. Exact figures for Seminoles and Black Seminoles are difficult to ascertain but the author states that 4,000 Indigenous and African peoples were removed while 400-500 Seminoles remained. Black Seminole population numbers have been estimated at 500-1,000, however an exact number cannot be reached because runaway slaves were responsible for continual demographic increases. Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 54. General Gaines believed that the total number of Seminole and Black Seminole troops, men of fighting age, was not more than 1,200.
- ⁶¹ Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 288.
- ⁶² Duncan L. Clinch to Lewis Cass, 28 May 1835, BIA, RG75, M21, microfilm reel 16, NA.
- ⁶³ Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 67.
- ⁶⁴ Seminole Headmen to Andrew Jackson, 19 August 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA. The Seminole Headmen are writing to President Jackson concerning conditions of their move to Indian Territory. They state that their diplomatic delegation was told that the Seminoles and Creek would become unified. They disagree with this course of action and want guarantees that they will have a separate agency in Indian Territory with their own agent and blacksmith. Indigenous leaders are insistent on separate territory from the Creeks and they want the return of Wiley Thompson as their agent. They refuse to move until these conditions are met.
- ⁶⁵ Proceedings of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 30 August to 16 September 1823, BIA, RG75, T494, microfilm reel 1, frame number 538, NA.
- ⁶⁶ Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones*, 31.

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- ⁶⁷ Seminole Headmen Statement, 23 April 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA. Statement from Seminole headmen that proclaimed that all the provisions of the Treaty of Payne's Landing and Fort Gibson are valid. The most prestigious leader to sign the document was Charley Emartla.
- ⁶⁸ Asin Yahola was one of the younger leaders that rose to prominence during the Second U.S.-Seminole War. His party often included a number of Black Seminole fighters.
- ⁶⁹ Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 28.
- ⁷⁰ Porter, "John Caesar," 192. Plantation slaves on the St. Johns River were said to have kin among the Black Seminoles and these existing connections facilitated their communication and escape.
- ⁷¹ Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 61. Creeks were assured of receiving plunder for attacking the Seminoles, which often meant acquiring African slaves.
- ⁷² John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 123. Jesup had been sent under the command of Winfield Scott to suppress a faction of the Creek resisting removal. In 1836 the general was put in charge of the Alabama campaign and quickly outpaced the performance of his superior officer. As a result Jesup was transferred to Florida and given command in the Second U.S.-Seminole War.
- ⁷³ Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 67; Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border*, 29.
- ⁷⁴ Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 72.
- ⁷⁵ Miller, *Coacoochee's Bones*, 66. According to the author, Abraham married Micanopy's sister. In a matrilineal society a female relative of a Seminole headman was held in high esteem.
- ⁷⁶ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 122.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid, 130.
- ⁷⁸ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1999).
- ⁷⁹ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 123.
- ⁸⁰ For scholarship concerning volunteer regiments, see John K. Mahon, "The Journal of A.B. Meek and the Second Seminole War, 1836," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 38 (April 1960), 302-318; John K. Mahon, "Missouri Volunteers at the Battle of Okeechobee: Christmas Day 1837," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 70 (October 1991), 166-176.
- ⁸¹ Cantor Brown Jr., "Persifor F. Smith, the Louisiana Volunteers, and Florida's Second Seminole War," *The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 34 (Autumn 1993), 397.
- ⁸² Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 77.
- ⁸³ Thomas Jesup to Joel Roberts Poinsett, 08 May 1837, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 288, NA.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid, 80.
- ⁸⁵ Thomas Jesup to William Wilkins, 30 May 1844, BIA, RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, frame number 89, NA. Whether the offer of freedom was limited to Seminole slaves or was also extended to all African combatants is ambiguous.
- ⁸⁶ Gad Humphreys to Charles Downing, 30 May 1838, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.
- ⁸⁷ Porter, *The Black Seminoles*, 81. Allied Creek military units had been brought to Florida and promised plunder if they assisted in combating the Seminoles. Jesup offered them 8,000 dollars for the slaves that they had acquired and began sending Black Seminoles in his possession to Fort Pike, New Orleans. From this location they awaited transportation to Indian Territory.
- ⁸⁸ Thomas Jesup to William Wilkins, 22 May 1844, BIA, RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, frame number 2, NA.
- ⁸⁹ Thomas Jesup to William Wilkins, 30 May 1844, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 806, NA.
- ⁹⁰ James W. Covington, "Trade Relations between Southwestern Florida and Cuba: 1600-1840," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 38 (October 1959), 116. The author presents an insightful description of

how the Spanish fisherman operated in Florida from August to March. He discusses how they prepared the fish, organized their crews, and divided their profits.

⁹¹ Spanish Fishermen Petition, 1838, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA; James W. Covington, "A Petition from Some Latin-American Fishermen; 1838," *Tequesta* 14 (1954), 62.

⁹² Patrick Tonyn to Peter Parker, 25 September 1779, Colonial Office (hereafter cited as CO) 5/559-60, microfilm reel 4, Public Records Office, London (hereafter cited as PRO), Library of Congress (hereafter cited as LC). *Ranchos* were viewed as a danger to the British war effort against the American rebels. Spanish fishermen were perceived as influencing the Creek to leave the British and support the independence movement.

⁹³ William Bunce to Wiley Thompson, 09 January 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 288, NA.

⁹⁴ William C. Sturtevant, "Chakaika and The "Spanish Indians": Documentary Sources Compared with Seminole Tradition," *Tequesta* 13 (1953), 35-73. Some of the Spanish men in Charlotte Harbor had spent thirty years living in the area.

⁹⁵ Augustus Steele to Wiley Thompson, 10 January 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 288, NA.

⁹⁶ Sturtevant, "Chakaika and The 'Spanish Indians,'" 39.

⁹⁷ Augustus Steele to Wiley Thompson, 10 January 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 288, NA.

⁹⁸ Wiley Thompson to Elbert Herring, 03 April 1835, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 800, NA.

⁹⁹ Thomas Jesup to C.A. Harris, 13 April 1837, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 290, NA.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Jesup to William Bunce, 15 May 1837, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.

¹⁰¹ James W. Covington, "Trade Relations between Southwestern Florida and Cuba," 127. Bunce's fishing operations were unable to remain active after U.S. naval raids and he later sought compensation from the government.

¹⁰² Covington, "A Petition from Some Latin-American Fishermen; 1838," 63; Petition from Spanish Fishermen to Joel Poinsett, 1838, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.

¹⁰³ Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War 1835-1842*, 324; Ibid, 283. An example of Africans assisting the U.S. Army can be found in the episode of John who helped direct Lieutenant Colonel William S. Harney expedition into the Everglades.

¹⁰⁴ Peters, *The Florida Wars*, 204.

¹⁰⁵ Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War 1835-1842*, 283. 266.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth W. Porter, "Billy Bowlegs (Holata Micco) in the Seminole Wars (Part I)," *The Florida Historical Society* 45 (January 1967), 239. Financial inducements and the establishment of a separate Seminole reservation from the Creek convinced Bowlegs to relocate.

¹⁰⁷ Micanopy Statement, 20 July 1840, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 289, NA.

¹⁰⁸ John G. Reynolds to C.A. Harris, 15 May 1838, BIA, RG75, M234, microfilm reel 290, NA.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 17.

¹¹⁰ Gustavus Loomis to Thomas Jesup, 07 December 1847, BIA, RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, NA; Littlefield Jr., *Africans and Seminoles*," 17. Within the confines of Fort Gibson, Loomis interacted daily with a party of Black Seminoles located there. He writes that they informed him that they wish to go to any place where they could live in peace.

¹¹¹ Matthew Arbuckle to Roger Jones, 29 January 1848, BIA, RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, NA.

¹¹² Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida 2005), 13.

¹¹³ Claude A. Clegg III, *The Price of Liberty: African American and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 3.

¹¹⁴ Gustavus Loomis to Thomas Jesup, 07 December 1847, BIA, RG75, M574, microfilm reel 13, NA. Loomis held religious classes and sought to teach the Black Seminoles to read the bible; Littlefield Jr.,

Africans and Seminoles, 17. In a letter to Poinsett, Jesup exclaimed that “it is highly important to the slave holding states that these negroes be sent to one of our colonies in Africa.”

¹¹⁵ Thomas Jesup to Matthew Arbuckle, 08 April 1846, BIA, RG 75, M574, microfilm 13, NA.

¹¹⁶ Harriet Bowlegs to Marcellus Duval, 23 September 1846, BIA, RG 75, M574, microfilm 13, NA.

¹¹⁷ Statement of Seminole Headmen, 20 November 1847, BIA, RG 75, M574, microfilm 13, NA.

¹¹⁸ Matthew Arbuckle to Roger Jones, 14 September 1849, BIA, RG 75, M574, microfilm 13, NA. Duval expected to receive 1/3 of the Seminole slaves as payment for his services; Marcellus Duval to John Y. Mason, 30 May 1848, BIA, RG 75, M574, microfilm 13, NA.

¹¹⁹ John Y. Mason to William Learned Marcy, 28 June 1848, BIA, RG 75, M574, microfilm 13, NA.

¹²⁰ Mathew Arbuckle to William Learned Marcy, 29 January 1849, BIA, RG 75, M574, microfilm 13, NA.

¹²¹ Marcellus Duval to Mathew Arbuckle, 16 July 1849, BIA, RG 75, M574, microfilm 13, NA.

¹²² Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 86.

¹²³ Thomas Judge to Hartley Crawford, 31 January 1843, BIA, RG 75, M234, microfilm 800, NA.

CONCLUSION

A year 2000 referendum election in the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma led to the passage of nine constitutional amendments. Three of the proposed changes stripped the Seminole Freedmen or Black Seminoles of their citizen rights in the Seminole Nation.¹ However, the Department of the Interior (DOI) asserted their oversight powers, specified in the 1969 Seminole Constitution, and did not approve the results of the election and subsequently refused to sanction the proposed changes. One year later, despite U.S. government objections, the Seminole Nation disenfranchised the Freeman and barred their participation in an election for Principal Chief of the Seminole Nation. Since the DOI vetoed Black Seminole expulsion, the Freedmen remained marginalized tribal citizens while their eventual legal standing was debated during the following years within U.S. courts and through a number of appeals.²

At the turn of the twenty-first century a flurry of media attention focused on the plight of “Black Indians,” their status within tribal nations, and questions of identity, in particular, one *New York Times* article asked “Who is a Seminole, and who gets to decide?”³ Both the Freedmen and the Seminole national leadership constructed vastly different narratives of the ongoing dispute. Mainstream media outlets largely argued that the conflict was between Black Seminoles and “blood Seminoles,” individuals who utilized blood quantum, in a manner similar to the U.S. government, as a marker of their Indigenous identity. Although these groups had “intermarried over the generations,” they drifted apart because of competition for resources stemming from U.S. government settlement funds first being distributed in 1990.⁴ While these articles acknowledged the presence of individual Black Seminoles who preferred to identify

solely as African-Americans, they nonetheless provided testimonials and quotes from individuals who felt their African and Indigenous ethnicity were ignored and their right to Seminole citizenship marginalized. Wilburt Cudjoe, a self-identified Black Seminole, highlighted his dual identity when he argued that, “his ancestor may have been Black, but he was very much a Seminole.”⁵ Similarly Bud Crockett embraced Seminole Nation citizenship because he wanted “a correct account of history” that cemented his “legacy.”⁶ Cudjoe, Crockett, and others bristled at the notion that they sought monetary gain or personal attention. Journalist Jeff Guinn’s book, *Our Land Before We Die: The Proud Story of the Seminole Negro*, published in 2005, included an interview with Clarence Ward, who emphasized his Indigenous cultural heritage.⁷ Newspaper articles sympathetic to the Black Seminoles offered a couple of reasons for the tensions between “blood Seminoles” and Black Seminoles, namely greed and racism. *New York Times* reporter Brent Staples posited that the Seminoles were an “Afro-Indian tribe” in denial and continued to be “running from history” as the Black Seminoles sought justice. Furthermore, the Seminoles wanted to expel African-Seminole members, and that these actions were “mean-spirited and immoral.”⁸

The Seminole Tribal Council’s arguments and positions were only given a perfunctory discussion in the many of the articles mentioned above. Despite the mainstream media’s dismissal of Seminoles’ arguments for excluding individuals with African descent, their concerns were not simply smokescreens for racism. All Indigenous nations and groups have struggled with issues over inclusion and exclusion. As Phillip Deloria’s *Playing Indian* has shown, Euro-Americans appropriated Indian personas, grounded in stereotypes rather than actual representations of native peoples’ cultures, in order to construct an American identity.⁹

Unfortunately the process included individuals claiming an Indigenous identity with little desire to participate and contribute to Indigenous communities. Echoing Deloria, Eva Marie Garroutte cites the adherents of New Age spirituality as especially prone to appropriating Indigenous social ceremonies and even identities. She states that “the cavalcade of self-identified people and groups who improperly present themselves as representing the views, values, commitments, or authority of entire tribes” is a cause of serious concern that merits action.¹⁰ These observations shed light on the Seminole Nation’s concerns about individuals claiming a Seminole identity.

In the dispute between the Seminoles and the Freedmen, the Seminole tribal leadership, in particular embattled Chief Jerry Haney, argued succinctly “If they don’t have any Indian blood, or prove it, then they’re not looked at as Indians.”¹¹ Despite their contest for leadership in the Seminole Nation, Kenneth Chambers agreed with Haney over the issue of Freedmen citizenship. He also invoked the issue of culture by stating that the Black Seminoles and Seminoles had always remained separate and that the “two cultures never truly mixed.”¹² Although in various newspaper articles Black Seminoles in Oklahoma stressed that their lives were intertwined with the Seminoles, Chambers insisted that the Freedmen do not speak Muscogee, cook Seminole dishes, and do not “welcome another harvest by stomp dancing and signing into the night.”¹³ Ultimately Seminole leaders argued that the decision to establish citizenship standards is essentially a question of sovereignty. They viewed the conflict within the context of the larger struggle to protect and enhance Indigenous nations’ authority in the face of U.S. policies. Specifically, in the Seminole-Black Seminoles dispute, the 1866 Seminole-U.S. treaty pressured the Seminoles to include the Freedmen within the Seminole Nation. Meanwhile, recent U.S. policy protecting Black Seminoles’ citizenship has been followed by rulings denying

Freedmen access to U.S. court settlement funds given to the Seminole Nation for Florida lands. Consequently U.S. policies have kept the Black Seminoles in the Seminole Nation but only as marginalized members.

Scholarship on the eighteenth and nineteenth century Florida Borderlands is relevant to present-day events in Oklahoma, especially in regards to studies centering on colonialism, racial discourse, and identity. Both Freedmen and Seminole leaders have turned to history to support their arguments about Black Seminole integration within Seminole society. More broadly speaking, the events surrounding the potential Freedman exclusion from the Seminole Nation speak to the ascendancy of the U.S., political centralization among Indigenous groups, and the development of racial categories deemed immutable and biologically distinct. This work argues that processes associated with hardening racial designations, nationalistic discourse, and the market economy operated throughout the Southeastern Borderlands.

In Florida, older Indigenous and Spanish political, economic, and social systems were not initially displaced but were in constant dialogue and interaction with what Claudio Saunt has termed the “New Order,” leading to a complex sociopolitical milieu. The lack of a dominant discourse meant that different understandings and notions of race, nation, and economic exchange were possible depending on the situation, time, and place. However, in the 1830s the United States was able to fulfill the colonial project initiated by the British in the 1760s. While the British never advocated a program of Indian removal, Governor James Grant clearly outlined his goals of encouraging British settlement and the development of plantations based on African slave labor. He viewed alliances and presents with the Lower Creeks and Seminoles as pragmatic measures until the colony matured. Once power dynamics changed, British expansion

would necessitate Seminole displacement if Grant's vision for the colony were to be fulfilled. Removal of the Seminoles meant that the nation-state could control its territorial borders and secure property in the form of African slaves in order to support a plantation export economy. In the drive to buttress physical borders, colonial powers sought to also strengthen metaphorical boundaries between groups in order to facilitate control over them by undermining their cooperation and shared resistance. Only the U.S. mustered the necessary power to racialize and remove Africans and Seminoles while simultaneously conducting policies that enforced categories such as "Indian" and "Black."

Post-1850 Seminole-Black Seminole Relationship

U.S. policies centered on Indigenous peoples have been notoriously inconsistent and contradictory, especially in the case of the Black Seminoles and Seminoles. Both American citizens and government officials since 1821 sought to seize the Africans living among the Seminoles and return them to a state of bondage. During the Second U.S.-Seminole War, 1835-1842, General Thomas Jesup undermined his negotiations with Seminole leaders when he assisted planters in claiming Black Seminoles among the Seminole ranks. In the face of considerable African and Indigenous resistance, Jesup had to cede the fallacy of his strategy and reverse his position by removing the Black Seminoles to Indian Territory. While these decisions served to maintain the Black Seminole presence among the Seminoles, they also served to eventually make the former into subordinate members of the Seminole Nation. Black Seminoles, in the eyes of the U.S. government, had been transported to Indian Territory as the slave property of the Seminole and not under the more nuanced and complex terms of their previous

relationship in Florida.¹⁴ In conjunction with U.S. policies, the Seminoles gravitated towards nationalism and consequently notions of a primordial racial identity, which in the twentieth century would further marginalize the Black Seminoles within the Seminole Nation.

In the years leading up to the U.S. Civil War, Black Seminoles' status remained tenuous due to the presence of Euro-American and Creek slave raiders. Scholars have debated whether the Seminole relationship with the Black Seminoles was dramatically altered due to relocation to Indian Territory. Daniel F. Littlefield states that the proximity of the Creek disrupted the affinity and cooperation between both groups since others were more likely to view the Black Seminoles as chattel.¹⁵ Meanwhile Kevin Mulroy argues that the "1850s saw a re-emergence of many of the characteristics of pre-Removal Seminole-maroon relations."¹⁶ Nonetheless, both historians agree that the Civil War marked the emergence of a Seminole faction led by Heniha Mikko, also known as John Jumper, that sympathized with the Confederacy. Although the majority of the Seminoles remained pro-Union, the Confederate alliance generally enjoyed more support in Indian Territory and managed to gain control of the area during the war. Consequently the pro-Confederate Seminole faction passed legislation re-enslaving free blacks within the Seminole Nation. Once the Confederacy surrendered, pro-union Seminole groups and Black Seminoles returned from their exile in Kansas to Indian Territory. The U.S. informed them that they needed to enter into a new treaty, despite never having joined any of the Confederate factions. Federal government officials held the Seminole Nation culpable and considered them belligerents in the war due to the treaty between Heniha Mikko and the Confederacy.

Post-war treaties between the U.S. and the Indigenous groups emphasized the emancipation of slaves and the abolition of the institution of slavery. The 1866 U.S.-Seminole

Treaty stipulated that the freedmen should gain their liberty and “enjoy all the rights of native citizens” within the Seminole Nation.¹⁷ While the Confederate faction had an opportunity to reintegrate into the Seminole Nation they objected to the treaty article bestowing citizenship rights upon the Freedmen. They demonstrated the extent to which they had internalized Euro-American racial discourse when they stated:

We know the abolition of slavery to be a fact throughout the United States. We are willing to recognize that fact by the proper acts of our Council. But the proposition to ‘incorporate’ the freed negro with us on an ‘equal footing with the original members’ of the Seminole tribe is presented to us so suddenly that it shocks the lesson we have learned for long years from the white man as to the negro’s inferiority. We honestly think that both the welfare of the Seminole and the freed negro would be injured if not destroyed by such ‘incorporation.’¹⁸

The Confederate faction faced accusations of seeking to control their slaves as long as possible while seizing the slaves’ property.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the loyal faction did not have the same concerns over the integration of the Freedmen and were often praised by U.S. officials for their cooperation. Passage of the agreement proved significant not only because of the consequences for the Freedmen but because it also enabled the U.S. to annex two million acres of the Seminole reservation. The Seminoles were then assigned two hundred thousand acres in central Oklahoma from previous Creek lands as a new homeland.

With the passage of the 1887 Dawes Act, U.S. Indian policy heeded the call of reformers to dissolve Indigenous communal land holdings and promote private property in order to assimilate native peoples. A decade later, the Curtis Act extended the provisions of the Dawes Act to the “Five Civilized Tribes,” such as the Creek and the Seminoles. Commissioners proceeded to compile the Dawes Rolls, a list of individuals that would receive their own private

land allotments. Officials separated the Seminole Nation into two categories, “Seminoles by blood” and the Seminole Freedmen. Individual enrollees were then placed into either category based on whether they were considered Black or Indian. Among the “Five Civilized Tribes” the process of delineating whether a person belonged to the “blood” or Freedmen roll was often complicated and difficult to ascertain, resulting in irregularities.²⁰ However Mulroy argues that since the Seminoles and Black Seminoles had maintained their sociocultural distance; the creation of the “blood” and Freedmen rolls was unusually straightforward and accomplished in a relatively short amount of time.²¹ Melinda Micco and Martha Melaku nonetheless maintain that the process was inherently problematic because of the role of U.S. government agents in constructing the list caused “opportunities for inaccuracies to occur.”²² They respectively note that nineteenth century racial discourse held fast to notions of hypodescent and the “one drop rule,” which meant that a person was considered Black even if they had a limited number of African ancestors. Conversely, to be recognized as a “real Indian” meant being a “full-blood” since a “mixed-blood” individual was viewed as a dilution of the original racial stock but simultaneously capable of being civilized if the person had a Euro-American parent. Consequently, after the allocation of land parcels, safeguards remained for “full-bloods” but not for “mixed-bloods,” since the former was considered unacculturated and vulnerable. U.S. officials conflated race, culture, and blood, and assumed that the amount of “Indian blood” signified whether an individual retained a primordial Indigenous culture.

As expounded by various scholars, the Dawes Act had severe consequences for Indigenous peoples beyond the disastrous land displacement that led to the creation of the State of Oklahoma in 1907. Blood quantum, which was originally established to facilitate the land

dispersal, became the preferred mode of legitimatizing a person's Indigenous identity. It is questionable that Freedmen at the turn of the twentieth century realized the full importance that blood quantum would later assume. Certainly Mulroy notes a few cases where individuals sought to be listed on the "blood" rolls because of the social and economic benefits they could gain during that period. However he does note that Freedmen and Seminoles received the same acreage in their land allotment.²³ Equal land distribution and the difficulty of appealing exclusion from the "blood" roll may explain the limited number of Freedmen challenges over their status. However, the "blood" or Freedmen rolls were later utilized to determine whether a person remained eligible for economic assistance and the legitimacy of their citizenship. Eve Marie Garrouette illustrates how U.S. policy and internal Indigenous political and social developments led to the utilization of blood quantum to confer group membership. As a result, Indigenous communities have become divided among those who can and cannot satisfy the "blood" quantum requirements for tribal membership.

Seminole and Freedmen relations markedly deteriorated after the 1930s. Regionally, African Americans in Oklahoma had already been subjected to Jim Crow laws that segregated Blacks, violated their voting rights, and targeted miscegenation. In 1921 Tulsa had experienced a major incidence of racial violence when an African American Dick Rowland was arrested for assaulting a white woman. After a Euro-American mob failed to lynch the accused they turned their attention to the African American community defending Rowland. Rioters had done significant damage to Black neighborhoods and the unofficial death toll stood at several hundred. Oklahoma was not immune to the broader trends of a period viewed as the nadir in race relations exemplified by the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan outside of the South into the Midwest. These

trends also manifested themselves in the Black Seminoles' increasingly tenuous sociopolitical standing among the Seminoles. Until the Great Depression, the Freedmen could access Seminole economic resources and political system. Beginning in 1930 the Seminole Nation sought legal action to limit Black Seminoles ability to draw upon joint Seminole property and funds. A distinction was made between Freedmen's membership in the Seminole Nation as opposed to the Seminole Tribe, and only the tribe could receive financial assistance.²⁴ The "tribe" and the "nation" evolved historically among Indigenous peoples. Tribes have become perceived as sociocultural groups bounded by "blood" or race, while nations are political units.

Scholars have had difficulty highlighting the precise moment when the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship became deeply strained. The legal battles in the latter half of the twentieth century clearly demonstrate the rifts between both groups were now firmly in place. Seminole leadership continued to appeal for U.S. courts to accept the expulsion of the Freedmen or at the very least their marginalization within the Seminole nation. Seeking to utilize the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act to redress the dissolution of the Seminole Nation under the Dawes Act, a number of Seminole leaders wanted to adopt a new constitution that excluded the Black Seminoles. Their objections stemmed from the perceived social distance with the Black Seminoles and their resentment with being associated with the Freedmen's blackness.²⁵ Seminole leaders continued to strive towards a constitution, which was eventually adopted in 1969. Similar to previous efforts to draft a constitution, the federal government thwarted the ouster of the Black Seminoles by citing the 1866 treaty and its guarantees of Seminole citizenship to the Freedmen. Not only did the constitution include the Black Seminoles but it also contained a clause stipulating that the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs had to approve

any amendments, including the expulsion of the Black Seminoles, before they could become effective.²⁶

Although Seminole efforts to expel the Freedmen failed, their drive to restrict access to economic resources did meet with some success. In 1976, the U.S. Indian Claims Commission awarded the Seminoles 16 million dollars for land taken by the United States in the 1823 Treaty of Moultrie Creek. The fund had increased to 56 million dollars by 1990, when the money began to be utilized for various programs and a small per capita payment to individual members. However the U.S. and the Seminoles agreed that the Freedmen would not receive any benefits from the settlement because as slaves they did not own land and should not be compensated. Susan Miller states that the Black Seminoles were only members of the Seminole Nation after the 1866 treaty and thus not eligible for compensation for events that occurred in the 1820s.²⁷ Seminole arguments questioning Freedmen's land ownership had begun earlier in the 1930s when the Seminoles desired compensation for lands allotted to the Black Seminoles because of the Dawes Act. While previous litigation had failed, in 1976 the Seminoles did gain U.S. support for barring the Black Seminoles from accruing any economic benefit from the recent settlement.²⁸

In response to these developments, Sylvia Davis, a former representative of the Dosar Barkus band on the Seminole Council, brought forth a lawsuit against the U.S. in 1994 after she was denied a clothing stipend for her son from the settlement funds.²⁹ Her case was dismissed and the subsequent appeals were unsuccessful because the Seminole Nation was not a party to the lawsuit.³⁰ Their participation in the legal proceedings could not occur because of sovereign

immunity. Efforts to have the U.S. Supreme Court hear arguments in the case ended in 2005, and ensured the enforcement of the earlier rulings.

Within this context, the 2000 election had sought to implement the use of blood quantum to regulate citizenship, voting, distribution of economic resources, and access to leadership positions. Individuals needed to prove that they could meet the one-eighth blood quantum necessary for admittance into the Seminole Nation. Eligibility for the tribal council continued to be set at one-fourth mark; however, the previous exemption made for the Freedmen was abandoned. In response to Black Seminole access to the financial resources of the nation, Seminole leaders sought to settle the issue by revoking all Freedmen rights. While the U.S. agreed with the Seminoles in the Davis case, it sided with the Black Seminoles over the opposition to the newly passed constitutional amendments. The government's positions remained anchored in the 1866 treaty that guaranteed citizenship to the Freedmen and to its ability to veto any changes to the Seminole constitution. Nonetheless, the Seminoles conducted an election the following year under the guidelines established by the 2000 vote. As a result, Black Seminoles' votes were not counted, especially in the contest for principal leader, which was won by Kenneth Chambers. His opponent, Jerry Haney, contested the results and gained assistance from the U.S. government, which ruled that conducting the election under amendments yet to be approved by the DOI was invalid. Although Haney had demonstrated his support for excluding the Freedmen from citizenship in the Seminole Nation, he utilized their lack of voting rights as part of his challenge to the election's legitimacy.

Indigenous scholars have highlighted the continuing U.S. colonialism over groups such as the Seminoles. In the case of the Freedmen, U.S. policies and decisions are responsible for

the current impasse. Refusing to acknowledge the results of the 2000 and the 2001 elections, the Bureau of Indian Affairs applied significant pressure on the Seminole Nation. They continued to recognize Haney as the leader of the Seminole Nation and more significantly they suspended federal funding to the Seminoles. The Seminole leadership reluctantly reversed its positions once their lawsuit against the U.S. ended in disappointment. Freedmen retained citizenship in the Seminole Nation, but their marginal position continued to stand as a source of conflict. BIA intervention did prevent Black Seminoles' expulsion from the nation but also it served to replicate U.S. racial hierarchies in the sense that the Freedmen were still denied access to settlement funds. Similar to the position of African Americans in larger American society, the Black Seminoles possessed political rights but not access to economic resources, which contributed to their marginalization. While the current struggle has unfortunately been presented as the Seminole Nation against the Freedmen, it is vital to recognize how the legacy of colonialism, particularly racial hierarchies, was a vital component to the present situation.

Making Africans and Indians

At the center of the Seminole and Freedmen dispute is the emergence of Indigenous nationalism, rigid racial discourse, and the conflation of "blood," culture, and citizenship. While scholars such as Mulroy assert that the present conflicts are largely due to the events of the twentieth century, specifically the post-1930 debates over the governments formed under the Indian Reorganization Act, this work argues that the tensions between people of African and Indigenous descent are rooted in larger processes beginning in the eighteenth century. In particular, the rise of the nation-state, racialization tied to a slave economy, and Seminoles'

incorporation of U.S. racial categories shaped contemporary notions of race and identity. At the beginning of the British colonial occupation of Florida, various bands of Lower Creeks had migrated into the territory where remnants of more established native peoples lived. Simultaneously, Indigenous ranks were augmented by various groups of runaway slaves from regional plantations. These respective groups formed politically autonomous settlements centered on kinship and ethnic diversity. Although four broad Indigenous groups were based in Florida, the Alachua, Mikasuki, Apalachicola, and Gulf Coast peoples, the Spanish and the British labeled all of them as “Seminoles” in order to facilitate treaty agreements. Despite the problems caused by mislabeling, stable relations with these groups were important in order to establish a plantation export economy, which in turn facilitated increasingly stark notions of blackness. Although Africans in Florida came from different areas they became racialized as Black through various laws and edicts that conferred slave status upon them and restricted the rights of free Africans.

The Southeastern Borderlands at the turn of the nineteenth century was in the midst of a significant transformation because of the market economy, Euro-American notions of property, the impact of rigid racial categories, and political centralization. Across northern Florida more established Spanish and Indigenous social, economic, and cultural systems were not completely displaced by the processes mentioned above. In some cases different ideas about race existed simultaneously, for instance, when British officials first utilized terms such as red, negro, and white in their correspondence with the Seminoles. While the former viewed these terms as racial classifications, the Seminoles only later adopted them as racial designations. This was also the case when Spanish and Euro-American planters living in the same area adhered to different types

of slavery. Florida represented an ideological borderlands due to its geographical position and easy accessibility, unlike other areas that had been somewhat isolated in the Spanish North American Borderlands. Emergent ideas interacted and were in dialogue with more traditional beliefs, resulting in a complex and fluid situation where no specific discourse was dominant.

Integral to this work's larger arguments is an emphasis on the analytical continuities between British, Spanish, and U.S. colonialism. The British had sought to establish a colonial model, which they had clearly articulated through government sources and texts published by various authors. They sought to establish stable relations with the Seminoles and limit their territory to the interior. Indigenous groups retained considerable autonomy under this relationship. British officials conceded power to the Seminoles because they were not currently in the position to increase their presence in the territory. Additionally the British understood that economic development of the colony hinged on the utilization of African slaves and the construction of plantations. Native peoples' seizure of plantation property and especially slaves undoubtedly posed a threat to these economic policies. Consequently the British engaged in diplomacy with the Seminoles and utilized the language of the Southeastern Borderlands, which had become infused with recently developed racial designations. British-Indigenous relations and the development of plantations and blackness were not isolated developments but illustrate how colonialism in Florida and its impact on the Seminoles and Africans was interrelated.

Scholars have minimized the relevance of the British period upon the subsequent resumption of the Spanish colonial project. However, after 1784, St. Augustine remained the only true Spanish bastion in Florida. Previously individuals were classified according to their sociocultural standing, which included factors such as religion, language, and economic class.

However, in the Second Spanish Florida period, 1784-1821, the missions in the interior of the province had faded and were replaced by British traders. Panton, Leslie, and Company, which did not deal in spiritual salvation but rather property by commodifying deerskins and trading them for manufactured goods from London. They served as Spanish agents while interpreting, advising, and representing colonial governors and their administrations. In addition to British merchants, Spanish officials encouraged Euro-American planters from surrounding Southern U.S. states to immigrate into Florida. The Spanish lacked the political and military power to support the colonial project first outlined by the British.

European colonialism before 1821 remained limited, even as it sought to homogenize and racialize Seminoles and Africans. Despite the diversity of Indigenous peoples, including Muscogee and Hitchiti speakers, over time through treaties and negotiations these groups came to be known as Seminoles: a development counter to their history of political decentralization. Equally significant, African slaves beginning with the British period were relegated to the status of Black and consequently slaves. Previously Africans had been considered indentured servants and not inherently inferior to the Europeans. In the Southeastern Borderlands there was a vigorous Indian slave trade until the middle of the eighteenth century, when slavery then became synonymous with blackness. Laws written at the end of the British period sought to secure African slave property. Even under the Second Spanish period, edicts severely restricted the rights of the African population because they were viewed as a threat. Both Indigenous and African peoples sought to resist these racial categories by defending their autonomous settlements and continuing to adhere to locally based identities centered on kinship. Black

Seminoles in particular resisted their status in both U.S. and Spanish settlements by finding refuge among the Seminoles and developing their hybrid identity.

Due to a complicated geopolitical position, the British and the Spanish had a limited ability to project economic and political power in Florida. Emergent nationalist discourse and efforts at political centralization gained traction in the Southeastern Borderlands during the late eighteenth century. However, the rise of the U.S. nation-state during the mid-1830s led to the fulfillment of the colonial project first envisioned by the British. U.S. officials initially restricted the Seminoles to an interior reservation while middle Florida witnessed the growth of cotton plantations. Within a few years the Florida territorial government felt that economic development and the use of African slaves was impossible because of the presence of Indigenous peoples. The nation-state could not tolerate a threat to its control over territory posed by autonomous Indigenous and African settlements. Equally distressful was the belief that the Seminole and Black Seminole relationship of cooperation and intermarriage challenged U.S. racial order and hierarchies. During the Second U.S.-Seminole War, the military sought to end the resistance by separating and dividing both groups by firmly situating them within the racial categories of Indian and Black. This was done through negotiations and agreements, which placed the Seminole as slave masters and Black Seminoles as slaves despite the fact the Seminole had not adopted chattel slavery. The U.S. made contradictory offers to the Seminoles to guarantee their property while the Black Seminoles received an opportunity to gain their liberty if they surrendered. Positioning each group as either master or slave effectively divided their interests, created social space, and thus helped homogenize Blacks and Indians into two broad racial designations.

As illustrated by the points above, Florida was at the nexus of various processes, colonial administrations, and Indigenous and African Diasporas. Unfortunately scholars have simplified this complex and multifaceted history by emphasizing the colonial or national periods. More recent works have emphasized a number of fields such as the African Diaspora, American Indian History, the Spanish Borderlands, and U.S. History, but they continue to simplify complex issues. This work both contributes to and problematizes a number of historiographical trends by advocating for a Borderlands perspective that incorporates various fields and colonial sources while seeking a multi-dimensional understanding of colonialism, racial discourse, and identity by moving across standard time periods and thematic categories. Saunt's criticism of Spanish Borderlands framework stemming from the limited ability of the Spanish to project their power or shape events outside the hinterlands of St. Augustine calls for an important adjustment.³¹ A Borderlands framework examining Florida history must not remain centered on the Spanish but must incorporate Indigenous peoples as well other European and Euro-American groups. The Spanish were only one of many groups struggling to preserve their autonomy and promote their agenda.

Power relations among the various groups were evenly distributed among the Spanish, Alachua, Mikasuki, and Apalachicola. Although the Lower Creeks and later the United States were significant political and military entities, their distance from Florida temporarily mitigated the threat to the province. The Seminole and Spanish alliance, which also encompassed the Black Seminoles, was based on the precarious situation faced by these parties. Spanish colonial administrations faced danger from the United States while the Seminoles had to protect their newly established independence from the Lower Creek. Africans living among the Seminoles

also made alliances to protect their freedom. Thus, a Borderlands framework is best situated to demonstrate that Indigenous, African, and European struggles in Florida were interrelated and should be examined together. Current colonial and national frameworks for Florida history at the turn of the nineteenth century are inadequate in encapsulating the complexity of life on the ground in the borderlands.

Utilizing a Borderlands model facilitates a historical analysis that spans the tenure of multiple nations, cultures, and peoples in Florida. This work especially emphasizes the short-lived British period, which only lasted twenty years but left an impression on its colonial successors. Previous work on British Florida such as Cecil Johnson's text on British West Florida and M.L. Mowat's book about East Florida simply recounted the events of the era with little analysis. They contribute to the belief that the British period was too brief to have a lasting impact and thus should be secondary to the Spanish resumption of power over the area. However short their reign, the British had outlined a colonial vision for the province and began to take the steps to realize their goals. Governor James Grant orchestrated a peace treaty with the Seminoles at the 1765 and 1767 Picolata Congresses, which outlined the parameters of Seminoles' relationship with European powers until 1821. Their efforts to map out and develop the area through the nurturing of a plantation export economy and African slave labor would resemble efforts by later ruling governments. Having a more concrete influence on the Florida Borderlands, British traders linked the Indigenous deerskin trade in the Southeast to a Caribbean entrepôt tied to manufactured goods from London warehouses. In the latter days of the British regime, the Panton, Leslie, and Company dominated trade among the Seminoles and Lower Creek.

When the Spanish returned to Florida they reached an agreement with the British traders who served as an important link to the Seminoles. Merchants John Hambly and John Forrester were stationed in company stores where they exchanged goods with Indigenous clients and supervised the work of African slaves on adjacent lands. They also served as important Spanish agents when they provided intelligence of Indian Territory while also transporting and interpreting talks between Indigenous leaders and Spanish governors. The language of Southeastern diplomacy and racial discourse was filtered through their cultural lens. Highlighting the role of Panton, Leslie, and Company demonstrates some of the differences between the First Spanish Florida period and the Second Spanish Florida period. This work problematizes scholarship that posits that Spanish notions of race and slavery in Florida remained unchanged after 1783. While the province served as refuge for runaway slaves in the First Spanish Period, by 1790 the policy had been officially terminated. Jane Landers argues that the exodus of slaves from the British colonies and later the United States into Florida clearly illustrated that African slaves gained agency and opportunities under the Spanish system of racial classification and slavery. However, this work addresses the fact that a substantial number of runaway African slaves among the Seminoles were from Spanish settlements such as St. Augustine and Pensacola. Perhaps the biggest example of this occurred in the famous 1816 “Negro Fort” incident, which scholars often present as a major slave rebellion. However, a significant number of the slaves in the fort were from Spanish West Florida, and an unknown but significantly smaller group from East Florida. When the Spanish and Panton, Leslie, and Company representatives sought to convince the slaves to return to their masters rather than remain in such a desperate situation, they refused. The dichotomy between a rigid racial order

among the British and U.S. as opposed to a more malleable and fluid Spanish system during this period should be questioned and problematized.

One of the larger historiographical debates over the Florida Borderlands concerns the relationship of the Seminoles and the Black Seminoles. Kenneth Wiggins Porter first sought to classify the relationship as “democratic feudalism,” and several scholars such as Kevin Mulroy and Landers have generally agreed with that assessment. They argue that the Seminoles and Black Seminoles generally maintained a sociocultural separation while cooperating on economic and military matters. Miller is more adamant in her belief that both groups were temporary allies and that Porter overstated the relationship that existed. However, other scholars have emphasized the cultural hybridity and transculturation between Seminoles and Africans. J. Leitch Wright Jr. went further than most scholars in his argument that many “Indian-Negroes were essentially Indians and not Africans” and that “blacks had been absorbed or acculturated by the Muscogulges.”³² Mulroy noted that Africans had lived in separate towns away from the Seminoles. However, Micco argues that this does not automatically imply a sociopolitical distinctness because “this pattern of town structure followed the organized settlements modeled after the Creek Confederacy.”³³

The disparity among various interpretations of the intimacy between Seminoles and Black Seminoles is based on two main factors. First, Black Seminoles occupied a multitude of positions among the Seminoles that ranged from recent runaways in autonomous settlements, to Africans that had Seminole kin that married into numerous clans. This makes it difficult to generalize or provide an all-encompassing term such as “democratic feudalism” to define this relationship. Second, scholars’ interpretations are hindered by the limited nature of the

documentary record. While governors and Indigenous leaders are represented in the historical record, information concerning individuals of lesser sociopolitical stature is difficult to obtain. Records from colonial officials and traders would typically only focus on prominent members of the community with scant attention to non-elites. Many colonial sources were written by traders and officials either unconcerned or unwilling to see the complex nuanced identity of the Black Seminoles and often labeled these individuals as simply slaves of the Seminoles or *Negros de los Indios*. Some scholars use these documents to argue that intermarriage between Seminoles and African was largely a “myth” that, if it occurred, was relegated to leaders and “high-profile individuals.”³⁴ In contrast, I argue that a borderlands perspective that focuses on cultural intermixture and hybridity, and that moves beyond the histories of nation-states and colonial powers, can emphasize the complexities of the relationships between various people “on the ground.” A number of scholars agree that the Black Seminoles and their descendents eventually underwent an ethnogenesis and developed an identity based upon their distinctive history.

Although generating less debate than the issue of the Seminole-Black Seminole relationship, this work also argues that more attention should be directed towards the territorial period after U.S. annexation of Florida. The majority of scholarship on Florida after 1821 focuses on the Second U.S.-Seminole War since the conflict was costly for the U.S. and manifested an impressive display of Seminole and Black Seminole military resistance. Nonetheless, the years preceding the conflict were vital in establishing the Seminoles as a “domestic dependent nation” within the U.S. With the expansion of the nation-state came the drive to control territory and people within demarcated boundaries. U.S. officials sought to control Seminoles’ physical movements and to restrict Indigenous groups to reservations. This

period also contains various U.S. citizens' slave claims upon the Black Seminoles, many living within Indian Territory. These valuable sources not only shed light on individual African slaves but also illustrate how the nation-state sought to enforce racial hierarchies by re-enslaving Black Seminoles.

While this work engages with the established historiography of the Florida Borderlands, further emphasis on questions of identity are merited, especially with the consultation of additional sources. Slave claims from the territorial period after 1821 provide rare insight into the lives of runaway Africans among the Seminoles. Access to other claims from holdings such as the St. Johns County archives yield more information. Apart from the textual record, oral histories can provide scholars with an opportunity to improve sociocultural analysis. These resources would be necessary in order to supplement the perspective gained from colonial officials and Indigenous leaders and shed light on non-elites. More importantly, this study presents a broad overview of the Florida Borderlands from the 1760s to the 1830s, which would be well served by further emphasis on individuals and family history, to demonstrate how racial discourse and identity formation function on a local level. The benefit of this analysis is its potential to offer further insight into the Seminole and Black Seminoles relationship.

Contemporary Significance

As mentioned above, gauging the sociopolitical position of the Black Seminoles within and near Seminole settlements remains a significant but difficult topic to examine. Further complicating scholarly research in this area are the political implications of such work. As recognized by students of historiography, scholars are often affected by contemporary events

while they craft their historical analysis. Specifically, the ongoing conflict between the Seminole leadership and the Freedmen can politicize one's findings since both sides have sought to buttress their arguments through historical evidence. While scholars have undoubtedly strived to ground their interpretations in data and discernable facts, post-modern scholars have successfully illustrated the fallacy of claiming pure objectivity. This further complicates the challenges facing historians even as it saves their work from being classified as simple academic exercises with little meaning or significance. Simultaneously scholars must realize that their work will have concrete consequences in debates that affect individuals' lives.

On an immediate level, the Oklahoma Seminole and Black Seminole dispute is centered on the distribution of settlement funds and changes to the Seminole Nation's constitution in order to utilize blood quantum to decide citizenship. More broadly speaking, the impasse concerns the development of Indigenous nationalism and the struggle for sovereignty over questions of identity, group membership, and citizenship. Members of the Seminole Tribal Council have argued that attempts to amend their laws represent a movement to claim the rights of a nation-state to set its own criteria for citizenship. Indigenous Nations continue to fight to gain autonomy and sovereignty because they are still considered "domestic dependent nations" under the oversight and jurisdiction of the U.S. Thus the ruling by the DOI in the 2000 election represents the curtailing of sovereignty and the continuing manifestation of U.S. colonialism.

When the Seminoles coalesced into a political entity in the late eighteenth century, they formed a loose confederation mainly during conferences where important matters such as treaties and defense were discussed. European powers and individuals such as William Augustus Bowles injected nationalist discourse in the Florida Borderlands in hopes of facilitating their own

agendas. Colonial regimes desired to elevate Seminole headmen to positions of “chief” so that they could sign treaties that could then be applicable to all Indigenous groups in the region. Although this did unintentionally serve to lay the seeds of a Seminole nationalism, which the Seminoles would also shape through their own sociopolitical traditions, they largely remained groups of politically decentralized and autonomous settlements until removal. U.S. policies, such as the Indian Reorganization Act, have sought to impose a nation-state model upon native peoples. Indigenous groups have adopted this framework in order to resist U.S. colonialism. While the Seminoles did not simply replicate a nation-state model exactly similar to Euro-American nations, they did begin to associate the nation with a primordial race. Thus the recent efforts to expel the Black Seminoles can be perceived as an effort to preserve an imagined pristine Seminole race due to the belief a nation consists of a homogenous people. This has occurred despite the Seminoles’ well-documented history of ethnic and cultural diversity. Aside from the issue of sovereignty, the Seminole leadership has justified the expulsion of the Black Seminoles on the grounds that they are not culturally assimilated and are outsiders to the Seminole Nation.

Scholars have critiqued Indigenous groups’ utilization of the nation-state framework. On one hand they note that the nation has served as a counter hegemonic force against colonialism but which also promotes controversial policies. Garrouette cites Taiaiake Alfred who argues, “sovereignty introduces foreign values” and “destroy those communities’ original foundations, and may lead to unnatural and divisive distinctions among tribal members who occupy different legal statuses.”³⁵ Basically, Garrouette and Taiaiake argue that sovereignty and blood quantum are recent developments that are contrary to Indigenous historical traditions. In the conflict

specifically dealing with the Seminoles and the Black Seminole this is also the case. While Landers and Micco do not argue that Black Seminoles should be regarded as Seminole Indians, they make a case that the distinct and shared history between both groups should be considered in the Black Seminoles appeal for financial assistance and citizenship. They highlight the joint resistance and cooperation between both groups to ward off removal at the hands of the U.S. Landers asserts that while the U.S. government labeled the Black Seminoles as chattel, they were indeed property owners like the Seminoles, thereby implying the Freedmen deserve participation in the recent land settlement.³⁶ Micco's interpretation of both groups' history affirms that the "Seminole Freedmen and their ancestors were a meaningful part of the Seminole Nation from its founding in the Southeast."³⁷ Whether or not significant intermarriage or cultural exchange existed between both groups, scholars agree that the Black Seminoles constituted a part of the larger Seminole political entity.

The issue of defining citizenship remains a contentious issue not only for Seminoles but also for all Indigenous peoples. Garrouette advocates that native peoples in general should replace blood quantum as the marker for citizenship and Indigenous identity. Rather she supports a modified notion of kinship that continues to value "genealogical" relations and simultaneously creates a mechanism for the adoption of others. Group and national membership should be based upon an individual's contribution and participation in Indigenous communities.³⁸ Since this work has focused on the Florida Borderlands, there has been an emphasis upon the conflicts within the Seminole Nation. However, the Seminoles are not the only group dealing with issues of race, identity, the nation-state, and membership criteria. These issues concern many different communities. While the situation of the Seminoles and other

Indigenous peoples is distinct to that of other ethnic and racial minorities in the U.S., all groups in some form must face questions of how they define themselves and whom they consider legitimate members. These populations also broadly share a historical legacy of colonialism that created the racial designations that continue to shape their lives today.

Notes:

¹ Ray Von Robertson, "Estelusti Marginality: A Qualitative Examination of the Black Seminole," *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2 (June 2008), 67.

² The term "freedmen" applied to African slaves who gained their liberty after the U.S. Civil War. In Indian Territory, "Cherokee Freedmen" or "Seminole Freedmen" are designations given to the decedents of the former slaves associated with each respective Indigenous group.

³ For one of the early mainstream media accounts about the disenfranchisement of the Black Seminoles and their citizenship status within the Seminole Nation see *New York Times* (New York), 29 January 2001.

⁴ In 1976, a U.S. court ruled that the federal government owed the Seminole Nation 16 million dollars for lands illegally seized in the early nineteenth century. These funds accumulated interest and totaled 56 million dollars by the time they began to be utilized in 1990. *New York Times* (New York), 21 April 2002; *New York Times* (New York), 12 September 2003; *New York Times* (New York), 18 November 2003.

⁵ "Black Seminoles in Oklahoma Fight for Equal Rights in Tribe," *Jet* 102 (October 2002), 35.

⁶ Chicago Tribune (Chicago), 03 April 2002.

⁷ Jeff Guinn, *Our Land Before We Die: The Proud Story of the Seminole Negro*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 309. The author also writes about William Warrior who identifies more as an African American rather than as an Indigenous person. A dispute existed between Warrior and Ward surrounding the name of their local organization, the Seminole Indian Scouts Cemetery Association.

⁸ *New York Times* (New York), 21 April 2002.

⁹ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 89.

¹¹ Emily Cartwright, "A Nation Divided: An Indian Tribe Debates Membership," 2002, [online], available from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/07/01/60II/main513944.shtml>, 10 July 2002. For a discussion over the 2002 dispute over the position of principal leader of the Seminole Nation between Jerry Haney and Kenneth Chambers as well as the issue of the Black Seminoles, see Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles), 16 May, 2002.

¹² "Black Seminoles in Oklahoma Fight for Equal Rights in Tribe," *Jet*, October 7, 2002, 36.

¹³ Chicago Tribune (Chicago), 03 April 2002. A newspaper article by John Keilman states that Black Seminoles argued that both Seminoles and Freedmen jointly attend religious ceremonies, share the same diet, and serve on the tribal council; *Telegraph-Herald* (Dubuque), 22 September 2002. Chambers believes that the Seminoles and Black Seminoles have always been culturally distinct and continue to live separately.

¹⁴ Although military officials in Florida such as Jesup did have an understanding that the place of the Black Seminoles in Seminole society was not similar to chattel slavery, U.S. government officials ruled that the Black Seminoles were not prisoners of war from the Second U.S.-Seminole War but rather Seminole property that had to be restored.

¹⁵ Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 119.

¹⁶ Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 86.

¹⁷ Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. Vol. II (Treaties) (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 910.

¹⁸ Littlefield Jr., *Africans and Seminoles*, 187.

¹⁹ Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen*, 197. The author includes a detailed account of the negotiations between the pro-Union and pro-Confederate factions and the reconstruction period in general.

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- ²⁰ Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 154.
- ²¹ Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen*, 296.
- ²² Melinda Micco, "'Blood and Money': The Case of Seminole Freedmen and Seminole Indians in Oklahoma," in *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*, ed. Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 135; Martha Melaku, "Seeking Acceptance: Are the Black Seminoles Native Americans? Sylvia Davis v. The United States of America," *American Indian Law Review* 27 (2002/2003), 541.
- ²³ Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen*, 295.
- ²⁴ Ibid, 309
- ²⁵ Ibid, 312.
- ²⁶ Susan A. Miller, "Seminoles and Africans under Seminole Law: Sources and Discourses of Tribal Sovereignty and 'Black Indian' Entitlement," *Wicazo Sa Review* 20 (Spring 2005), 28.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Aaron R. Brown, "Judgments: 'Brothers' Fighting over Indian Money: The Right of Seminole Freedmen to a Portion of the Indian Claims Commission Judgment Fund," *American Indian Law Review* 11 (1983), 114. Senator Henry Bellmon supported a bill specifying that only "blood members" of the Seminole Nation would receive funds from the judgment.
- ²⁹ The Dosar Barkus and the Caesar Bruner bands represent the two Freedmen bands among the fourteen overall Seminole bands in the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. Each band sends two representatives to serve on the general council.
- ³⁰ Melaku, "Seeking Acceptance," 543.
- ³¹ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6.
- ³² J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 278.
- ³³ Micco, "Blood and Money," 128.
- ³⁴ Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen*, 233.
- ³⁵ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 95.
- ³⁶ Jane G. Landers, "A Nation Divided? Blood Seminoles and Black Seminoles on the Florida Frontier," in *Coastal Encounters: The Transformation of the Gulf South in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Richmond F. Brown (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 116.
- ³⁷ Micco, "Blood and Money," 142.
- ³⁸ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 127.

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CURRICULUM VITA

John Paul Nuño earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in History from California State University, Fresno in 2002. He received his Master of Arts degree in History from the University of Texas at El Paso in 2004. He continued his graduate work in the UTEP Borderlands History doctoral program.

Dr. Nuño has earned a number of honors and awards such as being named Outstanding History Masters of Arts student in 2004. He has also been the recipient of the Phi Alpha Theta John Pine Memorial Award and the Dodson Dissertation Fellowship. In 2010 he was awarded the Porter Dissertation Fellowship to assist in the completion of his dissertation.

While attaining his degree, Dr. Nuño worked as an assistant instructor in the department of History. He was also a summer fellow at the Newberry Library in Chicago where he participated in discussions and research concerning American Indian diplomacy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Dr. Nuño has presented his work at various regional and national conferences such as the 2006 Texas Historical Association Conference and the 2008 American Studies Association Meeting. He has also served as a panel moderator for the 2009 Western Social Science Association Conference.

Permanent Address:	519 Prospect St.
	El Paso, Texas 79902

This dissertation was typed by the author.