

THE CREEK INDIANS: AN EXPLORATION INTO IDENTITY

Jaden Wu

In the late seventeenth century, a newly formed tribe—born out of the crucible of European diseases—emerged from a conglomeration of seventeen hastily cobbled together Native groups in the Southeastern Woodlands as the Creek Nation. While the exact details of the Creeks’ earliest histories are lost in legend, Creek oral history tells of their migration in search of new and fertile lands.¹ William Bartram, an American naturalist and astute observer of the Creeks, recounted from Creek oral history that “[the Creeks] directed their migrations eastward... [which] continued [for] a long time...under great hardships and embarrassments” where they were “continually attacked by hostile Indian nations.”²

The Creeks had built themselves under the sobriquet of the “Nation” and the continued existence of their confederacy, which might be reasonably described as an empire, meant that while they had little to worry about, they posed a dangerous threat to both their indigenous and European rivals. An American agent to the Chickasaws wrote that “A large body of Creeks [attacked] the Chickasaws in their town... [and] reduced some of their Forts [while] preparing to capture prisoners.” For much of their history,

Jaden Wu is a Junior at Awty International School in Houston, Texas, where he wrote this Independent Project paper for Tricia McFarlin’s course in the 2019/2020 academic year.

the Creeks were peerless warriors and their attacks were oftentimes so devastating that many of their Native rivals “gave up all hopes of hunting” and had to beg for “provisions from the United States.”³

A legal negotiation in 1824 between the Creeks and the governments of Georgia and Alabama tells of a completely different change. In just half a century, the Creeks had experienced radical decline, from losing a devastating war to ceding significant portions of their lands in Georgia and Alabama to the American government. Creek headsmen, who had once been proud of their warriors, were now trying to save what little was left of their original hunting ground.⁴ Forced into an impossible decision, Creek headsmen pleaded that “ruin is the almost inevitable consequence of a removal beyond the Mississippi, we are convinced. It is true, very true, that ‘we are surrounded by white people,’ that there are encroachments made—what assurances have we that similar ones will not be made on us.”⁵ The Creek chiefs were not only defending the last part of their territory but also offering their final protest to the forceful removal from what had been their homes for centuries.

The stark contrast in Creek status illustrated by the sharp rise then sharp decline of their power hints at the dramatic changes to Creek identity within a hundred odd years. The earlier period of British rule that saw the rise of Creek power was hardly one without bloodshed, but it was at least characterized by trade, tolerable Creek-European relations, and a strong sense of Creek pride. It is true that the Creeks were famed—even till today—for their excellent warriors, but they were also characterized as an agrarian society with strong tribal bonds which blossomed in the middle of the eighteenth century.

By the late 1700s and the early 1800s, the once strong European-Creek relations had evaporated, and Creek power experienced a violent decline. America had gained its independence and sought to expand westwards as fast as possible, indifferent to the destruction it caused to surrounding Native tribes. Heightened American pressure, a growing Creek dependence on American goods, and the increase of the number of Creeks who abandoned their traditions led to the deterioration of Creek identity. The once

proud Creek people—decaying in the face of an increasingly hungry and growing American force—finally engaged in a disastrous war, spurred on and ended by their American neighbors, that led to the collapse of Creek power. These events would prove to be the crucible of catastrophes that would turn Creek independence into nothing more than a thing of the past as the American takeover of Creek lands meant the end of Creek identity.

In this essay, I will first discuss the birth of the Creek Nation and the formulation of Creek identity; then, I will detail the rise of Creek power. I will then discuss the fall of the Creek Nation and collapse of Creek identity vis-a-vis their removal to lands westwards of the Mississippi. Modern popular opinion has mistaken the story of the Creeks as a simple interaction between the American colonizer and the colonized Creeks; however, the story of the Creeks and their interactions with their dynamic milieu is strikingly intricate given the sheer number of interactions, changes to social status, and ever-present change to Creek identity.

Forming the Creek Nation

Before the Creeks developed trading relations with the British and French, the tribes that would eventually form the Creek Nation first encountered European explorers in the 1540s. These Natives encountered Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto who had managed to reach Alabama, or the western part of modern-day Creek territory. While de Soto's soldiers left a trail of brutality and plunder in their wake, the diseases de Soto and his men carried infected many of the tribes that would later join to form the Creek Nation.⁶

Further contact with French and Spanish explorers exposed the unprotected Natives to a constant risk of contracting smallpox, measles, and other lethal diseases. In a culture with no written language, these Natives had lost both a significant portion of their population and their own history, art, and technology.⁷ Many of the surviving Natives discovered that the wisdom and culture they had developed over generations had vanished in a matter of days, debilitating many of these tribes in their ability to function.

The absence of a written language meant that village elders were devoted to the tasks of maintaining a tribe's traditions and culture, and as the tribal elders fell to European microbes, the pools of memory and knowledge on which the tribe depended evaporated at alarming rates. Not unlike cultures that had experienced a cultural genocide, surviving Natives remarked that while they had maintained their traditions, they had no knowledge of how these customs originated.⁸

Historians who have begun to uncover the nature of Native American displacement have recorded that many tribes lost almost half of their populations and some tribes even completely disappeared with the introduction of European diseases.⁹ The series of tribulations that the Natives had to overcome did not end with the collapse of their societies and the disruption of cultural norms; Native Americans also had to ward off their newly-arrived neighbors who sought dominance over the regions they settled in.¹⁰ The loss of Native wisdom and culture from disease, combined with the often violent introduction of hostile neighbors, necessitated the restart of earlier Native civilizations and the rise of new successors.

The surviving Natives experienced radical social change following their encounter with European disease. So radically, indeed, did the influx of these diseases decimate Native populations that the Creeks' predecessors lost their ability to continue living independently; this change forced the disbanded and confused survivors to construct entirely new societies from the shattered remnants of their ancestral tribes.¹¹ In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the weakened Native tribes in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida—all with varying cultures and beliefs—recognized their weaknesses as incapacitated individuals and formed alliances.¹² These seventeen different Native tribes would unite as the Creek Nation, a confederacy with a distinctive identity formed from the amalgamation of their precursors' cultures.¹³

The Creeks aptly termed themselves "The Nation" as they were the product of several tribes and inhabited a vast territory stretching from Georgia to Alabama, hence the importance of

unity to Creek culture.¹⁴ The newly formed Creeks were immediately plunged into the work of rebuilding their civilization and, in turn, their identity. James Merrell's *The Indians' New World: The Catawba Experience* illustrates the reweaving of the social fabric of Native civilization to harmonize discordant peoples. In reweaving the frayed ends of broken societies together, Creek headsmen considered revisions from the logistical questions of language, food sources, and territorial divisions, to the social questions of how to reach those very decisions, punish criminals, decide which ceremonies to perform, and whom to include within these newly formed tribes.

As these dissenting peoples eased into a unified group, they began by clinging to former friends and neighbors—often with similar values and decision-making processes—but these social boundaries eventually disappeared with time.¹⁵ The jarring experience of intense cultural change and the collapse of Native civilizations were not so different from those suffered by the Africans arriving from the mid-Atlantic passage who were also, like immigrants generally, contending with issues of dislocation and radical cultural change. As among many tribes in Western Africa, the disoriented Native peoples lucky enough to survive the initial epidemic now faced the homogenizing threat within their new society.

A military alliance united the seventeen groups within the newly formed Creek Nation. The early Creeks first agreed not to wage war upon one another, proceeding to strengthen their alliance by declaring war on rival tribes. Even in its infancy, the Creek Nation exercised a surprising amount of power through its excellent warriors, and the Nation migrated eastward as invaders. This aggressive military alliance was justifiably feared for its legendary warriors, but the true success of the Creeks' formidable military campaigns is found in their strategies after battle. Creek headsmen exercised a canny understanding of civilization's growth, capitalizing on their formidable military successes by "adopting" defeated tribes into the Nation. Through invasion and incorporating their vanquished enemies into their confederacy, the Creeks solidified

their dominance over the American Southeast and forever tied warfare with Creek culture.¹⁶

A distinctive agricultural-based society emerged out of the ashes of the tribes that formed the Nation. Though not entirely dependent on farming, corn, supplemented by beans and squash, was still the staple food crop, and heavily cultivated by the Creeks on specialized public fields.¹⁷ The prominence of agriculture within Creek society provided them with a stable source of food that many of their hunter-gather neighbors lacked, and the uniquely communal act of farming, combined with the impossibility of a nomadic lifestyle while doing so, united the tribes of the Nation who tied their economic independence and source of identity to their land.

With the Creeks' agrarian lifestyle, harvesting season factored significantly into their everyday lives and festivities. The Busk—known to some as the *poskita*—was the Creeks' principal ritual and was a solemn, multi-day celebration to commemorate the annual harvest and mark the beginning of the new year.¹⁸ Although it contrasted with its serious purpose by concluding in feasting and dancing, it carried a deeper symbolic purpose of purification and renewal. The Creeks conducted an elaborate fire lighting ceremony that symbolized the rebirth of each individual and wiped away all sins short of murder in a celebration of life and its beauty.¹⁹ This annual ritual helped the Creeks preserve a harmonious society that structured their lives through a spiritual *modus operandi* which even extended to Creek politics.²⁰ The Busk's celebration of Creek history and their future offered the promise that as long as the Creeks had land to harvest they had cause to celebrate, and the importance of the Busk in Creek civilization permanently tied Creek identity to their land.²¹

The Creeks resided in vibrant towns where, much like their predecessors, clan and town-based networks transcended personal agendas.²² In contrast to the conflicting factions that defined many of their neighboring tribes, the prominence of clanship in Creek civilization—combined with the communal experiences of farming and the festivities that came with it—solidified them under a singular identity that intensified their already rapid speed of

development.²³ The Creeks' development did not go unnoticed. As all three European powers in North America—the English, French, and Spanish—realized the strength of Creek communal bonds, they competed for Creek trading alliances to gain access to an entire nation of people.²⁴

Early Creek Relations

Before the onset of American westward expansion, the dominant European powers in the New World approached the five major tribes: the Creeks, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Seminoles, and Choctaws. These imperial powers recognized the importance of securing strategic allies to strengthen their foothold in North America. Before the British victory in the French and Indian War in 1763, these Native tribes allied themselves closely with the Spanish and French, with the British only winning over the Choctaws.²⁵

With the European demand for deerskin booming and the Creeks' century long reputation as hunters, the European powers prized the Creeks as trade partners.²⁶ Reluctant to open trade but so weakened from exposure to European microbes, Creek headmen were obligated to trade to preserve the Nation's self-sufficiency.²⁷

It is true that many of North America's indigenous tribes became dependent on European goods—fractured by war or decimated by disease—but so it goes with economic collapse; however, contemporary discussions of Settler-Native trading relations fail to do justice to the spectrum of social relations by positing native dependence on European goods as the most salient factor.²⁸ In contrast, the deerskin trade was a constantly changing model of social contact and exchange between the Europeans and the Creeks where both parties struggled in an invisible conflict for advantage over the other.²⁹ The power struggle between the competing European nations created a screen of ambiguity in the American Southeast where the Creeks were adept at maneuvering for power as they extracted military favors and control over the warring imperial nations.

The Creeks were exceptionally shrewd in their dealings with the Europeans and recognized the importance of the chaos of the region. The Creeks rarely gave concrete promises to serve as military allies, preferring to claim neutrality, forcing the clashing European empires to compete for their favor. The deftness of the Creeks in extracting favors from the imperial powers, often in the form of guns and tribute, allowed the Creeks to use these very gifts against their own Native enemies.³⁰

The triumph of *The Middle Ground* is White's illustration of the surprising influence the Indians exercised in this chaotic struggle among multiple Native tribes and European empires, which he neatly terms the "middle ground." White details the deftness of the Algonquins in extracting prizes and tribute from their French allies, and he provides numerous instances of such subtle Native diplomacy in other areas as well. A similar environment—where Europeans and Natives alike competed for power—provided the ideal conditions of ambiguity to create a "middle ground" which the Creeks adroitly used in their ascension to power.³¹

After the British victory in the French and Indian War in 1763, the Treaty of Paris removed much of Spain's control of its territories in Florida, removed immediate French influence in North America, and marked the beginning of an era of British control over North America solidified through alliances with various Native tribes.³² The Creeks watched the British remove much of France's and Spain's influence from the New World in a display of military might, and offered the British their friendship.³³ Understanding the Creeks as equals and potent allies, the British entered into an alliance with the Creeks in what would become a formidable alliance that terrorized both other Native tribes and the remnants of other European powers in the New World.

The borders of the Creek and British worlds merged through their intimate trading relation and military alliance. Differences between Englishmen and Creek certainly existed, but the origins of common practices were not clearly obvious as many conventions originated from a mixing of the two cultures. The ambiguity within practice origins lay not in the anglicization of the Creeks or the turning Native of the British, although the

Creeks were anglicized to a certain extent and the British frequently deferred to Native customs. Rather, the ambiguity within practice origins was due to the British and Creek confidence in their values and beliefs.³⁴ Both the British and the Creeks were so convinced of the righteousness in their ways that they—almost paradoxically so—arrived at a common ground to determine suitable methods for action. Through a mutual state of intervention, Creek civilization slowly developed by operating within the “middle ground” to prioritize trade.³⁵

Following the British alliance with the Creeks, the once amiable Creek-Spanish relations soured. The Spaniards were keen to avoid expulsion from the New World and accordingly sought out new Native allies, many of whom were historical rivals of the Creeks. Under the influence of the Spanish, these Native combatants raided English plantations, pillaging and destroying valuable English property to strain the British-Creek alliance. The Creek response to these raids was swift and brutal as they drove their Native rivals deep into Florida, shattering their loosely built alliance with the Spanish. The Creeks would later drive the Spaniards from their settlements in East Florida into St. Augustine, paralyzing Spanish expansion and establish Britain as the dominant European power in the American Southeast.³⁶

The Creeks had become the most powerful Indian nation known to the English by the 1770s, feared by Native groups and European nations alike. To assert their dominance, the Creeks conducted unremitting raids against their two greatest rivals: the Cherokee and Choctaws, soon reducing them into a constant state of defense. The increasing decimation of their rivals following the Creeks’ successful raids doubled the Creek population from the previous generation, as the Creeks once again shrewdly integrated defeated Native tribes into the Nation.³⁷

The British alliance with the Creek Nation provided the English with military and economic control over their American colonies as the debilitating American fear of Natives would last till the 1800s. The colonists’ dread of the Natives—though often justifiable—became so incapacitating that an American naval officer reportedly surrendered to a group of thirty-six Native Americans

with a battalion of 115 soldiers who were “armed to the teeth, with a hanger [sword] by [their] side and a pair of pistols on [their] belt” after wandering into the forest.³⁸

Native forms of war and fear tactics so excelled in the escalation of panic that an American Justice of the Peace lamented that “40 or so [Natives]...are able in their skulking manner to disturb the peace of a whole province” in the 1750s.³⁹ Trained from youth, Creek warriors were better shots than almost all American militiamen. Warriors engaged in fast small-scale strikes by raiding farmsteads and small groups of working people, concluding before retaliation was possible. These bloody skirmishes with their silent approaches then piercing screams in attack chilled their victims and resulted in the massacre of small groups of innocents. The very real prowess of Creek guerilla combat haunted colonial imaginations so vividly that many settlers were left incapacitated with fear.⁴⁰ Such accounts of unpredictable Creek raids, especially common during the 1760s, marked the height of Creek power and were but a few of the numerous such testaments to the control the Creeks maintained over their region.

The reign of terror that the Creeks held over the settlers was solidified by exaggerated nursery tales and fireside legends, propagated among the settler groups, that told of the horrors and brutalities of the Natives.⁴¹ The British skillfully preyed on this fear to maintain their control of North America, so skillfully, indeed, that an American official resentfully remarked that, “A war with England has no terrors compared with those arising from their savage allies.”⁴²

Colonial American historians have noted that Native war-time practices augmented this colonial fear. Native warriors would scalp fallen enemies to signify their victory, with many warriors collecting their enemies’ scalps as trophies. The Creeks were no exception to this gruesome practice and oftentimes would mutilate their enemies’ corpses to warn off further aggression. Such displays left terrifying impressions on the colonists that reduced entire settlements to a state of panic.⁴³

Not only were the mangled corpses of the fallen ghastly sights to behold but American settlers also viewed these practices as desecrations of the body. Colonial Americans held that the souls of desecrated corpses would be unable to reach Heaven, and with the threat to their heavenly salvation, settler rhetoric changed out of fear and disgust to categorize all Natives as violent savages. Historian Alan Taylor describes this sentiment as a “categorical hatred of all Indians as murderous savages... [with] dread and hatred [as] alternating emotional currents affecting the [American colonists].”⁴⁴

The incapacitating colonial fear of Indians enforced Creek dominance of the American Southeast. To maintain their control of this region by propitiating their indigenous allies, England established the Proclamation Line of 1763 which prevented American settlers from settling and intruding into Native American land.⁴⁵ While the settlers were under British rule, the Creeks lived without much direct confrontation with outsiders and fully exploited the strategic ambiguity within the region; however, the conclusion of the American Revolution and the expansion of the colonies would prove to be the catastrophe that would end this life for the Creeks.

Creek Decline and Dependence

As the American Revolution waged on, the Creeks—who watched the tumult of the fierce struggles unfurl across their territory—soon too were caught up in the violence of the war. While the Creeks had yet to suffer any wartime casualties, American microbes ran rampant over Creek territory, killing Creeks in a fashion similar to the introduction of European diseases among their predecessors. The rising death toll pressured Creek headmen to act, as they quickly realized the impossibility of maintaining wartime neutrality.⁴⁶ Unsurprisingly, the Creeks joined the fray with their long-time British allies who the Creeks believed would end much of the carnage in this tumultuous period.

The American victory in 1783 and the increasing elimination of European powers from the North American sphere proved to be disastrous for the Creeks. With the decline of British imperial

power, the Creeks found that the “middle ground” in which they had once deftly operated by playing European powers off one another was instead replaced by the Americans who remembered the Creeks as bitter wartime enemies.⁴⁷

The loss of the “middle ground” that had been so crucial to the rise of Creek civilization led to their economic ruin. Many traders working with the Creeks were English. In defeat, these traders had their properties confiscated and fled back to Britain, leaving the Creeks without trading partners.⁴⁸ Without the strategic maneuverability that the “middle ground” had once offered, the Creeks were now pitted directly against the Americans in a struggle for control of the Southeast.

The colonists were no longer restrained by the territorial expansion restrictions that the British had imposed upon them with their victory. In absence of such restrictions, the colonists indulged their appetite for expansion to the fullest. With the webs of power gone that the Creeks had become so adept at using, these exposed peoples could only watch as their lands were flooded by often cunning and violent settlers.⁴⁹

Even during the Revolution, the unpredictable Creek raiding parties sent shock waves of terror that left the colonists often in fear. So psychologically anxious were the colonists that they failed to mount effective defenses against these raiding parties.⁵⁰ In the immediate years after the British, however, the American government increasingly became dependent on aggressive settlers and plantation owners. Motivated by a desire for land, these well-armed settlers expelled the once paralyzing fear of Natives and reinforced a sense of white identity under the threat of a second war against the Indians. The threat of another war held a special power that even altered colonial diction in speaking of the Natives with what had once been a language of fear. This fear soon transformed into a cry of anti-Indian sentiment.⁵¹

American settlers continued pushing westward, settling deeper and deeper into Creek territory, all the while maintaining an exponentially growing population. Before the expulsion of the British, the American government was unable to challenge

England's indigenous allies. The rapid pace at which U.S. settlements were expanding presented a new dilemma for many of the tribes.⁵² As American settlers continued their unstoppable progress westward in the late 1780s, these settlers began to pressure the weakened Native tribal leaders to cede their lands, forcing several Indian leaders to meet with American representatives and surrender large tracts of indigenous hunting grounds.⁵³

With the lingering microbes from European diseases still affecting the Creeks, in conjunction with the loss of a powerful ally in the British, the Creeks witnessed a decrease in their political and economic strength.⁵⁴ In an attempt to regain their footing in the American Southeast, the Creeks once more fell back to trade; the Creeks realized that much like British traders, the neighboring American settlers had a strong demand for deerskin. Thus, the Creeks and settlers began a large-scale trading relation for manufactured goods ranging from steel utensils to woven clothing. While the influx of useful tools entailing the reduction of labor would seem to lead to more Creek leisure time, the Creeks experienced a sizeable increase in the time spent on the production of deerskin goods for trading purposes.⁵⁵

With the Europeans, the Creeks had been able strategically to exploit the ambiguity in the American Southeast with European powers frequently conceding to Creek trading demands. The removal of the "middle ground" meant that the Creeks, declining in power, were more often than not forced into unfavorable trading relations with their American partners. To make up for their losses, the Creeks increased their hunting range and found themselves in conflict with other Native tribes over the limited number of deer in the short deer hunting season.⁵⁶ As Creek hunters ventured further from their hunting grounds, the number of violent confrontations they had with other Natives grew significantly, and American traders, who were quick to realize the profitability of Indian warfare, encouraged the Creeks to conduct large-scale invasions to capture slaves.⁵⁷

The Creek acceptance of American slavery practices marked the beginning of their assimilation into the American settler state.

While the concept of slavery was nothing new to the Creeks, the Creeks and Americans held widely differing practices in slavery *per se*. Many Natives in the American South participated in a form of slavery called *atsi nahsa'I* where captives remained within society but outside the kinship system where they were kept alive to augment the population.⁵⁸ Unlike American settlers, the Creeks were not motivated by a capitalist or mercantile logic, desiring nothing more than sustenance for income.⁵⁹ With the Creek concession to the prevailing American model of chattel slavery where captives were kept for monetary gain, the Creek slave trade marked the first of many disasters that would forever debilitate Creek identity.⁶⁰

From the adoption of American slavery practices, the Creek bourgeoisie—heavily influenced by American customs—realized the advantages of hoarding. They adopted a capitalist mindset where they participated in the activity of damaging communal land through growing cash crops and even trading away valuable farmland.⁶¹ Historical accounts of the rise of the Creek bourgeoisie is rife with documentation of Creeks who dressed like their European counterparts and even owned fine china.⁶² Following the development of Creek economic classes, Creek identity would forever be fractured as a pseudo-European group of people emerged from the melting pot of the Creek slave trade.^{63 64}

The Creeks' trading relations with their American neighbors became a lucrative business, so lucrative, that many Creek men rejected their traditional roles and became slave traders and commercial hunters. With the abandonment of their former way of life, the Creeks lost crucial knowledge of farming and tool making needed to maintain their extensive communities.⁶⁵ Through their increased participation in the American sphere, the Creeks soon lost the valuable skills to sustain an independent livelihood on which they had relied for centuries, marking the beginning of Creek dependence on the growing American power.⁶⁶

Indeed, increased Creek dependence on American goods enabled greater colonial control over Creek life. As America took notice of the booming deerskin and slave trade, it became increasingly anxious to dominate the trading process. Thus began the strict regulation and political control over the Creeks.⁶⁷

American control over Creek trading relations—which constituted much of the Creeks' diplomatic relations—allowed the American government to employ economically coercive tactics against its Native trade partners. With the lack of Creek trading partners outside the Americas, the loss of American trade would leave the Creeks vulnerable to hostile tribes which were all too eager to obtain goods and weapons from the Americans, creating a prisoner's dilemma amongst the clashing Native tribes in the American Southeast that served only to increase hostilities among the rival Native tribes.⁶⁸ The deerskin trade thus heralded the decline of the Creeks as they became reliant upon American trade.

By August of 1790, the decline of Creek power had become strikingly apparent to American Secretary of War Henry Knox who, through continued negotiations with the Creek Chiefs, encountered significant Creek resistance to land cessions. Despite these reservations, the American government was able to pressure the weakened Creeks into signing the Treaty of New York on August 7. In addition to Creek land cession, this treaty forced the Creeks to carry commerce through American ports and recognize the growing American nation's sovereignty. Thus, this treaty became the first time the Creeks had to surrender their independence to a determined and growing American power that would eventually break the Creeks.⁶⁹

Creek Civil War

With the arrival of the nineteenth century, American settlers began to encroach on Creek territory. American traders, aware of the Creek dependence on American goods, became increasingly abusive towards their Native trading partners. As squatters, Georgian farmers intruded on and swarmed Creek territory in droves. No longer the fearsome warriors they once were, the Creeks resigned themselves to watch in misery and resentment as colonial settlers seized vast tracts of Creek territory.⁷⁰

As Georgian settlers intruded deeper into Creek territory, hostilities between the Creeks and Americans rose to an unprecedented high. Georgian authorities reported that in just less than a year, the Creeks had killed over eighty Americans and

had taken over 140 Americans as prisoners. While there was disagreement on the exact figures, the unanticipated aggression of the Creeks—worried for the loss of their own homes—lashed out against the intruding farmers.⁷¹

In a futile attempt to alleviate Creek-American tensions, the American government passed a series of legal reforms. Though virtuous in nature, these reforms were but a half-hearted collection of statements that proved to be ineffective in stopping the stream of settlers intruding into Creek territory.⁷² While the nail in the coffin for the Creeks would only come years later, the American government appointed Benjamin Hawkins in 1796 to oversee and “civilize” the Creeks, which would leave Creek country devastated.⁷³

While considered sympathetic to the Creeks by many Americans, Hawkins, seeing the absence of written law in Creek culture and failing to understand the intricacies of the Creek Council, concluded that there was no Creek civilization.⁷⁴ Driven by a desire to “civilize,” and dismissing Creek legal code as primal, Hawkins abolished the Creek Council, demanding that the Creeks live up to American regulations and demanding punishments in accordance to the American penal code. While Creek law mandated that an entire clan receive punishment for the misdeeds of a member, Hawkins’ Eurocentric notions of responsibilities cast the burden of punishment on the individual alone.⁷⁵

The combination of the removal of the Creek Council melting the sovereignty of the Creek government and the jarring shift of responsibility onto individuals demolished centuries of inter-clan relations as Creek clans no longer held any legal control over their own people.⁷⁶ As communal Creek legal policies were forcefully abolished by Hawkins, the Creeks were forced to reconceptualize their identities as Hawkins’ policies became systematic structures to weaken the Creek Nation by enforcing a European modality of civilization upon them.⁷⁷

Even though the Creeks united themselves under the Creek Nation, there were two major bodies of water that separated the Creek Nation into a Lower and Upper Creek. The Chattahoochee, a stream that stretches from Georgia to the Gulf of Mexico, formed

the heart of the Lower Creek; the Tallapoosa, a river that stretches from northeast Alabama to the Alabama River, marked the location of the most prominent Upper Creek town.⁷⁸ Although this split had existed since Creek formation, it would greatly complicate matters, as the Creeks were thrust into the nineteenth century.

The Upper-Lower Creek schism prevented the complete unification of the Creek Nation with Creeks split into two, identifying as either Upper or Lower Creek.⁷⁹ Through changing the Creek judiciary system, Hawkins had removed an integral part of Creek identity as centuries of inter-clan communication and cooperation disappeared. Now there were divides that had not previously existed, even within clans, further widening the schism among Creeks that would ultimately prove to be disastrous for the Creek Nation.

The intensity of the Upper-Lower Creek split was palpable in certain areas as power vacuums emerged within Creek society.⁸⁰ The jockeying for power in the Upper Creek government in the early 1800s allowed Big Warrior—an excellent warrior renowned for his massive stature and forceful personality—to claim power and the Upper Creek leadership.⁸¹ Historically the more prosperous of the two Creek entities, any ruler of the Upper Creek held control over the American Southeast; however, Creek country was no longer the place of abundance and security it once was, with steadily declining birthrates.⁸² Already damaged by American intrusion, the Creeks could only watch in horror as their population, and control over the American Southeast, waned.

By 1805, the harsh decline in Creek power had become undeniable, even to the most skeptical of colonists. The Lower Creek were forced into American customs first. The cession of 1790 combined with two additional land sales of Lower Creek hunting ground saw a depletion in Lower Creek hunting grounds, and the Upper Creek were eager to avoid a similar fate. The Upper Creek opposed any form of American civilization, and the American government's proposition of a road to connect Alabama to Louisiana that ran through Creek territory was met with bitter opposition.⁸³

Big Warrior—whose loyalties to the Nation were already suspect—was keenly aware of the power he commanded. In his struggle for control with other Native leaders, he angered many other headsmen so much that Shawnee chief Tecumseh moved from his pro-American views to an extreme nativist stance.⁸⁴ Soon after Big Warrior's rise to power, those questioning Big Warrior's loyalties would be proven right. When the American government once more raised the issue of the road, Big Warrior signed the Treaty of 1805 that extracted his permission of the construction of the federal road.⁸⁵

The constant passage of American settlers through Creek territory startled the Creeks who believed that their security was threatened.⁸⁶ With their country split in half, rapidly growing American settlements, and increasing American intrusion and misconduct on Creek hunting grounds, Creek resentment towards the settlers grew with many Creeks openly hoping for a British return to power.⁸⁷

Big Warrior's loyalty to the Americans sparked hatred towards him from the Creeks. Already confused and trapped by the growing American power, the Creeks turned increasingly radical, first alienating Big Warrior from Creek society, then joining the rising radical Red Sticks movement. The Red Sticks, headed by famed Shawnee Chief Tecumseh, were famed for their hatred of Americans and lashed out against Big Warrior, who they deemed as corrupted by the "White Man's Desire for Conquest."⁸⁸

Tecumseh and his brother, known to many as the Prophet, promised invincibility from American bullets and rumors spread that Tecumseh had great Northern armies lying in wait.⁸⁹ Though seemingly ridiculous, these rumors shaped Tecumseh into a legendary figure and quickly spread his fame across the American Southeast.⁹⁰ The embittered Creeks—seeking to remove American influence from their land and frustrated at their headsmen—particularly resonated with Tecumseh's cause, and many Creek warriors joined the Red Sticks movement.⁹¹

Big Warrior, fearing the ruin that the Red Sticks would bring to him, begged Hawkins and the American government

for military assistance, and so began the American military invasion of Creek country.⁹² Tecumseh's military movement halted American expansion into Creek territory in 1810, and by then, he had amassed an almost cult-like following, which became known from its size and military prowess as "Tecumseh's Confederacy."⁹³

Tecumseh's success in creating so powerful a following and his shrewdness in military movements led future president and current army general William Harrison to remark that Tecumseh was capable of founding "an Empire that would rival in glory that of Mexico or Peru."⁹⁴ Even though Creek power had steadily declined since its height, the warlike identity that the Creeks had once prided themselves on redeveloped through Tecumseh's intervention, erasing the "civilizing" the Americans had done as the reinvigorated Creeks sought to reestablish their dominance over the Southeast.

Harrison—fearing the potential strength of Tecumseh—attacked the Creeks in Tecumseh's absence in 1811. Although this attack destroyed any hope Tecumseh had for a true military confederacy, Tecumseh rallied his belligerent Red Sticks and prepared for war.⁹⁵ As American-Creek tensions escalated, the gathering war cloud heralded another bloody conflict. For the Creek Nation—divided internally and debilitated by American microbes and dependence on European goods—to declare war on the growing American powerhouse, many predicted a crushing American victory, yet Tecumseh was confident in the military prowess of his Red Sticks.

Tecumseh's Red Sticks went to war with the Americans on June 18, 1812 as allies of the British who were concurrently fighting their own war against the Americans.⁹⁶ Already tired of the War of 1812 against the British, the prospect of another war against the Creeks was poorly received by the Americans who were uncomfortable in waging a separate Southern conflict.⁹⁷

In July 1813, the belligerent Creeks traveled to British-held Pensacola, where American spies witnessed Creek generals and almost five thousand Creek warriors perform their ceremonial war-dance.⁹⁸ Upon receiving the spies' report, Colonel Caller of Washington County—fearing a combined British and Creek raid

on American strongholds—immediately tasked an American force to contain the Red Sticks before they could mobilize into their lightning-fast raiding teams.

As the Red Sticks traveled back to Creek country, a collection of American settlers and soldiers launched a surprise attack near Mobile, Alabama at Burnt Corn Creek.⁹⁹ To mask their offense, the American soldiers dismounted from their horses and charged into the Creek camp, taking the resting Creeks by surprise. Although the unsuspecting Creeks withstood the American onslaught for a few minutes, they were eventually forced to give way and retreat into a nearby creek.¹⁰⁰

Prematurely declaring victory, the American generals directed a small fraction of their troops to give chase to the fleeing Creeks while the remainder of the soldiers were tasked with recapturing their horses that had since scattered during the engagement. The chasing American soldiers became careless in their pursuit as they searched through the creek, and the Creeks, using the lack of vision, ambushed their unsuspecting pursuers. The panic-struck Americans watched as their comrades were mercilessly slaughtered and scattered in retreat and only the Creek inability to catch fleeing Americans on horseback prevented the complete massacre of Colonel Caller's militia.¹⁰¹

In August, the Red Sticks invaded Fort Mims—which was under the command of Majors Beasley and Bailey—in an act of vengeance as many of its defenders had been the American aggressors at Burnt Corn.¹⁰² The day before the attack, Beasley sent two slaves on a scouting mission. Upon return, these slaves reported hostile Creek warriors; however, Beasley had them whipped after sending an armed party who reported no signs of danger.¹⁰³ To the attack on the Fort Mims defenders, Creek planter Red Eagle led seven hundred Red Sticks, and rushed through the open plantation gates. Before the American guards could retaliate, the Creeks had massacred all the inhabitants, men, women and children alike, in a horrifying act of retribution.¹⁰⁴

In the days after the slaughter, Major Joseph Kennedy—an American soldier who helped bury the dead—painfully recalled that “negroes, white men, women, and children, lay in one pro-

miscuous ruin.”¹⁰⁵ The massacre at Fort Mims became a turning point in the Creek War; no longer would there be any American restraint in fighting the Red Sticks, as the news of the massacre sparked American outrage and calls for vengeance. The American response to the slaughter was merciless and bloody as America dedicated its armies to stage two campaigns in Creek-held Georgia and Alabama.¹⁰⁶

To the bewilderment of the Americans who charged into battle, American soldiers watched the Red Sticks perform what was supposed to be a magical dance that granted them invincibility. These Red Sticks would dance no more as they were gunned down by American weaponry.¹⁰⁷ Massacres like these became common as the vastly outnumbered Red Sticks found themselves suffering one crippling defeat after another. The widely successful American campaigns in Georgia and Alabama eliminated thousands of Red Sticks who died in battle, and drove the Red Stick warriors north to the Creek refuge town on Horseshoe Bend.¹⁰⁸

Andrew Jackson and his army engaged the Red Sticks at Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814 in what would become the last resistance the Red Sticks would mount. As Jackson marched to Horseshoe Bend, the American army was met by an earthen barrier that was immune to artillery fire.¹⁰⁹ Frustrated by the ineffectiveness of his cannon fire, Jackson ordered a bayonet charge by Colonel Williams’ 39th Infantry. As the 39th charged with fearsome drum calls, the Red Sticks met their American enemies with their own war cries, and the roar of guns and noise from the voices of nearly two thousand soldiers rang through Horseshoe Bend.¹¹⁰

A bitter fight ensued as the Red Sticks met the Americans in battle, yet overwhelmed by the greater American forces, the Red Sticks eventually succumbed to Jackson’s onslaught.¹¹¹ Jackson’s crushing victory over the already weakened Creeks at Horseshoe Bend meant that the Creeks had no other option but to plead for peace, but as negotiations began, something went terribly wrong.¹¹² There is much disagreement on the exact nature of the disaster, but many historians suspect an unqualified translator or the sight of a dark cloud which the Red Sticks interpreted as a signifier of their victory as the problem. Regardless of the cause,

the Red Sticks replied to Jackson with gunfire as they descended into a full-fledged battle.¹¹³

The battle turned into a slaughter as hundreds of Creeks were massacred in the blood fever of American troops. As the surviving Red Sticks turned to flee, American soldiers vied with each other in a bloody sport to kill the most Red Sticks as if on a duck hunt, and their lust for revenge raged so strongly that American soldiers indiscriminately killed young children and shot at corpses for sport.¹¹⁴ Individual Red Stick strongholds held out through the massacre but these too were eliminated, and eight hundred of the initial one thousand Red Stick warriors died in the conflict.¹¹⁵

The Creek defeat in the Creek War meant the Creek expulsion from their original lands in Georgia and Alabama. Jackson, who believed that Upper Creek belonged to America by right of conquest, demanded a complete expropriation of Upper Creek territory, and Jackson's concerns about territorial contiguity as the key to national security meant that the Creek pleas for a more merciful sentence fell on deaf ears.¹¹⁶ Jackson would eventually force the Creek headmen to part with nearly 20 million acres of Creek territory in southern Georgia and central Alabama.¹¹⁷ With the movement of American settlers into Upper Creek territory, the once majestic woods of Creek country would soon be leveled for expanses of plantations and cotton.¹¹⁸

With the Creek dependence on agriculture, the loss of the hunting grounds with which the Creeks had so intertwined their identity meant the crippling of Creek identity. The whirlpool of cultural changes and increasing powerlessness the Creeks had experienced since their rise to power in the 1760s toppled a Creek empire that had dominated the American Southeast for decades. The dispirited and broken Creeks tried to steal back and rebuild their ruined homes after their defeat, but they would never regain their former prestige and power. As alcoholism became common among the Creeks, reports of general apathy and hopelessness were testaments of the collapse of Creek identity.¹¹⁹

Creek Removal

In the aftermath of the Creek War, American settlers set their eyes on Creek land, abounding with lush verdure and with fertile soil ideal for agricultural cultivation.¹²⁰ The Creeks were acutely aware of the importance of their land—which they farmed, hunted, and lived on—and were predictably loath to part from it. The Creeks understood that their land was crucial to their political and social independence from external forces.¹²¹ To the Creeks, the loss of their land not only meant the destruction of their livelihoods but also the severance from their source of identity.

While Creek hunting grounds were based on communal ownership, their American neighbors' thirst for land posed unfamiliar and difficult questions of ownership. Most Creeks maintained an understanding of their surrounding topography, yet the exact details of Creek land were only available to specialized Creek representatives.¹²² To complicate land deals, the Upper and Lower Creeks claimed separate portions of land with individual hunting grounds.¹²³ As the outcome of the Creek War suggests, the influx of American settlers—all too willing to coerce the Creeks into selling additional hunting grounds—forcefully introduced the concept of private property to the Creeks.

The removal of the centuries-long notion of communal land uprooted an important part of Creek culture. Even early in the Creeks' interactions with colonialism, the Creeks recognized the importance of communal decisions when discussing property issues with foreign powers and agreed that land sales could only be made through a unanimous agreement among all towns. But the Creeks were not just passive victims: the notion of personal land enticed easily swayed Creeks to sell their land at a profit. The growing number of Creeks eager to market their once prized land combined with their developing capitalist nature reveals the debilitation of Creek identity.¹²⁴

American land speculators acquired a multitude of illegal settlements and land purchases in Creek country through practices like border jumping and illegitimate squatting.¹²⁵ While

each individual instance of illegitimate property stealing only resulted in the loss of a few acres of land, the sheer number of such instances pressured the Creek Nation to tighten its grip over its remaining land.¹²⁶

The profitability of the once lucrative fur and slave trades declined drastically since the 1760s as Native groups unwittingly oversaturated the market.¹²⁷ The Creek bourgeoisie, who had so greatly profited from their trading with the Americans, began to view Creek land as a commodity to be sold and bargained for—neglecting their traditional beliefs in favor of profit.¹²⁸

American settlement in Creek country meant an increase in the number of mixed-Creeks. Often raised with an American upbringing, many mixed-Creeks rejected Creek culture, ignoring the Creek notion of communal property.¹²⁹ While the majority of the Creeks still believed their land to be their greatest resource, the growing number of mixed Creeks who sold Creek territory to American farmers, costing the Creeks their primary source of sustenance, degraded Creek political and economic sovereignty.¹³⁰

Through increased American influence, the increase in capitalist Creeks placed Creek culture in danger as the resources that once belonged to the community were now hoarded by the wealthy. For the first time in years, the Creeks experienced an increasing birthrate, but the lack of farmland made feeding the many hungry mouths an impossible task.¹³¹ The inability of the Creeks to feed their own population, coupled with growing American pressure to cede land and a growing number of corrupt Creeks forced the Creek Nation into a difficult position.

Benjamin Hawkins, the American agent who had worked extensively with the Creeks, once again sought to “civilize” the Creeks by establishing contact with their American neighbors. The increased presence of the Americans pressured the once nativist Creeks to draft their first legal document in 1818 and announce their “civilization” to their American neighbors.¹³² While the drafting of the Creeks’ first legal document was the first time the Creeks deferred to anglicized customs in words, it was nothing

more than a reminder of the loss of Creek identity as the Creeks began to weaken under the pressure for assimilation.

An anglicized Creek legal code, however, was unable to save the Creeks from their social and political dilemmas. Inter-Creek schisms continued to intensify, and extreme factionalism continued well into 1821 when Creek War belligerent Big Warrior vied with Lower Creek Chief William McIntosh for power. McIntosh, as well as several members of Lower Creek, was a mixed-Creek who participated within the Georgian sphere and was naturally sympathetic to the American cause.¹³³

Creek headsmen resisted American attempts to seize Creek territory by incorporating aspects of American law and governance to protect the Nation's rights.¹³⁴ Surprised by the shrewdness of the Creeks but unwilling to end their attempts for land—which would both create American settlement and resolve the conflict of authority in so hotly contested a region—Georgian and Alabaman representatives resorted to the bribery of corrupt Creek politicians, and brute force. Even as early as 1802, the American government agreed on a compact to “extinguish Indian title within the limits of the States as soon as it could be done,” and the execution of this compact meant that the Creeks had lost their once paralyzing terror over the Americans.¹³⁵

Tensions between the Creeks and Americans escalated into 1821 when McIntosh and a handful of Lower Creek headsmen signed the first Treaty of Indian Springs. Although many Creeks violently protested the signing of this treaty, the political pressure of the treaty cost the Creeks a portion of their hunting grounds and the last of their “losable” land before they nearly starved to death.¹³⁶ Thus prompted by the Treaty of Indian Springs of 1821, the Creek government tightened their grip on what little land they had left and removed any contact they had with the American government.

The Creeks' self-imposed seclusion ended by December of 1824 as American government pressure forced the Creeks to reopen negotiations. Much to the Creeks' disadvantage, McIntosh retained his position as the Lower Creek speaker, and he was to represent the opinions of the weakened Creek Council.

While publicly McIntosh claimed to be opposed to a land cession, privately McIntosh had been holding meetings discussing land deals with American representatives Campbell and Meriwether. Presenting the nativist Creek headsmen as Red Stick supporters with the War of 1812 still lingering on American minds, McIntosh argued that the Creek Council's anti-cession demands would spark a second Creek War and "give final victory" to the enemies of the United States.¹³⁷

In an act of treason, McIntosh and eight other Lower Creek Chiefs signed the second Treaty of Indian Springs on February 12, 1825 that ceded all remaining Creek territory in Georgia. Shocked and disgusted, the Creek Council agreed that McIntosh, the Hawkins brothers, and four other chiefs who signed the second treaty were traitors with guilt so manifest that they were to be executed. McIntosh's execution was an extreme act as no Creek had previously been executed by the Creek Council, but it was not one made by uncivilized peoples. McIntosh's execution was a decision made with reluctance and caution by a rational people who exercised their right to regulate their own people.^{138,139}

The execution of William McIntosh would forever leave a dark mark on Creek history; the Treaty of Indian Springs, crafted with treachery and with deceit, not only sold the country of the Creeks but also sold the Creek Nation and her people. Although the Creek Council fought back in a flurry of struggles to resist and overturn the two Treaties of Indian Springs, the disappearance of farmland the Creeks had so entwined with their identity would forever disrupt Creek society. McIntosh's actions would cripple the Creeks enough to cause the Creek removal from Georgia in 1827 and Alabama in 1832, and although the Creeks had received small monetary sums for their lands, they soon found themselves driven from their homes. Land-grabbers and violent mobs burned Creek homes, stole Creek livestock, and destroyed their crops leaving the Creeks "hopeless and demoralized... [and they] quickly spent [their money] on intoxicants."¹⁴⁰

Mary Hill, a Creek woman, recalls a story passed down to her by her grandmother about the Creeks' removal from their

lands. She tells that “the commands for removal came unexpected upon most [Creeks]. There was the time that we noticed several overloaded wagons...yet we did not grasp the meaning.” She recalls that “[she was] taken to a crudely built stockade and joined others of our tribe. Even here, there was the awful silence that showed the heartaches and sorrow at being taken from the homes and even separation from loved ones.” During the journey, Hill recalls that “death stalked at all hours, but there was no time for proper burying or ceremonies” and remembers that there were men whose sole “purpose was to encourage the Indians not to... think of the homes that had been left.”¹⁴¹

These memories of removal are painfully etched in the memories of many Creeks. Elsie Edwards recalls a story from her Creek mother who “remembered that she had left her home and with shattered happiness she carried a small bundle of her belongings.”¹⁴² Through these disorienting changes, the Creek people’s experience of a whirlwind of cultural changes left them as lost as their wandering ancestors. An Englishman traveling to the lands of the resituated Creeks left an unforgettable description of them. He wrote “those miserable wretches who had been dislodged from their ancient territory” were “wandering about like bees whose hive had been destroyed,” and many Creeks, without any means to sustain themselves, simply starved to death.¹⁴³ After removal, many Creek descendants became detached from their culture entirely. The diaspora of these disoriented peoples sought refuge with other Native tribes, while others were simply too concerned with their own survival to preserve their traditions and left these lost people with only vague memories of their ancestry.¹⁴⁴

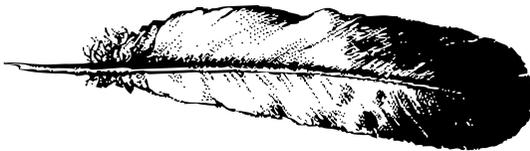
Conclusion

Creek history tells an ever-changing story of Creek identity. Creek identity, born through the desperation of seventeen different Southeastern tribes, changed drastically through contact with the British and the Americans. After the American Revolution—which heralded the end of the “middle ground” that the Creeks manipulated so well to strengthen their nation and their tribal

identity—Creek history tells of the decline of the Creeks themselves and the catastrophes that ultimately damaged Creek culture.

The story of the Creeks, though rarely discussed in identity studies, occupies an importance place in the understanding of human identity. Following massive social and economic changes from a lucrative trading relationship with the British, Creek history reveals the change of Creek identity from farmers to warlike traders. Creek history also reveals the decline of Creek identity as the Creeks' dependence on their American neighbors and their defeat in the Creek War saw the "Americanization" of the Creek people and the loss of Creek identity.

Having traced Creek history from birth to their removal from their tribal lands, the meaning of Creek identity slowly revealed itself. Constant change, as with many things, was perhaps the only part of Creek identity that remained static. From dominating North American history until the late eighteenth century, the Creeks have slowly disappeared from historical accounts as their influence has faded. Following their removal to lands west of the Mississippi, American history has been told as the story of a settler-dominated society.¹⁴⁵ Even though the Creeks are no longer the same warrior nation they once were, Creek heritage still lives on through literature and oral histories.



Endnotes

¹ Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance: A History of the Creek Indians (The Civilization of American Indian Series)* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 3-4.

² William Bartram, *Travels and Other Writings: Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* (New York: The Library of America, 1996), 528.

³ James Robertson to David Hendley, October 24, 1795.

⁴ Michael Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 96.

⁵ Little Prince, OYoholo, William McIntosh, and Hopoy Hadgo to John Brodnax, December 8, 1824, in *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative, Executive, of the Congress of the United States, From the First Session of the Fourteenth to the Second Session of the Nineteenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing December 4, 1815, and Ending March 3, 1827*, ed. Walter Lowrie and Walter Franklin (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 569.

⁶ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 17-18.

⁷ Wilbur Jacobs, "The Tip of the Iceberg: Pre-Columbian Indian Demography and Some Implications for Revisionism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (January 1974): 123-132.

⁸ James Merrell, "The Indians' New World: The Catawba Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly* 41, no. 4. (Oct., 1984): 542-543, accessed June 25, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1919153>. While Merrell details the Catawba Indians and their experience in navigating their new world in his book, his conclusion can be similarly drawn for the Creek. Merrell cites exposure to European disease, which the Creek were exposed to as well, as a cause for radical change.

⁹ Carl Waldman, *Atlas of the Native American Indian* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2009), 206.

¹⁰ Nicholas, *Indians in the United States and Canada*, 113-114.

¹¹ Merrell, "The Indians New World," 544.

¹² Verner Crane, "The Origins of the Name of the Creek Indians," *Journal of American History* 5 (December 1918): 340-342, accessed June 19, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1888814>.

¹³ John Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, 1922), 215-285.

¹⁴ Margaret Armistead, "Chief McIntosh and the Indian Spring Treaties," *The Georgia Review* 11, no. 3 (Fall 1957):

307, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41398128>.

¹⁵ Merrell, "The Indians' New World," 546-547.

¹⁶ Kathryn Braund, "The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery," *The Journal of Southern History* 57, no.4 (November 1991): 604, accessed July 20, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2210598>.

¹⁷ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 155-157.

¹⁸ Bartram, *Travels*, 510.

¹⁹ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 16.

²⁰ George Stiggins, *Creek Indian History: A Historical Narrative of the Genealogy, Traditions, and Downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek Indian tribe of Indians*, ed. Virginia Brown (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 60.

²¹ Bartram, *Travels*, 512.

²² Smithers, *Native Southerners*, 94.

²³ Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 65.

²⁴ Smithers, *Native Southerners*, 94-95.

²⁵ Frank Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981), 7-8.

²⁶ James Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City: Watauga Press, 1930), 433-434.

²⁷ Nicholas, *Indians in the United States and Canada*, 114.

²⁸ White, *The Middle Ground*, 94-95.

²⁹ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 24.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

³¹ The term "middle ground" is taken from Richard White's book *The Middle Ground*. White describes this concept in detail in the early chapters of his book.

³² Daniel Marston, *The French-Indian War: 1754-1756* (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2003), 83-84.

³³ Bartram, *Travels and Other Writings*, 68.

³⁴ White, *The Middle Ground*, 50-51. As a note, White describes the French—Algonquian relation and emphasizes the foolishness of considering any society as independent and in isolation. Through White's chain of reasoning, the British-Creek relation should also not be considered as two monolithic identities but rather as a blend of both societies.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁶ Bartram, *Travels and Other Writings*, 68, 183.

³⁷ Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 31.

³⁸ Robert Malcolmson, ed., *Sailors of 1812: Memoirs and Letters of Naval Officers on Lake Ontario* (New York: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1997), 31.

³⁹ Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 42.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 43-45.

⁴¹ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 203-204. Note that Taylor specifically talks about the Ojibwe Indians in this discussion of Native American myths; however, the Ojibwe customs that frightened Americans the most—scalping and guerrilla warfare—were also heavily used by the Creek.

⁴² Solomon Silbey to Thomas Worthington, February 26, 1812, in *Wampum Denied: Procter's War of 1812*, ed. Sandy Antal (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997), 25.

⁴³ Antal, *Wampum Denied*, 205.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 205.

⁴⁵ Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 8.

⁴⁶ Smithers, *Native Southerners*, 122.

⁴⁷ Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 22.

⁴⁸ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 26.

⁴⁹ Colin Calloway, *First Peoples*, (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2011), 161-164.

⁵⁰ Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 53.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 263-264. Silver details the effects of anti-Indian rhetoric in the mid-Atlantic colonies thoroughly in the final chapter (*The Postwar That Wasn't*) of his book by describing a series of serial massacres of Indians.

⁵² Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 14-22.

⁵³ Frank Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981), 8-11.

⁵⁴ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 18.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁵⁶ Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1886* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 22-25.

⁵⁷ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 25.

⁵⁸ Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 13.

⁵⁹ John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 240.

- ⁶⁰ Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 72.
- ⁶¹ Claudio Saunt, "Taking Account of Property: Stratification Among the Creek Indians in the Early Nineteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (Oct. 2000): 738, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2674154>.
- ⁶² Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 33.
- ⁶³ James Glen and George Johnston, *Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions*, ed. Chapman Milling (Columbia: South Carolina, 1951), 187-188.
- ⁶⁴ Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 16-18.
- ⁶⁵ Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 37-42.
- ⁶⁶ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 275-276.
- ⁶⁷ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 20.
- ⁶⁸ William McDowell, *Journals of the Commissioners of the Indian Trade 1710-1718: Colonial Records of South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1944), 236-237.
- ⁶⁹ Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 50-51.
- ⁷⁰ John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier: A Study of Indian Relations, War, Trade, and Land Problems in the Southern Wilderness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1944), 89-95.
- ⁷¹ Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard College Press, 2005), 11.
- ⁷² Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia, A History* (New York: Scribners, 1976), 195.
- ⁷³ Merritt Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951), 155-156.
- ⁷⁴ For a detailed glimpse into Benjamin Hawkins' life, see Benjamin Hawkins, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, ed. Thomas Foster (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003).
- ⁷⁵ Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent*, 156-157.
- ⁷⁶ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 24-38.
- ⁷⁷ Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent*, 167-169.
- ⁷⁸ Hawkins, *Sketches*, 1.
- ⁷⁹ Bartram, *Travels and Other Writings*, 182-186.
- ⁸⁰ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 38.
- ⁸¹ Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 60-64.
- ⁸² Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 70.

- ⁸³ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 39.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ⁸⁵ Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 188.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.
- ⁸⁷ Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 159, 298.
- ⁸⁸ Thomas Woodward, *Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians* (Montgomery: Barrett and Wimbish, 1965), 84.
- ⁸⁹ Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 110-135.
- ⁹⁰ Stiggins, *Creek Indian History*, 86.
- ⁹¹ Henry Halbert and T.H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814* (Chicago: Donohue and Henneberry, 1895), 99-101.
- ⁹² Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 40.
- ⁹³ Halbert and Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814*, 68.
- ⁹⁴ William Harrison, *Messages and Letters of William Harry Harrison*, ed. Logan Esarey (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1943), 549.
- ⁹⁵ Anthony Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 315-317.
- ⁹⁶ Halbert and Ball, *The Creek War*, 85.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.
- ⁹⁹ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 42.
- ¹⁰⁰ Halbert and Ball, *The Creek War*, 134-135.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 136-137.
- ¹⁰² As an interesting side note, the Creek also chose to attack Fort Mims as it housed a large number of mixed bloods whom the Creek seemed to hold a special antagonism against.
- ¹⁰³ Rothman, *Slave Country*, 127.
- ¹⁰⁴ Halbert and Ball, *The Creek War*, 177.
- ¹⁰⁵ John Buchanan, *Jackson's Way: Andrew Jackson and the People of the Western Waters* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2001), 224.
- ¹⁰⁶ Woodward, 85-86. For a more detailed explanation of the Georgian and Alabaman campaigns, consult chapters 4 and 5 of Frank Owsley Jr.'s *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812-1815* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981).
- ¹⁰⁷ Edmond Shackelford to Frances Shackelford, November 26, 1813.
- ¹⁰⁸ For a detailed description of all the important conflicts between the American and Creek forces in the Creek War, consult Henry Halbert and T.H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814* (Chicago: Donohue and Henneberry, 1895), 125-286.

Howard Weir, *A Paradise of Blood: The Creek War of 1813-1814* (Yardley: Westholme Publishing, 2016) also has a detailed account of the causes and course of the Creek War including a detailed explanation of the Georgian and Alabaman campaigns.

¹⁰⁹ Weir, *A Paradise of Blood*, 410.

¹¹⁰ While a significant portion of the American army during the Creek War were white Americans, there were several “friendly” natives that ranged from the Creeks’ traditional enemies in the Choctaws and Cherokee to traitorous Creeks—headed by the Creeks’ William McIntosh – that had become Americanized.

¹¹¹ Weir, *A Paradise of Blood*, 417.

¹¹² Halbert and Ball, *The Creek War*, 266-267.

¹¹³ Weir, *A Paradise of Blood*, 418.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 418-419.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 420-426.

¹¹⁶ Rothman, *Slave Country*, 137.

¹¹⁷ Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 317.

¹¹⁸ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 256.

¹¹⁹ Debo, *The Road to Disappearance*, 84.

¹²⁰ Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), 142.

¹²¹ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 210-211.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 223-225.

¹²³ Bartram, *Travels and Other Writings*, 184-185.

¹²⁴ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 227-233.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 226.

¹²⁶ Florette Henri, *The Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins 1796-1816* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986) 45-69.

¹²⁷ Smithers, *Native Southerners*, 67.

¹²⁸ Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 96-105.

¹²⁹ Armistead, *Chief William McIntosh*, 309.

¹³⁰ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 228.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹³² Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 69-72.

¹³³ Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 50.

¹³⁴ Debo, *The Road to Disappearance*, 68-71.

¹³⁵ Department of the Interior, *Federal Indian Law* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1958) 185-192.

¹³⁶ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 73-74.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 83-86.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

¹³⁹ Menawa—the Creek’s chief at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend—avenged himself for his great defeat at Horseshoe Bend by killing McIntosh and his son-in-law, Samuel Hawkins. Following the Creeks’ discovery of McIntosh’s signing of the Treaties of Indian Springs, Menawa was called to collect 100 warriors and kill McIntosh. Upon his arrival to McIntosh’s home, he allowed the women and children to leave and engaged in a violent standoff with McIntosh and a friend of his, ultimately resulting in the death of McIntosh and his comrade.

¹⁴⁰ Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 100.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 104-105.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁴⁴ Jane Dysart, “Another Road to Disappearance: Assimilation of Creek Indians in Pensacola, Florida, during the Nineteenth Century,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (July 1982): 37, accessed July 20, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30146156>.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bartram, William. *Travels and Other Writings: Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida*. New York: The Library of America, 1996.

Gosse, Phillip. *Letters from Alabama: Chiefly Relating to Natural History*. Edited by Gary Mullen and Taylor Littleton. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2012.

Harrison, William. *Messages and Letters of William Harry Harrison*. Edited by Logan Esarey. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1943.

Hawkins, Benjamin. *Creek Confederacy and a Sketch of the Creek Country*. Savannah: University of Pittsburg Press, 1848.

Hawkins, Benjamin. *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*. Edited by Thomas Foster. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003.

Lawson, John. *A New Voyage to Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967.

Little Prince, O. Yoholo, William McIntosh, and Hopoy Hadgo to John Brodnax, December 8, 1824. In *American State*

Papers: Documents, Legislative, Executive, of the Congress of the United States, From the First Session of the Fourteenth to the Second Session of the Nineteenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing December 4, 1815, and Ending March 3, 1827, edited by Walter Lowrie and Walter Franklin. Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834.

Malcolmson, Robert, ed. *Sailors of 1812: Memoirs and Letters of Naval Officers on Lake Ontario*. New York: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1997.

Robertson, James. James Robertson to David Hendley, Nashville, TN, October 24, 1795.

Shackelford, Edmond. Edmond Shackelford to Frances Shackelford, Smithsonian Institution, DC, November 26, 1813.

Silbey, Solomon. Letter to Thomas Worthington, February 26, 1812. In *Wampum Denied: Procter's War of 1812*. Edited by Sandy Antal. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997.

Secondary Sources

Adair, James. *The History of the American Indians*. Edited by Samuel Cole Williams. Johnson City: Watauga Press, 1930.

Alden, John Richard. *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier: A Study of Indian Relations, War, Trade, and Land Problems in the Southern Wilderness*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1944.

Armistead, Margaret. "Chief William McIntosh and the Indian Spring Treaties." *The Georgia Review* 11, no. 3. (Fall 1957): 307. Accessed September 20, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41398128>.

Braund, Kathryn. "The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery." *The Journal of Southern History* 57, no.4 (November 1991): 604. Accessed July 20, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2210598>.

Buchanan, John. *Jackson's Way: Andrew Jackson and the People of the Western Waters*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2001.

Calloway, Colon. *First Peoples*. Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2011.

Coleman, Kenneth. *Colonial Georgia, A History*. New York: Scribners, 1976.

Crane, Verner. "The Origins of the Name of the Creek Indians." *Journal of American History* 5 (December 1918): 340-342. Accessed June 19, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1888814>.

Debo, Angie. *The Road to Disappearance: A History of the Creek Indians (The Civilization of American Indian Series)*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979.

Department of the Interior. *Federal Indian Law*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1958.

Dysart, Jane. "Another Road to Disappearance: Assimilation of Creek Indians in Pensacola, Florida, during the Nineteenth Century." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 61, no.1 (July 1982): 37. Accessed July 20, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30146156>.

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

Glen, James and George Johnston, *Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions*. Edited by Chapman Milling. Columbia: South Carolina, 1951.

Green, Michael. *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

Halbert, Henry and T.H. Ball. *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814*. Chicago: Donohue and Henneberry, 1895.

Henri, Florette. *The Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins 1796-1816*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986.

Horsman, Reginald. *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967.

Hudson, Charles. *The Southeastern Indians*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976.

Jacobs, Wilbur. "The Tip of the Iceberg: Pre-Columbian Indian Demography and Some Implications for Revisionism." *William and Mary Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (January 1974): 123-132. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1918985>.

Jennings, Francis. *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*. North Carolina: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Marston, Daniel. *The French-Indian War: 1754-1756*. Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2003.

Martin, Joel. *Sacred Revolt*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

McDowell, William. *Journals of the Commissioners of the Indian Trade 1710-1718: Colonial Records of South Carolina*. Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1944.

Merrell, James. "The Indians' New World: The Catawba Experience." *William and Mary Quarterly* 41, no 4. (Oct., 1984): 542-543. Accessed June 25, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1919153>.

Nichols, Roger L. *Indians in the United States and Canada*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018.

Owsley Jr., Frank. *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans*. Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981.

Perdue, Theda. *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1886*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979.

Pound, Merritt. *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951.

Romans, Bernard. *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962.

Rothman, Adam. *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South*. Cambridge: Harvard College Press, 2005.

Saunt, Claudio, "Taking Account of Property: Stratification among the Creek Indians in the Early Nineteenth Century." *William and Mary Quarterly* 57, no 4. (Oct., 2000): 733-760. Accessed September 18, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2674154>.

Silver, Peter. *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008.

Smithers, Gregory. *Native Southerners: Indigenous History from Origins to Removal*. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2019.

Stiggins, George. *Creek Indian History: A Historical Narrative of the Genealogy, Traditions, and Downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek Indian tribe of Indians*. Edited by Virginia Brown. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989.

Swanton, John. *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, 1922.

Taylor, Alan. *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

Waldman, Carl. *Atlas of the Native American Indian*. New York: Checkmark Books, 2009.

Wallace, Anthony. *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Wier, Howard. *A Paradise of Blood: The Creek War 1813-1814*. Yardley: Westholme Publishing, 2016.

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

Woodward, Thomas. *Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians*. Montgomery: Barrett and Wimbish, 1965.