

“A PEACE BETWEEN THEM”: NEGOTIATING INDIGENOUS CONFLICT AND
DIPLOMACY IN THE CREEK-CHOCTAW WAR, 1766-1776

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in American History.

Robert Owens, Committee Chair

Robert Owens, Committee Member

George Dehner, Committee Member

Donald Blakeslee, Committee Member

DEDICATION

For the two stars in my night sky. May you ever light the way home.

Now I can see you waverin' as you try to decide
You've got a war in your head and it's tearin' you up inside
You're tryin' to make sense of somethin' that you just don't see
You're tryin' to make sense now and you know that you once held the key
But that was the river, this is the sea

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a kid in western Kentucky, I spent a lot of time reading. History did not appeal to me much then; I was far too interested in discovering what happened to Luke, Han, and Leia after the Emperor met his demise. Nor did I care much about the writing process—I just wanted to know if Roland Deschain would ever find his way to the Dark Tower. I worried little about the efforts of the author. They were unimportant. But as my interests changed, I began to enjoy reading the acknowledgments in each new work I took on. To me, they are the story within the story. A manuscript reveals a path, but the acknowledgments are the journey to that path. So it is an odd thing that I find myself writing these pages on a small table in Daytona Beach, Florida. It is my hope that you will enjoy the journey the last four years have been for me.

Two men are most directly responsible for this thesis. One is the late Dr. Robert Lawless, who introduced me to the writings of Anthony F.C. Wallace, and his work on revitalization movements. I had never strongly considered American Indian history prior to taking his class on magic, witchcraft, and religion, but names like Handsome Lake and Neolin resonated with me. Dr. Lawless was an incredibly kind man to me, though was a likely to greet me with an unsuspecting slug to the arm as a smile. He is missed.

The other is Dr. Robert Owens, who has had the unfortunate role of being my sounding board for almost all things Indian over the last four years. It was in his classroom that I first heard the name Pontiac and learned of his rebellion at Fort Detroit. Dr. Owens encouraged me in a subsequent course to investigate action of Creek Indians during the American Revolution. By then it was already too late. I determined that not only would I be an American historian, I would

be an American Indian historian. Over the last four years, Dr. Owens has said goodbye to any semblance of quiet time during office hours, as the great Herbert invasion began. I cannot thank him enough for his encouragement and his generosity.

There are many others to thank, as well. First among them are Carol Howard and the late John Wehle, who in 2008 suggested that perhaps I might be happier by completing my long delayed college degree. The plan then was simple: finish my degree, gain some personal satisfaction, and quickly return to the workplace and my plans for world domination. But how plans change. Sitting in a classroom at Tallahassee Community College, I realized just how much I loved history. Each day was an opportunity to listen to a new story, a chance to tap into the knowledge of some long-forgotten experience. I would still achieve world domination, though I decided to do it the hard way by becoming a historian.

Along the way have been many professors who have helped shaped my journey and each of them have been truly important to me. To George Dehner, Don Blakeslee, David Hughes, Travis Bruce, Lisa Overholtzer, John Dreifort, and Robert Weems, you have my everlasting thanks. My peers at Wichita State University have also been incredibly helpful by providing their insights and most especially, their friendship. Katie Coriell, Carolyn Speer Schmidt, Paul Leeker, Angela Blackerby, Kristina Owen-Haar, Andy Mullen, Emily Jones, Shannon Reed, and Sheila Hauser: thank you. Outside this group have been several people who have been supportive of my path in other ways, and I would be remiss if I did not thank Kate Larson, Fin Adams, Levi Henry, Lynette Chapman, Maruchy Ramos, Michele Cirou-Bourst, and especially Ed Williamson.

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Finally, my two sons, Jackson and Benjamin, have been my inspiration. I hope that in these pages they find an effort that they can be proud of.

ABSTRACT

This research attempted to understand the underlying causes and consequences of the Creek-Choctaw War of 1766-1776. Previous studies held that the war was fomented by British leadership in North America out of a desire to channel indigenous violence away from colonial settlements. However, it is apparent the war began from a small spat of traditional violence and then spun out of control.

Ultimately, the war significantly weakened both the Creek and Choctaw nations, especially the former. Neither nation was in a position to be a deciding factor in the American Revolution, and both were subject to invasion by the new republic.

PREFACE

The first Wichita State University Graduate School manual summarizing thesis/dissertation preparation and procedures was produced in the fall of 1987. The continuing evolution of print technology and computer applications quickly resulted in the original manual becoming outdated. This latest revision reflects communication advancements and presents general guidelines for the use of word-processing software.

The guide is also designed to be a basic source of information for the preparation of theses and dissertations. It establishes the technical parameters within which all students should work, such as margins and the sequence of pages within the manuscript.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It must have been a moment of shock and disbelief as upwards of seventy Creek warriors watched the last moments of their leader, Yahatastanage, in late 1774. Alternately known as the Mortar by the English, and le Loup (the Wolf) by the French, he and his band were traveling down the Alabama River to New Orleans when they were attacked, perhaps foolishly, by a smaller band of Choctaws. After a three-day siege that claimed the lives of Creek and Choctaw alike, the Mortar took it upon himself to singlehandedly break down the barricade that protected the outnumbered Choctaw warriors. It was here, at the plantation of William Struthers, that he suffered a gunshot wound to his abdomen. The Mortar's men quickly retrieved him from his position as his body began to fail. As blood seeped from his tattoo-covered body, the old man attempted to reassure his followers. "If any Choctaw bullet could kill me," he comforted them, "I would have been dead a long time ago." But there, in the southern portion of present-day Alabama, The Mortar died.¹ But the Creek-Choctaw War, already almost a decade old, lived on.

It was perhaps ironic that the Creeks' greatest warrior was also their best hope for peace. In a sad twist of fate, The Mortar was attacked while on a mission to end the war with the Choctaws. By 1774, he understood that the Creeks' real enemy was not the Choctaws; rather, it was the English who sold the guns and bullets that ended Indian lives and the rum that stole their souls. In New Orleans, he hoped to encounter French and Spanish leaders that could broker a peace between the Indian nations that would finally allow a pan-Indian alliance against the

¹ *The Connecticut Journal*, February 2, 1775; David H. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 287; Debra Lynne Fletcher, "They Lived; They Fought: The Creek-Choctaw War, 1763-1776" (master's thesis, Auburn University, 1983), 126-128.

British Empire in North America. But that meeting would never take place. When Choctaw warriors opened fire on Creek canoes that November, they extended a war that devastated the American Southeast for almost another two years.

Despite a surge in scholarship in recent years focused on the indigenous peoples of the American Southeast, the Creek-Choctaw War of 1766-1776 has failed to receive proper attention. When addressing the southeastern Indians in the colonial era, historians have typically focused on Anglo-centered events such as the French and Indian War or the American Revolution. However, the gap between those two wars has gone largely un-analyzed, especially regarding the bloodiest conflict in the region: the Creek-Choctaw War of 1766-1776. J. Leitch Wright's *Creeks & Seminoles* devotes only a few pages to the conflict; Charles Hudson's *The Southeastern Indians* says nothing about it at all.² A recent study of Superintendent of Southern Indian Affairs John Stuart missed the opportunity to discuss Stuart's attempts to manipulate the war.³ James Taylor Carson's analysis of pre-removal Choctaw history fails to acknowledge the war even existed.⁴ R.S Cotterill disappointingly referred to the period as "little more than a record of misfortune."⁵

What analysis that has been done is mostly decades old. David H. Corkran addressed the conflict in *The Creek Frontier 1540-1783*, published in 1967.⁶ Corkran's contemporary, John Richard Alden, thoroughly analyzed the war from the British perspective in his 1966 work, *John*

² J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Creeks & Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 175; Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976).

³ J. Russell Snapp, *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire on the Southern Frontier* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

⁴ James Taylor Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path: The Mississippi Choctaws from Prehistory to Removal* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

⁵ R.S. Cotterill, *The Southern Indians: The Story of the Civilized Tribes before Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 34.

⁶ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 253-272.

Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier.⁷ In 1983, Debra Lynne Fletcher made the episode the focus of her master's thesis at Auburn University, though failed to place the conflict within the context of the greater Atlantic World.⁸ A few exceptions do exist, however. In 2002, John Juricek used the struggle to highlight British administrative disarray.⁹ Most recently, Greg O'Brien has used the war to illustrate the connections between diplomacy and war in the Choctaw nation.¹⁰

Perhaps this lack of scholarship has been due to the "back-seat" role of the British in the Creek-Choctaw dynamic. Certainly British citizens were involved and even killed in the conflict, but the Creek-Choctaw War never saw the use of militia or British regulars in the way the Yamasee War or First Cherokee War did. Perhaps the dearth of scholarship is due to the war's location. This war took place deep in the heart of Creek and Choctaw country. It was the extreme frontier for British settlers, and therefore, we have less written accounts of what happened in the backwoods of modern day Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida. Or perhaps historians have thought of the war as unimportant, a series of conflicts that ultimately lacked relevance.

But it was important. The Creek-Choctaw War was relevant. As further explained below, the Creek-Choctaw War of 1766-1776 was caused by a trifecta of forces: 1) a desire by Choctaw elites to maintain their position, 2) a similar desire by Creek elders to protect their trade networks, and 3) British efforts to protect their settlers by refocusing Creek violence along the frontier and countering pan-Indian alliances by manipulating native diplomacy. The results were

⁷ John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier: A Study of Indian Relations, War, Trade, and Land Problems in the Southern Wilderness, 1754-1775* (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), 224-229.

⁸ Fletcher, "They Lived, They Fought."

⁹ John Juricek, ed., *Early American Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789: Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, 325-332.

¹⁰ Greg O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750-1830* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 35-36; Greg O'Brien, "Protecting Trade through War: Choctaw Elites and British Occupation of the Floridas," in *Pre-removal Choctaw History: Exploring New Paths*, ed. Greg O'Brien (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 106-113.

significant. The war cost the lives of hundreds of men, women, and children and important leaders of both Indian nations. The participation in the war kept both parties from joining anti-English confederations, and perhaps most importantly, distracted the Creek and Choctaw peoples from their greatest threat: an unstoppable encroachment on their lands by white settlers. Furthermore, the Creek-Choctaw War should be considered as a “world war” amongst the residents of the American Southeast. People of Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Shawnee, Iroquois, British, Spanish, and French nationalities all played roles in the conflict. It was a terrible war that reached far beyond the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, stretching to the Great Lakes and across the Atlantic.

Studying the war is important if we are to truly understand the dynamics of the Atlantic World in the years immediately preceding the American Revolution. The conflict offers the opportunity to view how American Indians interacted with one another, and with European Americans. In some cases, such as with the Creeks and Choctaws, long-simmering feuds were reignited and threatened to burn out of control. In others, such as the Choctaws and Chickasaws, decades-long quarrels were dismissed in favor a new partnership that benefitted both parties. Regarding European partners, we see how Choctaw leadership came to terms with former foes, little more than a decade after a civil war between Francophile and Anglophile factions nearly destroyed its confederacy. Within the Creek confederacy changes were also afoot, especially after losing its domination of Southeastern trade routes. Losing the French as a counterbalance to the British forced both Indian nations to seek out new partnerships in order to maintain the balance of power in the region. The conflict also allows historians to view the complexity of British colonial administration, particularly the efforts of John Stuart, the British Superintendent

of Southern Indian Affairs, to protect both colonist and Indian alike from interracial violence amidst a flood of settlers and bureaucrats eager to profit in the backcountry.

My approach to this study is to assess the motivating factors of the war of its three main participants: the Creeks, the Choctaws, and the British, and to understand the underlying reasons for their actions during the conflict. At times, we will visit other players, namely the Chickasaws and Cherokees, but also the French, Spanish, and the Iroquois. Chapter One opens in 1763, as the French prepare to evacuate the American Southeast. Each of the triad will be introduced, and how they came to be in region will be detailed, along with underlying causes of violence inherent to the parties. Chapter Two details the start of the war and the early stages of how the British attempted to manage the conflict to their own ends. Chapter Three takes place between 1767 and 1768 and focuses on two signal events in the American Southeast: the first Choctaw-Chickasaw alliance and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Both had massive implications on the war to the detriment of the Creeks. Chapter Four follows the war as the Creeks turn the tide against the Choctaws, only to be undone by frontier violence against settlers that forced the British to steer the war in the latter's favor. In desperation, the Creeks reached out to both the French and Spanish, though failed to obtain a new European trading partner capable redirecting the war. During this chapter we will also explore the efforts of some groups that attempted to form pan-Indian alliances against the British. Finally, we will see how violence on the part of revolutionaries in the Northeast finally brought the Creek-Choctaw War to a close and exactly how the war affected the American Revolution and the early United States. The concluding chapter highlights the struggles of the war, and its lasting impacts. Furthermore, I argue against previous interpretations of a stalemate and instead show why the war was a decisive loss for the Creek confederacy.

CHAPTER 2

A PRECIPITATE MARRIAGE

A month after King George III's Proclamation of 1763, French Governor Jean Jacques D'Abbadie stood alongside English Major Robert Farmer in Mobile, addressing his former "brothers," the Choctaws. In the first of his talks over the following November days, the governor told his Indian allies that the war between the French and English was over. The French had ceded control of the territory to the English and the fort upriver at Tombeckby would be relinquished. Seeking a smooth transition from one monarchy to the next, D'Abbadie promised the group of over 2000 men assembled that "you will find in them as you have found in us, Whites which will love you, and who will take Care of You your Old Men Wives and Children."¹¹ Looking to soothe concerns about trade goods and gifts, Farmer spoke to his new neighbors ten days later, and promised to treat the Choctaws as well as the French had, announcing:

Hitherto you have always had all your wants supplied by the great Emperour of the French; you will for the future receive equally from the Emperour of the English. . . . You will no more be in want of the goods necessary for your Traffick, because the Lands of the Great Emperour of the English, where they are made, are much nearer to you than those of the French, and this is the reason why you have been sometimes poor.¹²

Despite the best efforts of D'Abbadie and Farmer, the conference in Mobile was not entirely effective at assuaging Choctaw misgivings about being thrust into a precipitate marriage with their former enemies. It did not help that Farmer ordered that the Choctaws relinquish gifts given to them by the French, including guns. What helped even less was that the English

¹¹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 202.

¹² *Ibid.*, 203-206.

replaced the French guns taken with English muskets at a 3:1 ratio of replacement. An account dated November 15, 1763, stated: “The change in government is far from being pleasing to many of the Indians; those who are here are such as have always been strongly attached to the French, and wholly in their favor.”¹³ A bystander at the meetings recorded one Choctaw man’s animosity:

The English are strangers to us; the French we know; in all their former talks they encouraged and hired us to kill and scalp the English and their Indian friends; now they intreat us to take the English by the hand, and themselves mix promiscuously with them. It is mighty strange, but it looks as if the time is coming when we should be made slaves, as the French told us would be the case whenever we suffered the English to come upon this land.¹⁴

While the English were busy establishing new relations with one group in Mobile, their goals in Augusta were a bit different. At the same time as the Mobile conference, British Superintendent of Southern Indian Affairs John Stuart, along with the governors of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, met in Georgia with six hundred representatives of the Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee nations. There, the administrators managed to obtain the first major land cession from the Creeks since the founding of Georgia in 1733. The cession was made by Lower Creeks anxious to soothe relations after a wave of frontier violence by their kinsmen left numerous British settlers dead. As David H. Corkran once noted, the large swath of territory ingested by the British must have given credence to Francophile Creek fears of England’s land lust. While Lower Creeks celebrated the deal as a renewed bond with an old friend, Upper Creeks uneasily accepted the new treaty.¹⁵

¹³ *Georgia Gazette*, December 15, 1763.

¹⁴ *Georgia Gazette*, February 9, 1764.

¹⁵ The new boundary was agreed to be “extending up Savannah to Little River to the ends of the south branch of Briar Creek and down that branch to the Lower Creek path to the main stream of Ogeechee River and down the mainstream of that river just below the path leading from Mount Pleasant and from there in a strait line cross to Santa Seville on the Altamaha river and from thence to the southward as far as Georgia extends or may be

The English moves were part of a larger strategy following the Seven Years' War designed to secure the lands obtained from France while minimizing costs.¹⁶ Initial attempts to curb costs by discontinuing the practice of gift-giving to the assorted nations around the Great Lakes had disastrous consequences. Earlier in the year, an Ottawa war chief named Pontiac launched a bloody attack on Fort Detroit that would inspire neighboring tribes to make attacks on their own. Pontiac, a former French ally, saw the actions of General Sir Jeffrey Amherst as an attempt to starve all Indians into submission. Inspired by a Delaware named Neolin, he convinced members of the Ottawa, Huron, Pottawatomi, Ojibwas, Miami, Seneca, Delaware, and Shawnee nations to form the first pan-Indian attack against the British. The results were devastating. Over the next two and a half years, an estimated two thousand colonial traders and settlers were killed or captured, and thousands more fled their homes in terror. Countless American Indians died. And while Pontiac never actually succeeded in capturing Fort Detroit or driving the British from North America, the war substantially decreased the British presence in the west and forced them to view American Indians as sovereign entities whose claims could be ignored only at great peril.¹⁷ British policy in the South quickly amended itself in efforts to avoid another bloody Indian war.

While England had recently bested France in its war for empire, it had yet to establish itself as the dominant power in the Southeast. Instead, its moves in Mobile and Augusta were

extended to remain to be regulated agreeable to former treaties and His Majesty's royal instructions." Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 233-241.

¹⁶ The Great War for Empire was a military success, but it crippled the British treasury, and more than doubled the national debt to a sum near £146,000,000 sterling. Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 562.

¹⁷ Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations & the British Empire* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 274-275; Ian K. Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 236-242. For Neolin's influence on Pontiac, see Gregory E. Dowd, "Thinking and Believing: Nativism and Unity in the Ages of Pontiac and Tecumseh," *American Indian Quarterly* 16, No. 3 (Summer, 1992): 309-335; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 33-40.

symbolic of the political relationships that had evolved over one hundred years. In the American Southeast, power was shared by a host of would-be European invaders and the indigenous people they sought to control.

Ponce de Leon made the first European incursion in the region when he landed near present-day St. Augustine, Florida, in March of 1513. After encountering armed Timucuas, the Spaniard and his men boarded their ships and set sail south and landed at the southern tip of the peninsula. Again, the explorer encountered resistance, this time in the form of Calusas, who convinced him to make his visit a short one. In 1521 he returned to San Carlos Bay in hopes of establishing a permanent Spanish settlement. Joining him were two hundred mercenaries, missionaries, and a herd of cattle. Again the Calusas protested his visit by giving him the wounds that claimed his life.¹⁸ In 1526, Lucas Vázquez d'Ayllón established a settlement near the mouth of the Pee Dee River with the help of local Guale people, who were Creek precursors. Unfortunately for Ayllón and his followers, the mission was soon plagued by conflicts with the Guales, and bouts of malaria, the latter of which claimed the wealthy planter. The colony collapsed within three months. A year later, Pánfilo de Narváez sailed from Spain with 600 soldiers and dozens of horses. Half of his men deserted him and half of his horses died before they arrived near Tampa Bay. Once there, he led a trek up the peninsula, while his starving men captured Timucuas in hopes of finding corn fields. Eventually they made it to the Apalachicola River, where neighboring Apalachee bowmen proved to be skilled marksmen. Malaria also claimed the lives of multiple Spaniards, including Narváez. The remaining men fled towards

¹⁸ Steele, *Warpaths*, 7-8; Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 103.

Mexico. Of the three hundred-odd men that arrived at Tampa Bay, only four survived to see Mexico City.¹⁹

The first real European advance into the heart of what would become Creek and Choctaw country came in the 1540s, under the helm of conquistador Hernando de Soto (figure 1). After landing near Tampa Bay, de Soto pushed his army towards the Apalachicola River in the Florida panhandle. Here they began to encounter late-Mississippian era chiefdoms, one after another. De Soto, eager to find fame and fortune in the ways of Cortes and Pizarro, made little effort to hide his intent. Like many armies of its day, de Soto's legion traveled without rations, and therefore traveled from town to town in search of victuals and victims.

¹⁹ Steele, *Warpaths*, 9-12, Rochelle A. Marrinan, John F. Scarry, and Rhonda L. Majors, "Prelude to de Soto: The Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez," in *Columbian Consequences, Volume 2: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 71-82.

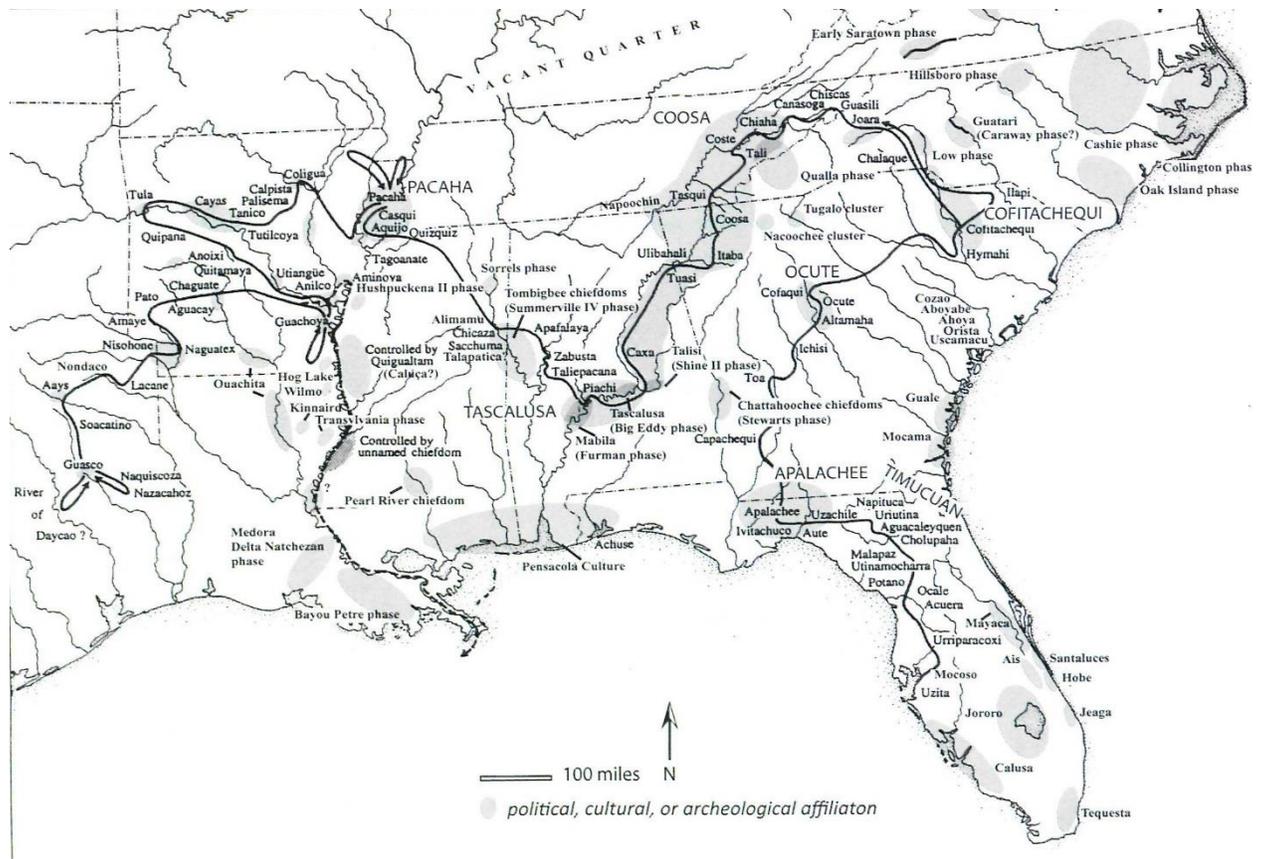


Figure 1. De Soto's entrada, 1539-1543. Reprinted from Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 13.

The people they encountered often had little food to spare. By the sixteenth century, Mississippians had adapted to cultivating squash, beans, sunflower, and other plants as a means to supplement their take of deer, rabbits, turkeys, bears, and other wild game. But the most important cultigen was corn. Corn was slow to take root in the Mississippian diet. It provides a significant amount of calories, but its cultivation is labor intensive. Furthermore, it takes a tremendous toll out of the soil. As a result, individual farmers produced only enough for their families' consumption, plus enough to donate to the village chief. Proto-Creek and proto-Choctaw communities featured an all-powerful chieftain who ruled by force. Standing atop the earthen mounds that were the architectural hallmarks of the era, he dictated to his subjects his orders. Men such as de Soto and his successors quickly saw this political structure as beneficial:

if they could bend the chieftain to their will, the resources of the entire chiefdom were theirs for the taking. Those resources were not limited to corn and venison, either. Spaniards demanded native women to quench their sexual appetites. News of their imminent arrival often preceded them, and it is not difficult to understand why they were not warmly received.²⁰

The *entrada* resulted in three major developments. First, it completely alienated Indians from European invaders, and for good reason. Spanish men were little more than barbarians, raping, murdering, and destroying communities as they encountered them. From 1539-1543, de Soto's men cut a swath of terror extending from Florida, up through present-day Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas.²¹ De Soto and his men believed their actions were biblically justified "wars by fire and blood" (*a fuego y a sangre*). A particularly violent episode occurred in October, 1540, at the battle of Mabila. There, the army of Tascalusa (a leader of a chiefdom sharing his name in present-day Alabama) ambushed the Spaniards, and inflicted tremendous casualties before being routed in a furious counterattack. Matthew H. Jennings estimates that de Soto suffered over one hundred fifty casualties, but may have killed between two and three thousand men and women in the fight.²²

Second, the *entrada* introduced the indigenous peoples of the region to European diseases that killed off much of the population.²³ In 1559, explorer Tristán de Luna moved throughout the

²⁰ Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 10-17; Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 30-35.

²¹ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 49-54.

²² Matthew H. Jennings, "Violence in a Shattered World," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South*, ed. Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 278-279. Hudson claims the toll may have been even higher for the Tascalusas, estimating as many as five thousand dead, including Tascalusa himself. Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 114.

²³ Alfred Crosby examines the effect of disease and the conquering of the New World. Alfred W. Crosby, Jr. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, 30th anniversary edition (Westport, Praeger Publishers, 2003), 35-63.

Southeast and noted that all of the Indians along the Alabama River were dead.²⁴ The best archaeological evidence of Old World diseases in Mississippian societies can be found at Coosa, a paramount chiefdom in the Coosawattee River valley near present-day Carters, Georgia, visited by the *adelantado* in mid-July of 1540.²⁵ Traditionally, Mississippian burials were solitary. However, there are a number multiple burials found at the site, which points to a massive loss of life. Furthermore, the number of towns around Coosa also diminished following de Soto's appearance.²⁶ Both the Alabama and Coushatta peoples, who are loosely affiliated with the Creeks, claim a massive outbreak of disease hit them before widespread European contact. Sheri M. Shuck-Hall suggests this may be an oral tradition dating to the epidemics brought on by de Soto and other Spaniards.²⁷ Alan Gally cautions against overestimating the long-term impacts of Old World diseases on Mississippian groups outside Florida, arguing that chiefdoms recovered quickly enough to defend themselves from later European incursions.²⁸

Finally, the *entradas* significantly destabilized the socio-political hierarchy of the Southeast. The death and destruction unleashed by Catholic warriors toppled chiefdoms and forced survivors to confront their lives in new ways. Tascalusa, once a fine province supporting thousands, was utterly destroyed.²⁹ The once powerful chiefdom of Cofitachequi, considered by de Soto to be the finest he ever encountered, completely disintegrated.³⁰ The earthen mounds that were so symbolic as representations of chiefly power, ceased to be constructed. Slowly,

²⁴ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 116.

²⁵ Adelantados were essentially royally sanctioned conquistadors. There was a common saying at the time that said that Spaniards brought back slaves (esclavos) instead of cloves (clavos). William C. Sturtevant, "Spanish-Indian Relations in Southeastern North America," *Ethnohistory* 9, No. 1 (Winter, 1962): 46.

²⁶ Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 423.

²⁷ Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, "Alabama and Coushatta Diaspora and Coalescence in the Mississippian Shatter Zone," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, 256.

²⁸ Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 32.

²⁹ Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis: 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 342.

³⁰ Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 425.

Mississippian groups began to coalesce into defensive alliances to protect against native and foreign invasion.

Coosa's descendants fled the area and over two hundred years, eventually resettled downriver. Here they were joined by refugees and descendants from the Itaba and Ulibahali chiefdoms, and founded a new Coosa, along with Abihka, a town that would become especially prominent. Along the Tallapoosa River in central Alabama, several communities were formed. Joining the Tallapoosas were Okfuskees, kinsmen who settled upriver. Two other groups joined the coalescing confederacy: a band of Alabamas from eastern Mississippi connected with Koasatis from eastern Tennessee at the confluence of the Alabama, Coosa, and Tallapoosa Rivers. These four major groups: Abihkas, Tallapoosas, Okfuskees, and Alabamas, made up the Upper Creek division.³¹

The Lower Creeks had similar beginnings. Casiste was a chiefdom on the lower Coosa River in the path of de Soto's army in 1540. Casiste gave way to Coweta sometime around 1670, which for years was the most important town in the division. Joining Coweta in the Apalachicola River valley of present-day central Georgia was Cusseta, which also rose to prominence in the early eighteenth century. Other towns formed around the watershed. The groups of people near the confluence of Walnut Creek and the Ocmulgee River and the Towaliga and Ocmulgee Rivers later came to be called Ochese Creek Indians by English settlers, from which the generalized term "Creek Indian" originates.³²

³¹ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 26-27

³² Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 26-29; H. Thomas Foster II, *Archaeology of the Lower Muskogee Creek Indians, 1715-1836* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 8-11; Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 28-29.

Creek coalescence was the result of two other forces, one native, the other, foreign. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Iroquois swept a devastating path across the Great Lakes in order to control the supply of beaver pelts to British traders. Like a wrecking ball, the Five Nations demolished neighboring Indian nations, among them the Hurons and Eries. The latter are particularly important to Southeastern Indian history. A band of surviving Eries fled the area and headed south to Virginia, where they became known as Richahecrians. While they were no match for the Iroquois, these Indians quickly rebounded in the mid-South. There they became the de facto supplier of Indian slaves to Virginia. Friendship with Virginia meant a steady supply of guns and powder, which they used to terrorize neighboring indigenous peoples. They moved south again, becoming known as the Westos, and settled along the Savannah River around 1670. Their new position gave them access to a new supply of potential slaves: the descendants of former Mississippian chiefdoms. From Carolina they raided south and west, capturing scores of Indians and crippling the Spanish missions at Guale and Mocama. In order to protect themselves from the Westo onslaught, the loosely affiliated groups of present-day Georgia and Alabama formed into the Creek Confederacy (figure 2).³³

³³ Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 40-43. Steven C. Hahn, "The Mother of Necessity: Carolina, the Creek Indians, and the Making of a New Order in the American Southeast," in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, ed. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 79-114. Somewhat ironically, the Westos were destroyed by the Savannahs in 1680, with most of the survivors being sold to work as slaves in the West Indies. Eric Bowne, "'A Bold and Warlike People': The Basis of Westo Power," in *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians*, ed. Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Robbie Ethridge (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 123-132; Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 46-50. One scholar suggests that Eastern Woodlands groups were "tribalized" by European contact. Christopher M. Stojanowski, *Bioarchaeology of Ethnogenesis in the Colonial Southeast* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2010), 92-94.

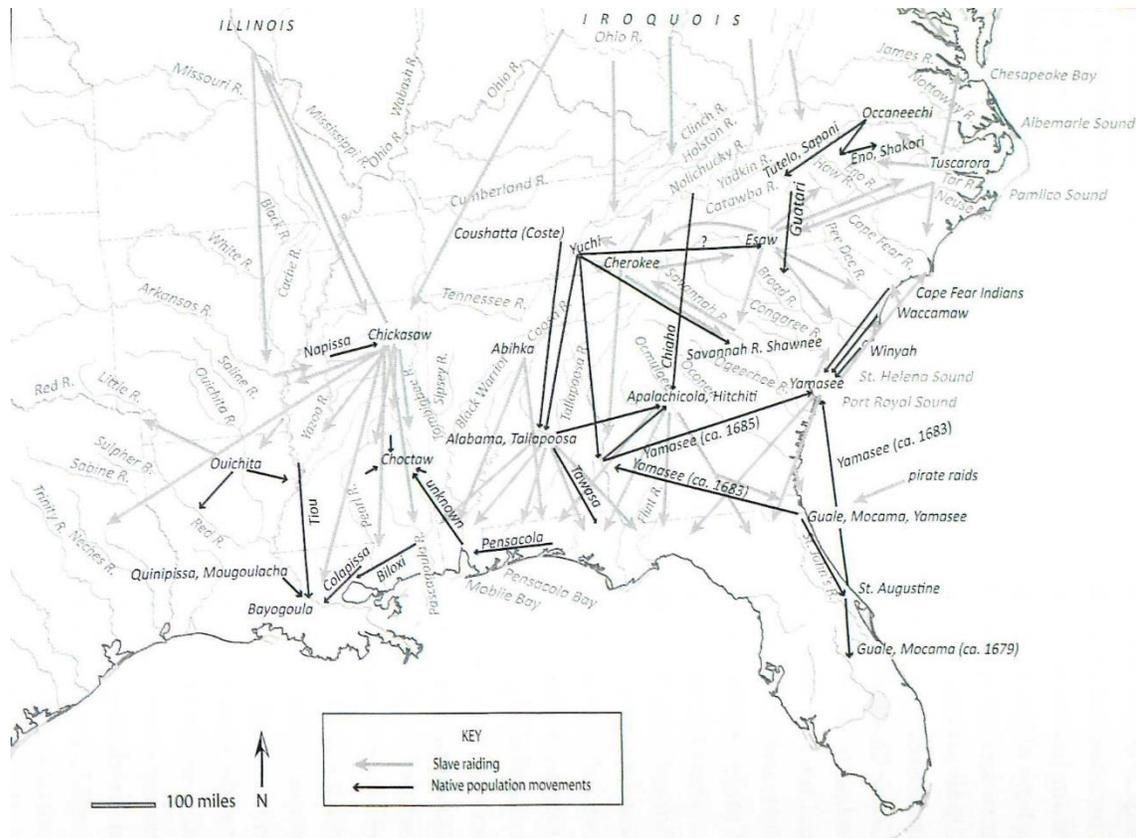


Figure 2. Slave raids and population movement in the American Southeast from 1680-1700. Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 156.

With the demise of the Westos in 1680, the Creeks became the major supplier of native slaves to British merchants. Slaves as chattel that could be sold was a new development in Muskogeddom. The act of taking slaves existed in the Southeast long before Europeans. But in indigenous communities, slaves were often kidnapped women and children from enemy villages who were later adopted as full members of society. They served as a replenishment for the lives lost in quarrels between towns that could last decades. Furthermore, private ownership of goods or land simply did not exist in Creek society prior to the eighteenth century. Everything belonged to the community. The introduction of chattel slavery presented a significant challenge to preexisting Creek customs. Nevertheless, Creek warriors adapted quickly. Using English guns, Creeks happily smashed the Apalachicolas and attacked Spanish settlements. In 1702, a strike

force of Creek and English warriors torched the last major Spanish mission outside St. Augustine, at San Juan de Apalachee, in present-day Tallahassee, Florida. But Creek Indians relished attacking their neighbors to the west—the Choctaws.³⁴

Like the Creeks, the Choctaws emerged from the ashes of Mississippian chiefdoms, some of which were encountered by Spanish conquistadores. The Bottle Creek and Moundville chiefdoms begat the Burial Urn people, who, in turn, founded the original Concha and Chickasawhay towns of the Southern division and the Inholahatas of the Eastern division. From the “prairie peoples” near Nanih Waiya came Chickasaw and Chakchiuma Indians, as well as the Imoklashas, the Western Choctaw division. Another group of the Southern division, the Sixtowns, developed from the Plaquemine people. All of these composed the Choctaw confederacy.³⁵

The Choctaws themselves trace their ancestry to a mound in eastern Mississippi called Nanih Waiya. From there they crawled out of the Great Mother’s womb and basked in the rays of the sun, the Great Father, Aba. Aba divided them into two families, called iksas, and established the covenants of Choctaw society. So long as Choctaws followed Aba’s laws, they would remain “on the bright path to a righteous life.” But should they falter, their world would be swallowed by the dark one, a netherworld monster that would consume the land in death and destruction.³⁶

³⁴ Peter H. Wood, “The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790,” in *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 81-84.

³⁵ Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path*, 11; Louis DeVorse, Jr., *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 1763-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 20-22

³⁶ Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path*, 8-9; William Brescia, Jr., “Choctaw Oral Tradition Relating to Tribal Origin,” in *The Choctaw before Removal*, ed. Carolyn Keller Reeves (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 3-16.

Death and destruction were part of indigenous lives, though the monsters that brought them came in the form of war parties, not serpents. The two peoples warred against one another long before the Creeks sought to supply English slave markets in the late seventeenth century. In fact, Creek-Choctaw antagonism dates back to their very beginnings. One Choctaw origin tale claims the Creeks were the first to emerge from Nanih Waiya and move eastward. Once they crossed the Tombigbee River, they lit a fire so that the others, the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws, could not follow them.³⁷ The Creeks also claim to be born of war. After crawling out of the earth, Cussetas crossed a bloody river and joined with three other peoples. From there they competed for scalps while they warred against their mutual foes. The Cussetas claimed victory, and the group continued east until they found Apalachicola precursors, the “people they had So long travell’d to See.”³⁸

Whatever their origin, it is without doubt that Creek and Choctaw towns attacked each other mercilessly prior to European contact, and their mutual hostility would only intensify with time. Both peoples had similar customs for declaring war. After gathering in council and fasting for as many as three days, a dance would be held and war would be declared. Creeks notified their enemies by planting sticks covered with hair along the paths of their enemies, while Choctaws sent a hatchet painted red to their targeted towns. Warfare between Creeks and Choctaws tended to be smaller affairs, involving members of particular clans or towns holding grievances with opposing factions. War parties themselves were often made up of no more than twenty to thirty individuals carrying an assortment of bows, war clubs, knives, javelins, tomahawks, and later, guns.

³⁷ Brescia, Jr., “Choctaw Oral Tradition,” 11.

³⁸ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 14-15.

Both Creek and Choctaw warriors carried with them supernatural idols that were only allowed to be touched by designated members of the party. This idol (most often a stuffed owl or other large raptor) would receive portions of the warriors' food and they endeavored to secure the idol's well-being. For instance, it would be considered a bad omen if the stuffed bird were ever dropped, or even if its head were to be turned to any direction other than that of the destination. Dreams, too, assaulted Choctaw goals. American ethnologist John R. Swanton wrote that if a warrior suffered a bad dream while on the war path, occasionally the entire party would return to the dreamer's home town. In addition, the chirping of a particular species of bird (most likely the Yellow Wagtail) could send the war party home.³⁹

The goal of combat was not to destroy the opposition, rather to cut off and kill or capture a few individuals while taking as few losses as possible. Even in victory a war leader would be shunned if his party suffered heavy casualties. The Creeks were ferocious in combat and did not discriminate between taking the scalps of women or children. Unlike the Choctaws, the Creeks actively raided into enemy territory, claiming it required additional valor to do so. Regarding prisoners, Creeks targeted women and children, unless they had previously decided not to take any at all and consequently left none alive. Upon arrival back at camp, the prisoners were usually whipped with glee by the women of the town. Those that had been condemned to torture usually endured a long, ceremonious end to their lives. Swanton noted that "Bearskin moccasins were tied to the feet of one who had been condemned to torture and a firebrand was fastened above his head." Choctaw warriors were also feared by their enemies. Scotsman John Stewart observed of them in 1711, "They cannot be fatigued," and that they would "run up to the very muzzle of their

³⁹ John Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), 693-698.

enemy's guns with unparalyzed and undaunted resolution."⁴⁰ Despite this, Choctaws tended to be a bit more merciful to their captives than the Creeks; dispatching their captives by gunshot or a blow to the head with a hatchet instead of a long process of ritualized torture. Upon the completion of a successful raid a Choctaw chief would divide the booty among the families of those killed, while keeping nothing for himself. This helped to honor their dead and soften the blow of the loss, while at the same time solidify the chief's position as a man who provided for his people.⁴¹

Rarely could it be said that the entirety of the Creek or Choctaw confederacies took to war against the other. Creek-Choctaw wars were also short-lived. They typically took place in the spring and when one side grew tired of the fighting or felt that it could be stopped with honor, a token of peace—often a white bird's wing—was sent to the opposition to end the feud.⁴² While the wars may have been short in length, they were massive in number, with fights between the peoples breaking out almost constantly.

Part of this was due to cultural norms within both Creek and Choctaw societies. In a very real sense, concepts of masculinity were tied to warfare. Only via warfare or hunting exploits could indigenous boys make the transition to manhood. Young boys were trained for warfare almost from birth. They were disciplined to pain by swimming in ice-cold bodies of water and ritually scratched by elders with gar teeth. Elders recounted with great glory the tales of young men who fought both enemies and monster on Earth and in the netherworld. In Choctaw towns, the addition of the suffix "abé" to a name signified a man's martial prowess, such as in the case of Chulustamastabé. Heroism in war was a requirement for social advancement within both

⁴⁰ Stewart quoted in Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 180.

⁴¹ Swanton, *Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 696-698; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 84-85.

⁴² Fletcher, "They Lived; They Fought," 1-3.

Creek and Choctaw circles. The expectations did not apply only to the battlefield. When captured, an Indian male was expected to display his virility in order to honor both his people and his foes. Those who did return found reward in enhanced prestige, which was awarded by better council seating, tattoos, and the affections of women.⁴³

Another reason for indigenous violence was the shared belief that the dead required vengeance in order to find peace in the afterlife. When someone died badly, such as being murdered, Creeks, Choctaws, and other Southeastern Indians believed that person's soul "cried blood," and demanded satisfaction. This posed problems both inside and outside the community. Inside the community, such as when one Creek murdered another, the onus of satisfaction was on the offending party's family. In this case, a guilty man would often be executed by his maternal nephew (and by custom, hereditary heir), or another family or clan member. Once punishment had been delivered, the soul was considered to be at peace and the matter was over. In the case of extra-national murder, wars could and often were the outcome. Reciprocity killings by one nation spurred revenge killings by the other and establishing satisfaction was often only accomplished via peace talks and the exchange of white feathers.

The appearance of foreigners in the Southeast only added fuel to the flames. When the Spanish visited the area in the late 1680s they found the Creeks engulfed in a war with the Choctaws to their west.⁴⁴ The Spanish attempted to pull Creek towns into their fold, but failed, in part because of Creek rejection of Catholicism, but most likely because the Spanish refused to

⁴³ Michelle LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother: British-Native American Relations in the Colonial Southeast* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 51-83; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 80-85; O'Brien, "Protecting Trade through War," 105.

⁴⁴ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 51-53. Archaeological excavations have confirmed that the proto-Creeks and proto-Choctaws fought one another long before the 1680s. Patricia S. Bridges, Keith P. Jacobi, and Mary Lucas Powell, "Warfare-Related Trauma in the Late Prehistory of Alabama," in *Bioarchaeological Studies of Life in the Age of Agriculture*, ed. Patricia M. Lambert (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 35-62.

trade the firearms that were coveted in Creek country.⁴⁵ The establishment of Charleston in 1670 opened up a supply of English guns that Creek warriors used to defend their towns and allowed them to wage a devastating attack on the Choctaws between the years of 1687 and 1701.

Queen Anne's War (1701-1713) broadened hostilities. Spaniards also found themselves targets of English-allied Creek marksmen, and their mission system was all but destroyed by 1704. So too, were the Apalachees, the last peoples inhabiting the Florida panhandle and separating the Creeks from the peninsula. The Choctaws made an alliance with the French, who in 1702 supplied them with guns and munitions that allowed them to successfully attack multiple Tallapoosa towns. In retaliation, Creek headmen widened the war to include Frenchmen among their list of enemies. Queen Anne's War was a massive success for the Creek Confederacy. By 1711, they had utterly destroyed the Apalachees, hemmed in the Spanish at St. Augustine and the French at Mobile, and delivered a tremendous blow to the Choctaws. Most importantly, they controlled almost every single trade route in the region. The balance of power in the Southeast flowed through Creek country.⁴⁶

Queen Anne's War also offers us the opportunity to see how European relations with Southeastern Indian nations evolved in the eighteenth century. As Robbie Ethridge has illustrated, indigenous nations were compelled to war only against nations allied to a European rival. The English rejoiced in the destruction of Spanish-allied Apalachees at the hands of Creek warriors, but discouraged them from raising the hatchet against fellow English allies, such as

⁴⁵ Creek dismissal of Catholicism can be seen in the symbolic destruction of Spanish missions, where Christians were burned on their own crosses. Amy Turner Bushnell, "Ruling 'the Republic of Indians' in Seventeenth-Century Florida," in *Powhatan's Mantle*, 206.

⁴⁶ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 53-57. J. Leitch Wright Jr., claims the destruction of the Apalachees "marked the greatest slave raid ever to occur in the South or probably in the United States, with the possible exception of De Soto's *entrada*." J. Leitch Wright, Jr. *The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of the American Indians in the Old South* (New York: The Free Press, 1981), 140-141.

Chickasaws or Yamasees. Likewise, the French crown worked actively to break up Indian-English alliances, though failed to make much headway. Both France and England learned quickly that colony viability depended in large part on ensuring their native allies emerged victorious.⁴⁷

Englishmen at Carolina were surprised when the Creeks unilaterally made peace with the French between 1711 and 1712. Along with this came a *detente* with the Choctaws, who were almost certainly pleased to have it. The new friendship between the Creeks and French masked a larger problem; English traders who abused indigenous clients. In 1715, Francophile Creeks induced Yamasee towns upset with English trading practices to rise up against Carolina. The war was filled with carnage for both sides. In order to combat the onslaught of Yamasee, Catawba, and other Piedmont Indians, the English recruited the Iroquois and hoped that old grievances would induce the Five Nations to take part. They did. Still, the burgeoning colony was almost destroyed before the Yamasee assault could be turned back. When the Yamasees fled to Spanish Florida, the English openly attacked Creek settlements, causing the eastern towns on the Oconee Creek to withdraw west to other towns and into Florida, where the first Seminole villages were constructed. A look at Creek actions during the war illustrates Creek approaches to diplomacy. Despite encouraging the Yamasees to attack Carolina, the Creeks did not join in the initial attack. Instead, they murdered English traders in their towns, but did not carry the attack into English settlements. For the Creeks, the war served two purposes: sent a message to the English king that they did not fear open combat with His Majesty's forces, and would no longer allow slights by British traders, and that they would gladly outsource their deerskins to French or Spanish.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 194-217.

⁴⁸ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 57-60; Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 327-344; Matthew Mulcahy, *Hubs of Empire: The Southeastern Lowcountry and the British Caribbean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 94-95.

The English seemed not to have learned that lesson, believing instead the war was divine punishment for not introducing the gospel amongst the savage masses. Instead, both England and France continued their attempts to control the Indians separating them in the New World. Both countries operated in a similar way: in order to control any of the Indian nations in the Southeast, they attempted to “crown” a leader or leaders amongst them ensure loyalty to the transatlantic king. However, both Creek and Choctaw political structure made this all but impossible.

As the Mississippian chiefdoms died, so too, did their hierarchies that featured an all-powerful chief who ruled by force. When the Creek and Choctaw peoples emerged, they did so featuring new concepts of governance that were almost identical. Towns of both peoples were led by a single man, called *mico* by Creeks and *mingo* by Choctaws. Instead of dominating his people by threat of force, a *mico* had only the power to persuade his townspeople that a certain course of action needed to be taken. If he was unable to sway the town council to his opinion, the proposed task was left undone. A headman’s power was not guaranteed, and he was subject to replacement. His claims to power were based upon his abilities to provide for his people, such as redistributing “gifts” from English, French, or Spanish envoys.⁴⁹ As Richard White has demonstrated, the French appeared to have a better understanding of the importance of gift giving practices in indigenous societies, but Europeans were plagued with obstacles relating to their paternalistic views of Indian nations. When speaking to Indians, both French and Englishmen referred to their respective monarchs as some derivation of “Great Father.” This analogy was supposed to represent the European leader as dominant over the native peoples, and responsible for their welfare.⁵⁰ But both Creeks and Choctaws were matrilineal societies, and

⁴⁹ J. Leitch Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 23-30.

⁵⁰ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, Twentieth Anniversary ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

power flowed not from men, but women. When a *mingo* was replaced, it was usually by the son of his sister, his nephew. In both polities, it was the maternal uncle, not the father, from whom discipline was received. Fathers loved their children, no doubt, but did so in a way different from anything the Europeans had ever encountered. Therefore, when diplomats called upon their kings as a “father” and protector of Indians towns and nations, the people there recognized them as someone who cared for them, but lacked the ability to enforce any demands.

Complicating matters was that except in rare cases, neither the Creeks nor Choctaws ever had anyone who could speak for the entire confederacy. This was due to the autonomous nature of both peoples. Both confederacies were composed of polyethnic communities. As the polities formed, they adopted refugee groups, and in some cases, conquered peoples. This led to a stunning amount of diversity. Most Upper Creeks spoke a variant of Eastern Muskogean, but Lower Creeks tended to speak Hitchiti, which was of a completely different linguistic stock and unintelligible from the Upper Creek tongue. Added to this were the languages of the Chehaws, who left the Appalachian Mountains to join the Lower Creeks, and the Yuchis, who had extremely loose ties to the Creek Confederacy. In other towns, an eighteenth-century visitor would almost undoubtedly come across other languages, most often Shawnee or Natchez.⁵¹

Within these polyglot towns, or *talwas*, as Creeks called them, existed a rigidly-defined clan system that affected all of the society. Clan membership was much like an extended family, and affiliation was passed through the mother’s bloodline. In many cases, reciprocal warfare was not the actions of towns, but of clans bent on revenging fallen kin. Claudio Saunt argues that clan affiliation was more important than township in Creek identity. See, for example, the Mortar’s 1765 boast that he was “king of the ancient bear family.”⁵² Other scholars believe that township

⁵¹ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 28-31.

⁵² Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 21.

had a greater effect on personhood. Joshua Piker believes that the clan only served as framework to the town. In his words, “town-based networks, events and rituals called on townspeople to transcend—although not forsake—personal and familial agendas and loyalties.”⁵³ Robbie Ethridge claims that towns whereas the dominant civic structure of Creek life, participation in clan meetings and rituals was the dominant sphere of Creek social life.⁵⁴

Choctaw towns were even more loosely knit. They shared similar political organization, featuring a persuasive headman, and the clan system. Like the Creeks, each town was designated as either “red” (representing warfare), or “white” (representing peace). Red towns took the lead on issues calling for violence outside the confederacy, while white towns were usually responsible for mediating and keeping the peace. The sheer size of the Choctaw confederacy prohibited a single leader. It was massive. Choctaw country encompassed lands ranging south from present-day central Mississippi and west-central Alabama south to the Gulf of Mexico, and stretching east from Louisiana to central Alabama.⁵⁵ Daniel Usner estimates that at the turn of the eighteenth century, the Choctaw population hovered around 17,500 souls.⁵⁶ Like the Creeks, each town was governed by a persuasive headman, and each town was free to act independently of the others in the confederacy. It is therefore unsurprising that Frenchmen criticized the Choctaws as having “so many little republics.”⁵⁷

The closest the Europeans ever came to a single leader of either nation was the decade immediately following the Yamasee War, when a man known as “Emperor” Brims came to

⁵³ Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 10.

⁵⁴ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 109-113.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁶ Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Social and Economic Histories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 38.

⁵⁷ Patricia Galloway, “‘So Many Little Republics’: British Negotiations with the Choctaw Confederacy, 1765,” *Ethnohistory* 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1994):516.

power from the Lower Creek town of Coweta. Brims did not speak for the entirety of the nation, but people followed his lead. He secured a short-term alliance with Florida Spaniards in 1716 before deciding on a policy of neutrality, and later, peace with the English. The 1717 Charlestown agreement between the Creeks and the English is particularly important because it established the rules by which the Creeks and British were to live by for the remainder of the century. Its first proviso established a regulated trade between the two peoples at fixed rates. Next, it guaranteed that Englishmen who hurt, killed, or robbed Creeks would be punished by the English and satisfaction given to the Creeks. Third, it promised that the English would supply Creeks with guns and ammunition to fight, so long as their opponents were not at peace with England. Fourth, it threatened to cut off trade of British goods should the Creeks behave badly. In return, the Creeks promised not to harm any English traders. Sixth, the Creeks were to deliver any of their people who were being prosecuted for crimes against His Majesty's subjects. Seventh, the treaty bound the Creeks to catch and return fugitive slaves. Finally, the Creeks swore an oath not to allow any others into their towns, especially the Spanish, from whom the Creeks were to have no more relations. By 1729, the English-Creek relationship was so tightly knit that the French governor in Mobile considered sending Jesuit missionaries in disguise to develop a Francophile faction.⁵⁸

The Choctaws paced a bloody path to European allegiance. While nominally tied to the French since the late seventeenth century, factions of pro-English men and women arose from time to time, none more violent than from 1746-1750. So terrible was the war that even Upper Creeks from Abihka were horrified by its events. On August 14, 1746, three Frenchmen were murdered as part of a revenge killing, as ordered by Western Division leader Red Shoe. The

⁵⁸ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 63-65, 80.

French responded by withdrawing all of their traders and sealing their warehouses before demanding satisfaction. Red Shoe was killed ten months later, but his faction actually grew following his demise. In retaliation, Western Division warriors attacked French settlements on the Mobile River, but refrained from killing Eastern Division members. After nonstop French demands, in July 1748 Eastern Division leader Alibamon Mingo assaulted Red Shoe's old village of Couëchitto and another town, Nuhkobo. From there, the Western Division plunged into war against its eastern counterpart and the Sixtowns. The war did not end until French soldiers took the field with a swivel gun in late 1750. The war was a disaster for pro-English factions and a major victory for the French, with whom the Choctaws renewed their allegiance.⁵⁹

Unfortunately for the Choctaws, the onset of the French and Indian War in 1755 cut off their French gifts and presented a challenge for the headmen who relied upon them to maintain power. The war never quite spread to Choctaw country, and relating to European powers, it was a quiet period.

The challenge for the Creeks was how to maintain relations with both the French and the English with the coming war. Anti-English factions arose within the confederacy and pleaded to join the Cherokees in striking the Georgia and Carolina colonies. The loudest of these voices belonged to the Mortar, who advocated a pan-Indian alliance of Creek, Shawnee, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Catawba warriors to destroy all of the English forts in Indian country, especially Fort Loudon.⁶⁰ In return, British soldier Captain Dan Pepper, the former commander of Fort More, suggested fomenting a Creek-Choctaw war in order to prevent a Creek alliance with the

⁵⁹ Galloway notes that the war happened as the last resort for Choctaws seeking vengeance. Choctaw warriors actively strove to kill external enemies as adequate retribution. When that failed to appease the French, the war boiled over. Patricia Galloway, *Practicing Ethnohistory: Mining Archives, Hearing Testimony, Constructing Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 258-290; Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path*, 31-33;

⁶⁰ For more on Loudon's construction and placement, see Daniel Ingram, *Indians and British Outposts in Eighteenth-century America* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2012), 27-58.

French. The onset of the Cherokee-Carolina War in 1760 split the Creeks into three factions: a pro-French party headed by the Mortar, an Anglophile group led by the Wolf of Muccolossus, and a much larger contingent under the Gun Merchant of Okchai, that favored neutrality. As Steven C. Hahn has demonstrated, the Creeks' great fight in the French and Indian war was within themselves. For them, it was an eighteenth-century "cold war." By and large, Creeks refrained from taking sides in the conflict, though they worried that an English victory would challenge their own political independence and destabilize the region.⁶¹

That it did.

⁶¹ For Creeks in the French and Indian War, see Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 174-228; Hahn, 229-231; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 460-466.

CHAPTER 3

A SOLUTION TO THE VIOLENCE

One of the difficulties the British faced following the Seven Years' War was how to administer the new lands and its residents. By 1760, the Creeks numbered around 13,000 people, and recent estimates claim the Choctaws' population was even higher at 13,300.⁶² The Grenville-Bedford plan attempted in 1764 to make peaceful Indian subjugation possible by allowing superintendents to appoint deputies to Indian nations. In the South, John Stuart first deputized his brother, Charles, to meet with the Creeks and then later promoted Alexander Cameron to relate with the Cherokees.⁶³ Already trouble was underway.

Unlike the Choctaws, who rarely dealt with French settlers, the Creeks were constantly under assault by British trespassers intent on staying. The establishment of Georgia in 1733 was a major blow to Creek sovereignty, and despite King George's Proclamation thirty years afterward, British subjects streamed into newly vacated lands still claimed by Indians. Like fronts meeting to form a storm, the collision of colonists and Creeks resulted in thunder. The Long Canes incident highlighted the friction between the two peoples, and foreshadowed problems that would plague their relationship until its end.

On Christmas Eve, 1763, fourteen British settlers of the Long Canes region of South Carolina were put to the knife by Lower Creek warriors. No reason for the murders was given, though it is probable that the men were upset about encroachment by English settlers and their livestock.⁶⁴ Had the murders been part of a revenge killing, Creek leaders would have protested

⁶² Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South," 85, 98.

⁶³ Fletcher, "They Lived; They Fought," 7.

⁶⁴ Upper Creek headmen had protested earlier in the year that settlers scared off the deer, and livestock can through their supplies of corn. Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North*

when English authorities demanded satisfaction. They did not. Lower Creek leaders were slow to react, though, and the incident threatened to plunge the English and Creeks into war when a skirmish erupted between twenty militiamen and twelve Indians, who shot “one man thro’ the shoulder, another thro’ his hat, and a third thro’ his coat.”⁶⁵The Lower Creeks soon agreed to deliver satisfaction for the Long Canes murders by killing those responsible when they returned from their winter hunt. The Long Canes incident is important because it demonstrates just how unwilling the Creeks and English were to go to war against one another. The Creeks reluctantly agreed to hunt down and kill those responsible for the Long Canes deaths, despite two of the men being sons of a respected headman, the White King of Cusseta.⁶⁶ The English also showed they were unwilling to press the situation any further than necessary. Instead of sending more troops to apprehend the murderers, John Stuart was willing to allow the Creeks to handle the matter internally. Each party’s actions were tacit admissions of respect for the opposite party’s power.

Unfortunately, more violence was to come. In September 1765, three settlers, William and George Payne, along with James Hogg, were brutally killed by several Creek men, led by Limpiki, the son of Sempoyaffi (also called Ishenpoaphe), the mico of Coweta. Stuart again demanded satisfaction, only for his pleas to fall upon deaf ears. Unable to get the Creeks to commit to a course of direction, Georgia Governor James Wright pressured an embarrassed Upper Creek headman named Captain Alleck to sign off on a larger than expected land cession, an act certainly more painful than the loss of a few kinsmen.⁶⁷

America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 101. Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763-1775, Volume I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 14-15, (Hereinafter referred to as Gage Correspondence Vol. I). Apparently, the bodies were discovered “mangled in a most inhuman manner,” Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 18.

⁶⁵ *South Carolina Gazette*, January 14, 1764-January 28, 1764.

⁶⁶ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 8-11.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 18-19. Ishenpoaphe’s refusal to allow his son to be killed would be the source of English-Creek tension for the next several years. The matter was finally settled when Ishenpoaphe made a plea to spare Limpiki’s life, which

While Stuart was busy trying to find an answer to Creek violence, he had new obstacles in Choctaw country: appeasing headmen who were losing power and curtailing abusive traders who satiated the nation's wicked thirst for alcohol. Prior to the war the Choctaws, like other Southeastern Indians, had learned to play European rivals against one another. French presents of guns, ball and powder could be used to hunt deer, the skins of which being traded to the English in exchange for clothes, jewelry and most unfortunately, rum. Stuart's predecessor Edmund Atkin complained of this in 1759, telling the Choctaws, "Your People have a way of begging Goods different from other Nations, which is like taking them away. This discourages Traders; and it is the Business of Headmen to make their People behave otherwise. And unless you can do that and keep your People in Order, I don't see how you can keep the Trade."⁶⁸ With the exit of *le francais*, the Choctaws and other Indian peoples lost bargaining power.⁶⁹ English merchants replaced their French counterparts in the three divisions almost immediately after the Seven Years' War. Instead of the ceremonial gift exchanges that took place annually in Mobile, the British sought a trade system based upon free enterprise and the use of capitalistic merchants. This eventually led to abuses as traders and their assistants "assaulted Choctaw women, bartered with alcohol, and cheated Choctaws out of promised goods." Angry Choctaw men lashed out by robbing the traders and stealing their horses.⁷⁰

The capitalist system was an incredible threat to the standing power system in Choctaw country, especially amongst the pro-English chiefs. When John Stuart visited the Choctaws in

was apparently accepted, as the incident disappeared from the historical record after the fact. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 258, 269-270.

⁶⁸ W. Stitt Robinson, ed. *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789 North and South Carolina Treaties* (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 2004), 91-97.

⁶⁹ Stephen P. van Hoak, "Untangling the Roots of Dependency: Choctaw Economics, 1700-1860," *American Indian Quarterly* 23, No. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn 1999): 115-117; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 34-68.

⁷⁰ Greg O'Brien, "Protecting Trade though War," 104; White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 71.

1765, they made their desires well known. Tomatly Mingo, a man of great authority bluntly told the English: “You have undoubtedly Run great Risques in coming here [Mobile], and it is to be Supposed as come to Supply all our Wants, you have brought Guns Cloathing and other Necessaries... I therefore hope the English Powder will flourish in the Land and enable us to Supply our Wives and Children with all Necessaries.” He then called upon the English act as a Choctaw father should. “How many times is it Necessary I should declare myself an Englishman. You Favre was formerly French, now you are become English. And if I am become their Son, they must Act the Part of a Father in Supplying my Wants by proper Presents and also by furnishing a plentyfull Trade.”⁷¹

Stuart’s job in Mobile was difficult, because while the English had nominally taken over the region, Frenchmen still resided at New Orleans and traded with the Choctaws. Furthermore, it had been less than two years since the end of the war, and many former enemies had yet to come around to the benevolence of King George III. He addressed the Choctaws, telling them they were “as a Son tho Seperated from his Father.” The king, in return, had authorized Stuart “to give you of his Royal Care and affection whist you Continue Obedient and Dutyfull.” The Superintendent then made a point of singling out the Sixtowns contingent, comparing them to a lost child who had adopted a father (the French), but struck their own brothers without knowing them. Now their adopted father had abandoned them, but their true father (the English) had found them and was ready to receive them. “From this day forward you are to look upon yourselves, as dependent upon the Generosity and Benevolence of the Great King George,” instructed Stuart. “It is by his Permission alone that your wants can be Supplied that Traders can

⁷¹ Juricek, *Florida and Georgia Treaties*, 242.

go amongst you, That you can have Guns, Powder, Ball, Cloathes, Knives, Hatchets, Hoes and such other Necessaries as you cannot Subsist without and are totally incapable of making.”

In order to make the trade, however, the English would need new cessions of land, something West Florida Governor George Johnstone masterfully persuaded the Choctaws to relinquish. Johnstone also warned those assembled about the dangers of rum, telling them, “Those Men who are Guilty of carrying Liquor amongst you ought to be Considered as your Real Enemies much more than if they lifted the Hatchet against you. He who dies in War, his Time shall be remembered, but he who is destroyed by Drunkenness shall be forgot like the Hog who has perished in the Swamp.”⁷²

Choctaw alcoholism was a real problem for the English. Not only was it making the leadership unhappy, it all too often led to conflict on the frontier. James Adair, a merchant who lived amongst the Chickasaws for the better part of forty years, wrote of a white trader who liquored up two Choctaw men to induce them to trade with him. Once they were unable to purchase anything more the trader cut off their lines of credit, infuriating the Indians. This led to a heated exchange and the death of the one of the Choctaws, as the trader killed him with an ax.⁷³

Perhaps an even bigger problem for Johnstone and Stuart was that Choctaw dependency was getting in the way of the Crown’s land acquisition. Inebriated warriors were running up huge lines of debt to the frontier merchants, who would then happily receive native lands in payment. If individuals were obtaining land directly from the Indians the English could not resell it to pay off the staggering amount of debt they had acquired during the Seven Years’ War. Because of this practice, Johnstone counseled the gathered assembly to seize “every drop of Spirituous

⁷² Ibid., 233-234.

⁷³ James Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 305.

Liquors which may be introduced amongst you, and that you never will pay to any Man any debts which you may have Contracted on account of Spirituous Liquors.”⁷⁴

Stuart left Mobile believing he solidified the English-Choctaw relationship. He had some reason to do so. He appeased the nation with a gift of presents and promises of more, he introduced the Choctaws to the same laws the Creeks and Chickasaws abided by, and he had obtained a large cession of land around Mobile to facilitate the trade. But Stuart’s mission was hardly that successful. Despite the warnings of Johnstone, rum continued to make its way via packhorse into Choctaw towns, and many were upset about the land cession. Perhaps most importantly, Stuart was unable to keep his promise regarding presents in Choctaw country. This upset the balance of power in the Eastern, Western, and Sixtowns divisions. When Choctaw leaders could not produce the goods they were promised, they paid dearly. Such was the case of Nassuba Mingo, a pro-English headman who was murdered by Francophile Choctaws in 1766.⁷⁵

Stuart moved next to Pensacola, where he hoped to cement deteriorating relations with the Creeks. One of Stuart’s primary goals was to sway the Mortar finally into the English fold. Despite his own apprehensions, the Okchai leader made an appearance in West Florida. The two men met several times during late May, 1765. During each meeting, Stuart positioned himself atop a heap of French gorgets renounced by the Choctaws. This was clearly interesting to the Mortar, who ultimately accepted a prize as an English Great Medal Chief, something he had formerly resisted even from the French. Stuart was impressed with the Mortar, recalling him as a “Sensible Manly Indian,” and the two shared the familiarity of former foes who had crossed paths in a previous adventure. After securing the Mortar’s friendship, Stuart was able to move on to the pressing matter of ratifying a land cession authorized by the Wolf of Muccolossus the

⁷⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 232.

⁷⁵ White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 74.

previous year. That the Creeks did, along with granting an additional allotment that extended from the northern shore of Pensacola Bay northwest to the town of Tensaw on the Alabama River. Smaller agreements were made and were almost identical to those made in Mobile.⁷⁶

Returning to Charlestown, Stuart soon had a new worry on his hands: backcountry settlers English frontiersmen were recklessly disregarding the Proclamation of 1763 (which prohibited settlement beyond the Appalachian Mountains) and bringing their rum with them. Stuart complained that South Carolina Governor William Bull had little intention of stopping either practice, avowing “no attention has been paid and as the Traders are not obliged to obey any orders I cannot remedy the evil nor prevent the bad consequences that may be expected from it.” Calling the frontiersmen “the lowest and worst part of the People,” Stuart expected the trouble the clashing of worlds would eventually bring.⁷⁷

George Johnstone agreed with Stuart, calling the trade of rum the “Primary Cause of all Mischief,” but thought that prohibiting its importation into Indian lands “would be in vain.” The mischief Johnstone was referring to was an uptick in Upper Creek restlessness. Small parties had begun to roam the frontier and attack English and Choctaw settlements. Johnstone had a solution to the problem: start a war between the two Indian nations. In November 1765, Johnstone wrote to Choctaw Commissary Elias Legardere, telling him, “it is even Proper to use every Means, which Wisdom can Suggest, and the Laws of Nations Permitt, to bring about a War between those two Nations of Indians.”⁷⁸ Johnstone was not alone in his sentiments. In 1764, Thomas Gage worriedly advised the Earl of Halifax:

Their Education and the whole Business of their Lives is War and Hunting, and it is not possible for us to divert that Active Spirit, Inherent in Them, as well as the

⁷⁶ John Stuart to Thomas Gage, 6 August 1765, The Papers of Thomas Gage, Clements Library, University of Michigan (hereinafter referred to as GAGE), American Series 40. Alden, *John Stuart*, 206-207.

⁷⁷ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 275-277.

⁷⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 291-292.

rest of Mankind, to Occupations which are more innocent and more Industrious. The Savage Nations therefore can never be a long Time at Peace, and if we have not Dexterity enough to turn this Rage for war from Ourselves, and direct it to other Objects; I fear we shall often feel the ill Effects of it.⁷⁹

The position of Gage and Johnstone stands in sharp contrast to the desires of their king, who wanted peace at all costs with the Indians, and hoped for a native *pax Americana*. In 1766, George expressed his displeasure with “the Policy of fomenting Wars among the several Indian Nations, and setting them at variance on every trivial Occasion,” believing it to be better policy for Indians to look upon the British as “their Friends and Protectors, and as the Arbiters of their Differences, rather than as a Party in their Quarrels.”⁸⁰

Johnstone certainly did not seem to care about his superiors’ viewpoints on Indian relations. In his mind, the only way to protect the Crown’s subjects was total war on the Creek confederacy. Stuart, with ever the cool head, chastised Johnstone for trying to take action without his consent. Backed by Gage, John Stuart believed it was possible to achieve peace in the Southeast through diplomacy, but also saw the wisdom in fomenting anti-Creek feelings among the other Indian nations. What separated Stuart and Johnstone was a fundamental difference the way they viewed the Creeks: Johnstone thought of them as inveterate enemies that should be immediately and permanently destroyed, while Stuart saw them as a people different than the British that were still worthy of negotiation with the crown.⁸¹ Regardless of Johnstone, Stuart, Gage, or even King George, war was coming.

⁷⁹ Gage to Halifax, 21 Jan 1764, Clarence Edwin Carter, Ed., *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763-1775, Volume I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 13.

⁸⁰ Shelburne to Gage, 11 December 1766, Clarence Edwin Carter, Ed., *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, and with the War Office and the Treasury 1763-1775* (hereinafter referred to as Gage Correspondence Volume II) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), 51.

⁸¹ Historian John Richard Alden variously described Johnstone as “fiery” and “pompous, quarrelsome, and cunning.” Alden, *John Stuart*, 225-226; John Richard Alden, *The South in the Revolution: 1763-1789* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 121.

In early 1765, Choctaw warriors killed two men from Tallapoosa. Following their customs, the Creeks retaliated by murdering a Choctaw.⁸² Creek warriors took another swing at the Choctaws while the latter was gathered at Mobile to meet with Stuart. Two Tombeckby men were killed and “a Woman and some Children” were kidnapped. While John Stuart tried to intervene, the Creeks refused to release the prisoners and instead sent back a peace belt of wampum to the Choctaws.⁸³ The following year, a Choctaw warrior named Suci Nantla was found scalped, with a warclub and a black bird’s wing placed beside the body in a clear challenge.⁸⁴ The Choctaws accepted.

There is no record why the Choctaws and Creeks chose this moment to return to war. Earlier interpretations argue that the main culprit for the hostility was the British, though a closer look at the timeline reveals this was not the case.⁸⁵ In 1765, Johnstone wrote to commissary Elias Legardere, “Your neighbors the Cusates [a Creek town] have likewise behaved with great Insolence and Injustice, and I heartily wish you could induce the Chactaws to Chastise them.” This hypothesis is given further credibility by a newspaper report from August 14, 1766, that stated a party of 200 Creek warriors had gone out to attack the Choctaws and had “strong Suspicions that the English have spirited up the Choctaws to break with them.”⁸⁶

However, Greg O’Brien warns of giving too much credit to direct English influence on the Choctaws. Choctaw-English diplomacy was in its infancy in the mid-1760s. The former French allies had just established a tenuous trading relationship with their new “fathers” that was

⁸² Milo B. Howard, Jr. and Robert R. Rea, ed., *The Memoire Justificatif of the Chevalier Montault de Monberaut: Indian Diplomacy in British West Florida, 1763-1765* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1965), 110; Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 25.

⁸³ Robinson, *North and South Carolina Treaties*, 221-224.

⁸⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 292-293; O’Brien, “Protecting Trade Through War”, 107.

⁸⁵ Alden, *The South in the Revolution*, 142.

⁸⁶ Robinson, *North and South Carolina Treaties*, 221-224; “Gage to Stuart,” cited in O’Brien, “Protecting Trade through War,” 106; *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 291-292; *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 14, 1766.

threatened by the violence of their own young men. Furthermore, the Choctaws' leadership in the best of days was loosely knit and had by the middle of the decade begun to show signs of serious strain. According to O'Brien, a war with the Creeks would provide Choctaw elites a way to, "bridge the growing generational breach with their young men," while protecting the trading system with their Anglo partner. This mindset seems to have been mirrored in Creek leadership as well. One Creek leader, Effatiskiniha, said that he led the first war party against the Choctaws so that relations with the English would not suffer. Effatiskiniha also stated that as soon as a Creek-Choctaw peace was reached he would break it again, because the young men needed to fight someone. Furthermore, the war-triggering murder of Suci Nantla occurred before Johnstone sent his message to Legardere, as the latter reported it to the former in his response.⁸⁷

By summer of 1766, the Creek-Choctaw War was well underway. What separated this new clash from blood feuds is that men of all three Choctaw divisions took the field against the Upper Creeks.

The Chactaws have sent a Challenge to Emistecigo, and say they have lost above twenty Men at different Times, which makes them send this Challenge, as they are sure the Creeks have killed them. The Chactaws say they will send 100 men to lye between Pansacola and the Upper Creeks to kill all they can find, and 100 men against the Woolf Kings Town [Muccolossus] to destroy it, and 100 more against Paucana Talahasa [Little Tallassee], and have reserved 500 in the Nation to guard the Women and Children, and told them that they would fight them in the Plains and not behind Trees like Cowards.⁸⁸

The magnitude of the Choctaw retaliation seems to have caught their adversaries off guard. Some Upper Creek leaders, such as Emistisiguo of Little Tallassee, questioned the onset of the war, and believed the British responsible. However, Governor Johnstone firmly rejected any notion of British intrigue, telling them the war was an answer to the war club left by Suci

⁸⁷ O'Brien, "Protecting Trade through War," 106-108; Robinson, *North and South Carolina Treaties*, 292-293.

⁸⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 297.

Nantla's body. Furthermore, he warned that Creek violence had best be left to Choctaws, or else the supply of munitions would be cut off.⁸⁹

Not everyone was convinced. Part of this was due to Elias Legardere and James Colbert, who had repeatedly encouraged the Choctaws to take to the hatchet. After defeating a party of Creeks near Pensacola, drunken Choctaws later boasted of English influence. That was enough for the Mortar, who upon learning of the braggarts cast off his English medals and set off to Cherokee country, where he hoped to build an anti-English coalition.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, Upper Creek towns responded by sending out a war party of 200 men to take enemy scalps.⁹¹ Creek headmen seemed pleased that the war was distracting their young men from harassing British citizens. The Wolf of Muccolossus told Johnstone, "Our young Men are now at War with the Chactaws which will give them full employment, and I am not sorry for it. It will keep them at Home and from doing Mischief to the white people." This was echoed by Molton (also called Topulga), a long-time friend to the English, who claimed that with the "full Exercise" offered by the new war the chiefs would be able to better govern their young men. Not everyone was so thrilled by the onset of war. The Koasatis, who were loosely affiliated with the Creeks, wanted none of it. Mico Tipoye met with Deputy Superintendent Charles Stuart to ask for his help in maintaining neutrality in the conflict. The lesser Stuart comforted the man by admitting the Creeks "have red Enemies enough" and that Tipoye was right to seek out the help of King George, though he promised nothing in return.⁹² Opportunities such as this were perfect for the British, who could rejoice in a war they hoped for, yet claim to abhor it and sow the seeds of disunion through a potential rival.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 296-299.

⁹⁰ Fletcher, "They Lived, They Fought," 41-42.

⁹¹ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 14, 1766.

⁹² Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 302-305.

If the Creek-Choctaw War had been successful in achieving British aims of preventing frontier violence, it certainly did not appear that way. Already smarting from the loss of the Hogg and Payne party, the British suffered the loss of two traders murdered late in 1766. The men, named Goodwin and Davis, met their demise at the hands of Creek warriors near Pensacola. Outraged, Governor Johnstone demanded retribution. Some of the Creek elders had already grown tired of the actions of their young men; the Wolf King of Muccolossus previously suggested something radical for a nation caught in a war with a bitter enemy: the British should cut off supplies to the Creeks:

I have considered what Means is necessary for Curbing and Humbling the Rebellious Set in our Nation, and find it is to be effected in no other Way than putting a Stop to the Trade for two Years. In that Time they will be so humble, that you may have any Satisfaction you choose to require, and they will use the Traders well, when you think proper to let them return.⁹³

The reaction out of West Florida was typical of George Johnstone, who believed the Creeks wanted war with England. In fact, this was the moment he had been waiting for. Johnstone had been pushing for a confrontation with the Creeks almost from the moment he arrived in Pensacola. Shortly after Suci Nantla's murder, he predicted that "this Province will be soon involved in a War with the Creeks," and advocated forming a militia. He later called upon Choctaw war hero the Red Captain to prepare for "any Stroke against the Creeks," before asking the Choctaws to "Chastise" their neighbors. The governor confided to John Stuart that the new war was the perfect opportunity to destroy the Creeks. With the murder of Goodwin and Davis, he finally had a motive. Johnstone called for an army of 3,000 British regular troops, along with

⁹³ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 11, 1766; *The Newport Mercury*, January 12-19, 1767; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 20.

the “whole Force” of Choctaws and Chickasaws to torch the lands of the Upper and Lower Creeks.⁹⁴This was his undoing.

George Johnstone’s pomposity was already wearing thin with Thomas Gage by late 1766. “His Majesty’s Orders seem very well understood everywhere but in West-Florida,” he lamented, “where I have at Times been obliged to send some specific Orders, to prevent the Service being confounded, and a Subversion of all Order and Discipline.” Gage believed England could not afford a war with the Creeks due to the relative weakness of Georgia and South Carolina. Furthermore, the murder of two traders, hardly seemed a justification for war. Wrote Gage,

I don’t Conceive, that the Circumstance of two Traders being killed, is a sufficient Reason to enter immediately upon an expensive and unprofitable War with the Savages; in such Case, our Indian Wars could have no End: It often happens that People are killed by disorderly Indians, and frequently thro’ their own Faults; and the Action disavowed by the Nation the Indians belong to, who upon serious and proper Representations made to them by the Superintendant, give Satisfaction for any rash Action their People have committed.⁹⁵

Gage doubted the murders were on the orders of anyone in the Creek nation, being as they were already embroiled with the Choctaws. He also refused to recall the traders, fearful that might be seen as an act of war. Johnstone, however, was recalled by Lord Shelburne in early 1767, who was tired of his war-mongering. In his place was named the decidedly more pacific Montfort Browne. To deal with the mini-crisis, Stuart instead showed remarkable diplomatic skills by sending a special envoy, Robert McIntosh, to the Upper Creeks who demanded the murderers face justice. Stuart then reassured the Creeks that he wanted peace with them but

⁹⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 282-296; Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 255-256; Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 46-47.

⁹⁵ Carter, *Gage Correspondence*, Volume I, 28-29, 42-43, 115-117.

reminded his counterparts that he was prepared to surround Creek towns and burn them to the ground.⁹⁶

Already entangled with one foe, Upper Creek leaders could not gain another. Emistisiguo called together fourteen Tallapoosa leaders and two men from the lower towns. Together, the congress agreed the murderer must be punished. Otaseky, a relative of the murderer, performed the execution, and showed the body to the English. As David Corkran has noted, it was the first time in over a decade that any Creek had been executed for the death of an Englishman.⁹⁷ Quick Creek compliance regarding the deaths of Goodwin and Davis reveals just how desperate the Creek leaders were to maintain trade with the British. However, the unresolved murders of the Hogg-Payne party, combined with a Creek raid on frontier horses and Johnstone's negative feelings towards the Creeks kept the relationship cool until summer 1767.

With the crisis averted, Creek leaders could focus once more on carrying the war to the Black Warrior River valley. The Creeks caught their enemies in a precarious position, as the Choctaws lacked the ability to fight off a full-scale assault. This was because by 1766 the British had yet to fully establish trade lines into Choctaw country, and the Indians there lacked guns and munitions. In July, Chulustamastabe (Red Shoes) asked Deputy Charles Stuart for help, claiming, "You must not let one Child kill another, nor give one Powder, and the other none. It grieves me to see the Creeks come and take away our Scalps with Impunity." The Red Captain also visited Stuart a couple of weeks later, and pleaded for ammunition: "for want of it, I may have my Head cut off in my own Town, and not be able to help myself."⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Alden, *John Stuart*, 227-229.

⁹⁷ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 257.

⁹⁸ Fletcher, "They Lived; They Fought," 48-49.

In October, the *South Carolina Gazette* reported, “the war between the Choctahs and the Creek Indians continued to be carried on with the utmost inveteracy; that hitherto the former had lost the most men; but it was thought they would in the end prove too powerful for the Creeks.”⁹⁹ The commentary proved to be stunningly accurate. Resupplied with English weapons, the Choctaws scored a series of victories against their rivals. Near the Creek town of Abicoochie, they encountered a scalping party and killed one man and took another four prisoner. In December, a combined Choctaw-Chickasaw war party defeated the Mortar, though the Okchai leader escaped. Finally, the Koasatis fled to Pensacola after repeated Choctaw attacks.¹⁰⁰

The tides quickly turned. A battle took place over the winter of 1766-1767 when two large war parties accidentally collided in the woods. The Creeks suffered twelve men killed, yet managed to kill “several” Choctaws and took six prisoners.¹⁰¹ With the victory, Emistisiguo rejected John Stuart’s offer to mediate an end to the war and Upper Creek warriors took to the offensive. In May, a Creek war party surrounded twenty-five Choctaws, killing ten, and taking one prisoner. The prisoner was a special prize for the Creeks, being the brother of a Choctaw headman. According to custom, he was tortured “in the most cruel manner,” before being burnt alive. That action, claimed the *New-York Gazette*, “destroyed every appearance of pacification taking place.”¹⁰² The Creeks continued. In September, they took four scalps near the shore of Lake Ponchartain, and killed six men near the town of Yoanie, the closest settlement to Mobile, while losing only a single warrior.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *South Carolina Gazette*, October 20, 1766-October 27, 1766.

¹⁰⁰ Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 53-55; *The New-York Gazette*, January 26, 1767-February 2, 1767.

¹⁰¹ *The Newport Mercury*, March 30, 1767-April 6, 1767.

¹⁰² *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 9, 1767; *The New-York Gazette*, August 3, 1767; Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 58-59.

¹⁰³ *The New-York Gazette*, December 14, 1767.

800 Choctaw men soon appeared at Tombeckby, Pensacola and Mobile requesting supplies. The British knew that the Choctaws began their deer hunting season in the fall, however, and urged the Choctaws to fight the Creeks instead. However, it was apparent that many Choctaws had grown “Sick of the War.”¹⁰⁴ The Red Captain called to his kinsmen, telling them that the pride of the Choctaw nation was at stake and that “it was part of brave warriors to keep awake, and not dream like old women.” He would go alone if he had to, but trusted that his townsmen would not forsake him. The Red Captain was successful in recruiting forty-two followers, and they set out for Emistisiguo’s home of Little Tallassee, where they “put every Woman & Child to death.”¹⁰⁵

The Red Captain’s victory was short-lived. Tipped off by Englishman Robin Hannah, Emistisiguo gathered 160 warriors intent on revenge and prepared an ambush. Joining him were two of the greatest warriors in the Creek confederacy: Duval’s Landlord and Molton. The Choctaws walked right into the trap, where “a fierce little woods fight ensued.” The smaller party never had a chance. The Choctaws fought until they ran out of ammunition, and then resorted to hand-to-hand combat using war clubs and tomahawks. Their Creek foes would later claim, “the Choctaws behaved with great bravery.” Foremost among them was the Red Captain, who supposedly killed thirteen warriors and fought on his knees before being taken captive. Their leader subdued, and out of bullets, the Choctaw warriors faced an encircling foe who pounced upon them with hatchets, knives, darts, and clubs. Twenty-five men died and two men were taken prisoner, including the Red Captain. One man escaped; the headman was not so

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 321; “Abstract of a Letter from Charles Stuart Esq.,” 29 October 1767, GAGE, American Series, Volume 72.

fortunate. “They flea’d [flayed] him alive and tortured him most inhumanely,” before setting him ablaze. Red Captain’s Great Medal was returned post mortem to the English by his rivals.¹⁰⁶

The battle was a huge loss for the Choctaws. They lost twenty-six brave warriors, including the Red Captain and his son. The Creeks also suffered casualties. The ferocity of combat claimed ten lives, including Molton and the Okfuskee King. But these losses extended far beyond the battlefield. Both the Red Captain and Molton were especially close to the English and served as brokers for each of their respective nations. James Adair mourned the Red Captain, referring to him as “Our gallant friend.” Charles Stuart exclaimed that he was “heartily sorry for the red Captain, as we lost a good friend and his Enemies at Orleans and in the Nation will exult.” A Massachusetts newspaper told its readers the Red Captain was “one of our fastest friends in that nation.” His death sent shockwaves through the British administration. Even Thomas Gage felt the loss, and the general confided to John Stuart, “We are unlucky in losing so good a Friend as the red Captain amongst a People where we have so few staunch friends.” Molton had saved the life of Edmund Atkin in 1759 and was also grieved for by the English, who claimed he was “another good friend of ours.”¹⁰⁷ It is difficult to gauge exactly how much losing the Red Captain and Molton meant, not to their nations, but to the English. The Anglo-Choctaw relationship was still in its infancy in late 1767, and many Indians still leaned towards French remnants in New Orleans. His was a friendly voice amongst a cacophony of dissention. Molton’s loss was probably not as devastating to the English, though Stuart needed every man he

¹⁰⁶ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 320-321; *The Massachusetts Gazette*, December 24, 1767; Hewett to McGillivray & Struthers, 16 October 1767, GAGE American Series 71; “Abstract of a Letter from Charles Stuart Esq.,” 29 October 1767, GAGE, American Series, Volume 72; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 340, 348; Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 264-265. Fletcher claims the Red Captain’s original party was much larger, but many turned back after receiving an omen in the form of a nightmare. Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 60-62.

¹⁰⁷ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 321; Abstract of a Letter from Charles Stuart Esq. 29 October 1767, GAGE American Series 72; Gage to Stuart, 26 January 1768, GAGE American Series 73; *The Massachusetts Gazette*, December 24, 1767. For Molton’s heroics in saving Atkin, see Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 206.

could get to counter the Mortar, who was constantly on the verge of leading an insurrection against the British. Neither man was easily replaced, and the loss of each meant Stuart's men would have to work that much harder to develop friendly relationships.

While war with the Choctaws kept Upper Creek men from raiding English settlements, the same could not be said of their Lower Creek kinsmen. By late 1767, Lower Creek men were a serious threat to frontier farms and villages, and the British response would have repercussions throughout the entire confederacy. Over the summer, Lower Creeks and Georgians took turns harassing one another and stealing livestock near the Oconee settlement, which ultimately prompted an apology from Governor James Wright.¹⁰⁸ Later, a group of "Creeks of Alletcheway" (Seminoles) crossed the St. Mary's River into East Florida, and killed nine crackers, including three children. The murders were in retaliation for whippings delivered by the pioneers onto the Indians for horse thievery. The escapade sent the region into a panic and "occasioned the settlers leaving their plantations."¹⁰⁹ The attacks were symptomatic of the dwindling frontier between Creeks and colonists. As to the restlessness between the people, Upper Creek mico Sallichie questioned John Stuart, "Whenever the Virginia people are told by our people that they are over the line & if they don't keep in the bounds they will burn their houses, they make answer they will burn the Governors house over his head. If the Governor cannot Keep these Virginia People under, how can we Keep our people under?"¹¹⁰

This was a question that long vexed Thomas Gage, who warned Lord Halifax in 1765, "If those People can't be kept within their Boundary's, and forced into a Subjection to the Laws, we must expect that Quarells will be renewed with the Indians."¹¹¹ The problem in Gage's

¹⁰⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 36-39.

¹⁰⁹ *The Georgia Gazette*, September 30, 1767; Carter, *Gage Correspondence Volume I*, 158.

¹¹⁰ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 40.

¹¹¹ Carter, *Gage Correspondence Volume I*, 59.

mind was that the recent victories scored by the Upper Creeks against the Choctaws had made the entire nation to be carried with “very high pitch of arrogance.” Recent victories only made the Creeks more hostile, thought Gage, so a new strategy was in order. If the Choctaws were unable to check their rivals, perhaps assistance could be recruited. To do so meant turning to the most unlikely of Choctaw allies.

CHAPTER 4

A LITTLE REVERSE OF FORTUNE

1767 ended with the Creeks firmly in control of the war with the Choctaws, and everyone knew it. “The war between the Creeks and Chactaws is carryed on with great rancor by the former nation,” reported John Stuart, “while the Latter seem to be greatly dispirited, they are badly supplied with ammunition, and not united in their sentiments.”¹¹² Desperate, the Choctaws hoped to bring the British directly into the war with the Creeks. Before his death, the Red Captain told James Adair of a plan he had concocted. Understanding that the Creeks had recently killed colonists, Choctaw elders intended to kill even more settlers in their own country and pin the deaths on their native enemies. Doing so, Adair reported, “would certainly obtain that favourite point they had long wished for, of drawing us [the British] into an alliance with them against the common enemy, as we must have some of the inward feelings of men for our lost people.” Fortunately for nearby colonists and traders, Adair persuaded the Red Captain out of the plan.¹¹³ Still, a growing consensus emerged that the Choctaws badly needed assistance to bring the Creeks to peace talks.

British leadership was reluctant to directly intervene in the Creek-Choctaw War. For one thing, the British military lacked the manpower to carry an assault into Creek villages. What few troops stationed in West Florida were far more busy combatting disease and infection than Indians. Furthermore, General Gage was under orders to keep costs down in North America, and simply could not afford another expensive Indian war.¹¹⁴ But if the British could not come to the

¹¹² Stuart to Gage, 26 December 1767, GAGE American Series 73.

¹¹³ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 312.

¹¹⁴ In December of 1765, Gage reported that nearly 100 men of the 31st Regiment at Pensacola had died since their arrival. The deaths were reported to be due to the extreme heat of the region and the appearance of a bilious

rescue, then perhaps the Choctaws' oldest enemy could. In August of 1767, Gage advised Lord Shelburne, "The Creeks and Chactaws are warmly engaged against each other, but the former have hitherto been most successfull in the War; which has so elated them, that they can't yet be brought to accept any Mediation: A little Reverse of Fortune would make them More inclined to Peace, and they seem very averse to a Rupture with the Chikesaws."¹¹⁵

It is difficult to overemphasize how unlikely a Choctaw-Chickasaw alliance was in 1768. Relations between the two nations had only thawed in the previous four years. For, as bitter enemies as the Choctaws and Creeks were, there was even greater animosity between the Choctaws and Chickasaws. Located in present-day northern Mississippi, between the Yazoo and Tombigbee rivers, the Chickasaws numbered only around 1,600 individuals in the 1760s. They claim to have emerged at Nanih Waiya and with the Choctaws, "came together from the west as one family."¹¹⁶ The family was dysfunctional, at best. Despite sharing the same language base and kinship system, Chickasaw warriors were prime slave raiders of Choctaw towns in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Part of this may have been due to the nature of Chickasaw society, which appears to have placed a greater emphasis on martial abilities than any other group in the southeast. One Frenchman noted, "The men have regular features, well shaped

fever, crowded conditions and the lack of a hospital. While Mobile had not been hit as hard, Gage stated that previous experience showed that the epidemic would last longer there. Mobile was thought to be in an unhealthier region, "being Situated in a wet Soil, near the Conflux of the fresh and Salt Waters." Gage to Conway, 21 December 1765, Carter, Gage Correspondence Vol. I, 75-76. Gage was under constant pressure to keep expenses to a minimum in North America. The costs associated in Pontiac's War ended Amherst's tenure and Gage wanted to avoid the experience of his predecessor. As a result, he found himself frequently updating his superiors on the finances associated with keep the Indian departments running smoothly. On April 4, 1767, he advised Lord Shelburne, "The making up of old Quarells, the taking Possession of New Countrys, where it was Necessary to conciliate the Affection of Strange Indians, who had great Suspitions of our Intentions, and Jealousy of our Power, would Naturally [*sic*] occasion them to be so: And tho' I hope many Expences before incurred may now be retrenched, yet I fear those Departments will be always a heavy Charge." Gage to Shelburne, 4 April 1767, Carter, Gage Correspondence Volume I, 129.

¹¹⁵ Gage to Stuart, 26 January 1768, GAGE American Series 73.

¹¹⁶ Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South," 92-99; Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 354.

and neatly dressed; they are fierce, and have high a high opinion of themselves.” Another claimed “The Chickasaws are tall, well made, and of an unparalleled courage.” Thomas Nairne compared Chickasaws to Creeks, claiming, “Chickasaws are to the Talapoosies as men of Quality among us are to the peasants, look much more brisk, airy, and full of life...; add to that both sexes of the Chickasaws are proper handsom people, exceeding the others.”¹¹⁷ Chickasaw bloodlust was so powerful that they gained a reputation as the most capable warriors on the continent, but it came at a great cost. By 1702, they were said to have lost 800 warriors in battle. Chickasaws bragged that they had “only to beat drums in our cabins” to make the Choctaws flee. The drums were loud in the early eighteenth century. Due to their relative lack of size, the Chickasaws could only conduct lightning raids against enemy targets, but were phenomenally successful. In 1706, the Chickasaws presented the English with three hundred Choctaw slaves and continued to harass their neighbors, despite being outnumbered. But the latter group found solace with the French, who after a brief courtship period, decided to destroy the Chickasaws. They failed. For over fifty years the Franco-Choctaw alliance attacked the villages to the north, but were repeatedly repulsed, albeit at great costs to the Chickasaws. The Chickasaws explained to the English that the French tried “to persuade all the nations to dip their hands in our blood.” Jean-Bernard Bossu reported in 1759 that “All the northern and the southern tribes, as well as the French, have waged war against them without being able to drive them from their lands.” Some of the nation tired of the assaults, and withdrew to Cherokee country in the 1750s. Another found solace in Creek territory, at a site called Breed Camp. But most continued their struggle against the French and Choctaws until 1763.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2004), 12-13.

¹¹⁸ Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 214-219; Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 171-72, 219;

Impending trouble with the Creeks may have been the reason the British chose to meet with the Chickasaws and Choctaws at Mobile in 1763 and 1765. Instead of inviting Creek delegates to the conferences, the British chose to meet with them only at Pensacola. It is apparent that the British could handle warming relations between two parties, but not all three. Furthermore, if the Choctaws were going to be brought into the British fold, it made more sense for the Chickasaws to be their ushers. If the Choctaws were George III's prodigal sons, then the Chickasaws were like the son "who had been from his Infancy dutyfull and had by that Means Merited his Paternal Tenderness and care by which he was Preserved and defended from Numberless Surrounding Dangers."¹¹⁹ While they had fought on and off for the greater part of a century, certain camps emerged in each nation friendly to the other. The newfound glad tidings between the Choctaws and Chickasaws were cemented in Mobile on April 27, 1765. There, Chickasaw headman Paya Mataha addressed his kinsmen:

[Y]ou will consider that I am a warrior & not accustomed to make Long Speeches. You will therefore not expect a fine Speech from me. My Younger Brothers: The Talks we have heard at this meeting have determined me to Speak to you in a friendly manner. I shall not therefore call to mind old affairs. Let what is pas[t] be buried in Oblivion, & Let us only now think of what is to Come. Some of you were always my Friends & supported the Interest of the English in your Nation. The Red Captain & Chulustamastabe were of the Same Sentiments with me, they went to Visit the English & the Treatment they received confirmed their Attachment to me, for it was by my advice that they undertook they Journey at the Risque of their Lives yet they did not repent of having performed it. While the French were in this Land division and Discord reigned in your Country, you fought and killed each other; but now look around & See Peace and Plenty; You are all Children of one Family & have but one Father, who admonishes & orders you to Live in Unity & Love each other. Let us now return to our Village hand in hand rejoicing & carrying with us the Presents of our Elder Brothers.¹²⁰

Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 28-29; John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 178-179.

¹¹⁹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 236.

¹²⁰ Note here that Paya Mataha refers to the Choctaws as his "Younger Brothers." According to custom, the older brothers were responsible for teaching and protecting their siblings. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 90.

The Choctaws tested their new friendship early in the war by asking the Chickasaws to enter against the Creeks. However, the Chickasaws refused, telling their kinsmen to avenge those they had lost, but they would not raise the hatchet.¹²¹ Within two years, those sentiments changed, and Chickasaw warriors were ready to take to the warpath. In January of 1768, a war party surprised a body of Creek hunters near the Coosa River. The Creeks lost ten men, along with another eleven wounded. It was an absolute shock to Upper Creek leadership, and the reaction demonstrated the autonomy of the villages in the Creek confederacy. Emistisiguo of Little Tallassee, quickly rising in the hierarchy, immediately dispatched an envoy to sue for peace with the Chickasaws. At the same time, there were “several of the upper Towns setting out to War against them.”¹²²

Perhaps the “Reverse of Fortune” Gage hoped for should not be a surprise. In 1775, Adair described the belligerent parties, claiming the Creeks were known “to be an over-match for the numerous and fickle Choktah, the few warlike Chikkasah, being put in the scale with these, would in a few years, have made the Muskohge kick the beam.”¹²³ But what can explain why the Chickasaws chose not to fight the Creeks in 1766, yet combat them two years later? In 1983, Debra Lynne Fletcher suggested it was due to the deaths of six Chickasaws that Creeks mistakenly took for Choctaws.¹²⁴ Fletcher’s hypothesis, while strong, lacked nuance, and failed to account for the full scope of Chickasaw motivations.

Not coincidentally, the Creeks considered themselves the older brothers of both the Choctaws and the Chickasaws. Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 191n52.

¹²¹ Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 44.

¹²² McIntosh to Stuart, 8 February 1768, GAGE American Series 75; *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 17, 1768; *Boston Evening-Post*, March 28, 1768; Carter, Gage Correspondence Vol. I, 170.

¹²³ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 282.

¹²⁴ Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 62-63. For an account of the attack, see *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 10, 1768. An alternate account that five Chickasaws were slain. *Boston Evening-Post*, March 28, 1768.

It is likely that Chickasaws decided to join the fray after years of being frustrated by Creek domination of trade routes into Chickasaw territory. In the eighteenth century, the dominant Indian trade item in the south was the skin of a whitetail deer. Indian hunters labored hard in the fall and especially winter to procure the skins in order to obtain European valuables, such as clothing, blankets, rum, guns, shot, and powder. The latter items were especially important as many Indians drifted away from traditional weapons like the bow and arrow in favor of French and English muskets. Southeastern nations needed the weapons to make war on one another, but even more importantly, provide protein for their families and ensure their survival. Claudio Saunt calculated that a Creek hunter needed to fell fourteen deer each year just to sustain the hunt, which may have been more than half of his annual harvest. That paid for five pounds of shot and twelve pounds of powder. Any additional skins would have gone towards shirts, blankets and axes. Chickasaw hunters were at a distinct disadvantage in that they were far removed from the English, which made their trade prices higher by over a third. Higher prices reduced the amount of goods a man could obtain, and proportionately weakened Chickasaw hunters versus their southeastern kinsmen.¹²⁵

Furthering the problem was that prior to 1763 the only English paths to Chickasaw territory ran right through Creek country. The Upper Path began at Charleston and ran to Augusta, crossed the Ogeechee, Oconee, Ocmulgee, Flint, Chattahoochee, and Tallapoosa rivers on its way to Okfuskee and then moved on to the Chickasaw and Choctaw towns. The Lower Path crossed the waterways on its way to Coweta and Cusseta before hitting Tuckabatchee and Fort Toulouse. From there it connected with a path leading to the ports at Mobile and Pensacola. The paths were tortuous. It could take nearly a month to make it from Augusta to Little

¹²⁵ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 223; Peter A. Brannon, "The Pensacola Indian Trade," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 31, No. 1 (Jul., 1952): 5-9.

Tallassee, and almost two weeks from Pensacola to Muccolossus. From there, the path only got rougher. James Adair placed Chickasaw towns three hundred miles from Upper Creek villages, down “a very mountainous winding path” (figure 3).¹²⁶

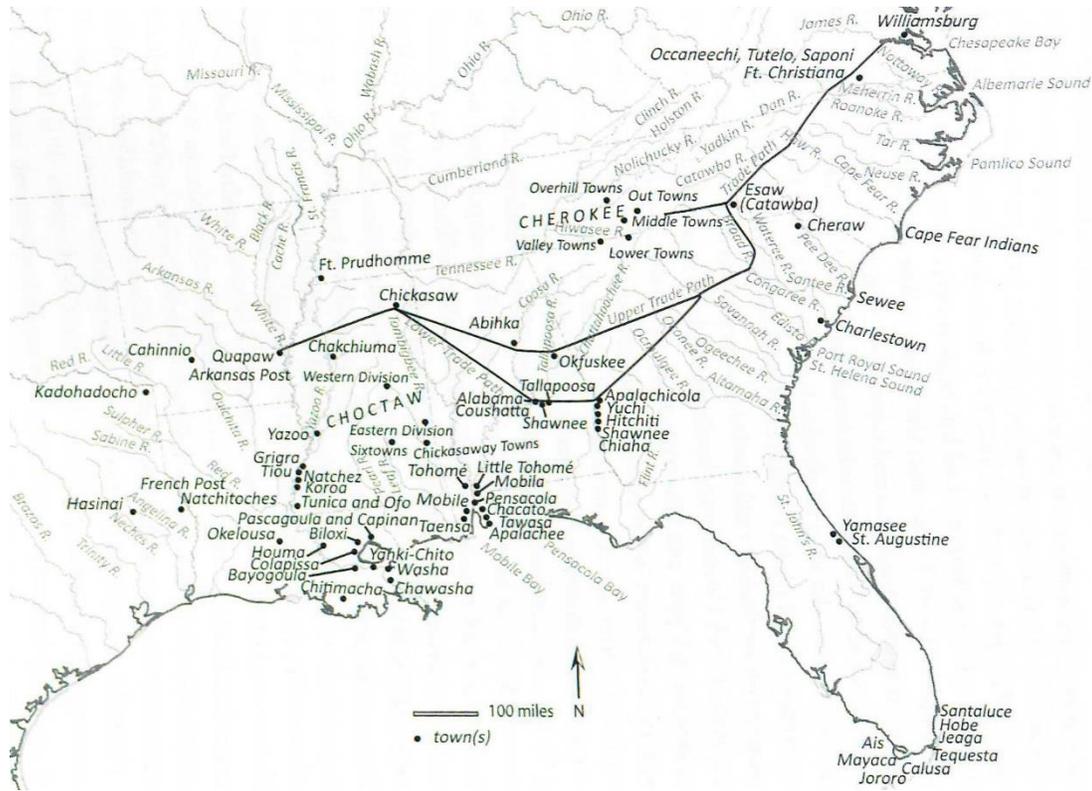


Figure 3. Upper and Lower Trading Paths through the Southeast. Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 245.

Guarding that path were Creek warriors, at liberty to rob British traders bound for Chickasaw towns. In 1756, some Upper Creeks threatened to raise the hatchet against the Chickasaws and destroy the trading path into their lands. Trader Jerome Courtonne told his Chickasaw patrons that “in Case some Creeks should make War with us and stop the Path, I would go to the C[h]erokees and open a Path for them there.” His clients were not concerned, and obstinately refused to reroute, claiming, “we shall never be obliged to take no round about

¹²⁶ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815*, Second Edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 90-92; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 153; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 354.

Path to go and see our Friends, the English.”¹²⁷ Still, Chickasaw leadership was prohibited from taking action against Creek marauders due to the British policy of discouraging allies from warring against one another. Instead, Chickasaw frustration was often loosed south against the Choctaws, or northward against Shawnees, Kickapoos, Kaskaskias, or Osages.

British policy changed with the demise of the French in 1763. No longer were the Chickasaws needed to fight Francophile Indians; though Francophile Indian factions were still targeted. Such was the case in 1764 when Chickasaw warriors, prompted by the British, murdered two of his brothers, one of whom they mistook for the Okchai headman.¹²⁸ Furthermore, the Mortar had often threatened to cut off trade along the Upper Path, which made him an enemy along the Tombigbee and Yazoo rivers. But the Chickasaws were prevented from taking a more aggressive action by a dust-up with the Cherokees in 1766.¹²⁹ Two years later, the timing was right. No longer prevented, but actually encouraged by the British, angry over decades of Creek interference with colonial trade, and steaming with anger over the deaths of their kinsmen, Chickasaw warriors struck hard enough at Upper Creek towns to dramatically shift the fortunes of the war.

Creek headmen, unaccustomed to such losses, were forced to scramble. Hoping for success, Upper Creek headmen called back war parties destined for enemy territory.¹³⁰ While Emistisiguo approached Stuart, beads were also sent to the Cherokees, who they hoped would enter the war on their behalf in case negotiations failed. This greatly concerned Stuart, who

¹²⁷ Robert Paulett, *An Empire of Small Places: Mapping the Southeastern Anglo-Indian Trade, 1732-1795* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 119. In 1763, Okfuskees carefully guarded the path to Chickasaw lands to keep it from being plundered, even by other Creeks. Piker, *Okfuskee*, 122.

¹²⁸ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 523n99.

¹²⁹ Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 23. Swanton mistakenly placed the battle at Chickasaw Old Fields in 1769. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, 179

¹³⁰ *South Carolina Gazette*, June 27, 1768.

worried “such an addition of Strength would render them [the Creeks] too powerful and they are already the most insolent Tribe in this District.”¹³¹ He quickly decided to prevent any such alliance. Furthermore, in order to prevent the Mortar from forming a pan-Indian alliance, he determined that any peace brokered between the Creeks and the Choctaws/Chickasaws had to be mediated by himself.¹³²

The Mortar refused to be undone by Stuart, or Emistisiguo. “Animated with a bitter resentment against any thing transacted by any of the British nation,” he attempted to thwart British peace mediations. In May, he set out with 83 men to within 150 miles of Chickasaw territory. There he dispatched “seven of the staunchest to surprize and kill whomsoever they could.” The men took the scalps of two women they found working in the fields. Adair gave a violent description of their demise: “As soon as the skulking barbarians had discharged the contents of their guns into the innocent victims, they tomohawked them, and with their long sharp knives, took off the scalps, put up the death *whoo-whoop-whoop*, and bounded away in an oblique course, to shun the dreaded pursuit.” Hearing the gunshots, sixty Chickasaw men took off on horseback. Four warriors caught up with the Creeks, shooting dead the Mortar’s brother, claiming his scalp and retaking the woman’s hairpiece attached to his girdle. Fleeing for their lives, the remaining Creek men escaped by hiding in a swamp.¹³³

The Mortar’s actions worked. Volleys of gunfire between the Indians buzzed through the woods like hornets from a nest. On July 19, 1768, the *New-York Gazette* reported “that all the men in the [Creek] Upper-Towns able to bear Arms, were gone and going out against a Body of Choctaws and Chickesaws [*sic*], which formed the largest Army of Indians ever remembered to

¹³¹ Stuart quoted in Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 69.

¹³² Braund, ed., *History of the American Indians*, 523n299.

¹³³ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 284-285.

have been seen in the Southern District.”¹³⁴ Shortly thereafter, a Choctaw war party torched Pucknatalahasa, an important Upper Creek town and home of Duval’s Landlord. Creek villagers suffered multiple killed and six others taken prisoner. This attack spawned yet more war parties from Upper Creek towns, who sought vengeance for kinsmen’s souls who were crying blood. Emistisiguo bitterly complained to John Stuart that the Choctaws were “Mad” to continue the war. “It is not merely on my own Account that I want a Peace,” the headman exclaimed, “but for the good of the Traders and Merchants, and that We may follow our Hunting. They are killing our People and Burning our Towns.” Emistisiguo asked the Superintendent to intercede by calling back the traders from Choctaw and Chickasaw lands, so that the war might be ended. In private, Stuart had no intention of bringing the nations to peace. He had previous opportunities to allow a truce but had broken them up. In an August 22, 1768, letter to General Thomas Gage, Stuart wrote, “I do not wish to see their differences made up without our mediation.” His plan seemed to be working: British traders were doing big business supplying the belligerent nations with arms and munitions, and the war was preventing any of the three parties from joining anti-English alliances.¹³⁵

The Upper Creeks sent the Second Man of Little Tallassee (Nealatchko) to Augusta in November to personally address Stuart. There he again requested that “the Trade be withdrawn from their [Choctaw] Country.” But the Second Man was the only Upper Creek at the Congress, and he was opposed by hundreds of Lower Creeks, who claimed trade stoppages “has never been the Custom when two Nations in friendship with us [the British] are at War with each other.” That the Lower Creeks refused to back Uppers’ pleas is worthy of consideration. Their kinsmen

¹³⁴ *The New-York Gazette*, July 19, 1768.

¹³⁵ Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 70-73; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 46, 344-346; *The Newport Mercury*, March 30, 1767.

were in the midst of a tremendous fight against the Choctaw-Chickasaw coalition. Yet, not only did they not send war parties to their aid, but they flatly rebuked an action that would have significantly helped their kinsmen. It is likely they were wary of setting a precedent where the British became the arbiters of wars solely between indigenous rivals. Their actions at the Augusta conference gives credence to why the French considered the Upper and Lower Creeks as two distinct peoples. Stuart seized on the moment to remind the Upper Creeks that he refused to cut off the trade to them when the Choctaws made the same request. “My good advice to both Nations shall not be wanting,” Stuart wrote to Emistisiguo and the Mortar, “but I cannot with any Justice propose to the Governors stopping a Supply of Ammunition to either Nation.”¹³⁶

Stuart was a busy man in late 1768. While he was consumed entertaining Creek and Cherokee audiences in Augusta, developing events far to the north threatened to further destabilize the region. Earlier in the year, Superintendent of Northern Indian Affairs Sir William Johnson mediated a peace between the Six Nations Iroquois (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Tuscarora, and Mohawk) and the Cherokees, who had quarreled for over forty years. It was hoped by the Mortar and feared by Stuart that the new-found peace in Cherokee country would enable them to join against the Choctaws, though this was unlikely. While the Mortar had some pull in the nation, many were still fuming about Creek murders at Long Canes, which was solidly in Cherokee country. Furthermore, the nation was wary about an alliance with the Creeks, who promised to assist them in their war against the English in 1760 and 1761, but left them to suffer British retribution.¹³⁷ As a whole, the Cherokees had little incentive to wage war against the Choctaws. War against the British, however, was a different story.

¹³⁶ Juricek, “*Georgia and Florida Treaties*,” 344-345; *Georgia Gazette*, November 30, 1768.

¹³⁷ Tyler Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation: Town, Region, and Nation among Eighteenth-Century Cherokees* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 134-136.

In addition to mediating a Cherokee-Iroquois peace, Johnson met with over 3,000 Indians in the fall at Fort Stanwix, New York. His chief interest was securing a land cession from the Iroquois, something that he achieved when the British received a large tract of land south of the Ohio River, which made up most of present-day Kentucky and West Virginia. The problem for Stuart was that the Iroquois had only a nominal claim to the acreage, as bands of Shawnees and Delawares lived in the area, and the Cherokees claimed it as their hunting ground. Making matters worse was that in October Stuart informed the Cherokees the British would honor their claims to the land, but was overruled by Gage, who was fearful of upsetting the Iroquois. The British about-face greatly upset many Cherokees, who listened more closely to the Mortar's alliance talks. But in 1768, the Cherokees were simply not in a position to engage anyone. Their nation, ravaged by bouts with the Iroquois and smallpox, was desperate to rebuild. For the time being, the Cherokees were staying put.¹³⁸

1769 saw Chickasaw war parties disengage from the struggle. No solid evidence exists as to exactly why they fought for such a short time in the war, but it is likely they were concerned with attacks from outside the region, such as from the Kaskaskias and Illinois, with whom they were sporadically engaged.¹³⁹ Between the Creeks and Choctaws, the war carried on. A report appeared in the *Georgia Gazette* claiming that the Creeks had headed out with over 1,400 men in various war parties, none having less than two hundred men per party. According to the report,

¹³⁸ Ibid., 143-144; Fintan O'Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 273-274. The Cherokees were in a serious plight by the 1760s. Half of them were killed by smallpox in 1738, and the disease struck twice more in the 1750s and 1760. They were aware of their peril. Headman Ostenaco said in 1763, "Our women are breeding Children night and Day to increase our People." Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, 37. While the Iroquois claims were not as strong as others, they were certainly still valid to them. In fact, the name "Kentucky" is a northern Iroquoian term for "at the prairie." Michael McCafferty, *Native American Place Names of Indiana* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 250n1. For Fort Stanwix treaty negotiations, see Peter Marshall, "Sir William Johnson and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, 1768," *Journal of American Studies* 1, no. 2 (Oct., 1967): 149-179.

¹³⁹ Journal of Transactions and Presents Given to Indians from 23 December 1768 to 1772 March 12, Enclosure in John Wilkins to Gage June 1, 1772, GAGE Reports and Journals, Volume 138.

the Creeks had rebounded from their earlier losses, and were killing Choctaws at a three to one ratio. Another report, by one Abraham Norman, stated that 170 Choctaws led by Coosamahaw had recently ambushed 70 Creeks, killing or capturing all but three, who swam to safety. Another account published in *The New-York Journal* placed Creek losses in the battle at seven, not 70. Emistisiguo later led an assault force of 160 men against his foes, suffering only three dead with another eighteen to twenty unaccounted for.¹⁴⁰

In May, the Mortar unexpectedly sent word to Stuart apologizing that his heart had recently been “cross and black” as a result of the war. The Mortar claimed he felt it was inappropriate to meet with the superintendent the previous year in Augusta “with a Black Heart.” He asked instead if Stuart could meet with him in September to “brighten the Chain of Friendship.”¹⁴¹ This was good news for Stuart, who was under pressure from his superiors in Whitehall to establish a new boundary line with the Creeks. He had previously attempted to do so with Emistisiguo, but was rebuffed by the headman. “Last Winter a Talk was sent [to] me about running the Line. There is at present a little black Cloud [that] Hangs over our Heads, but it will soon blow away,” Emistisiguo responded. “They Land will not rott,” he assured Stuart, “...but when it is Clear, the Headmen will show the Governor of Pensacola where the Line Runs.” Unfortunately for Stuart, the black cloud Emistisiguo referred to showed little chance of brightening. A talk from the headmen and warriors of the Upper Creeks in August declared, “We long ago gave them [the Choctaws] offers of Peace which they Rejected, nor do we intend ever making any offers of Peace to them again.”¹⁴² At the meeting to which the Mortar proposed, which in October, gathered 200 Creeks and Cherokees. Stuart had little luck in getting his

¹⁴⁰ *Georgia Gazette*, May 31, 1769; *The New-York Journal*, July 13, 1769; Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 78.

¹⁴¹ The Mortar quoted in Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 80.

¹⁴² Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 348-349.

boundary line established, but the presence of both Emistisiguo and the Mortar went a long way towards reaffirming the Anglo-Creek bond. John Stuart happily believed the Creeks would do their best to keep altercations to a minimum, stating that “nothing but encroachments on their Lands and the abuses of the Traders will induce them to break with us.”¹⁴³

Sensing that both nations had tired of hostilities, Stuart strove to mediate an end to the war in 1770. Peace seemed likely. Without Chickasaw support, the Choctaws had taken a solid beating from Upper Creek war parties. At the same time, warriors from both nations were devoting so much time to the campaign that their abilities to harvest deer were diminished, and thus taking a toll on their families. In March, Emistisiguo asked Stuart to see if the Choctaws were inclined to continue the struggle, offering to gather the headmen of the nation to make a response. Sentiments truly seemed to be changing. Shawnees living among Creek towns appealed to the British to mediate an end to the fight, and a string of white beads was sent from the Tallapoosas to the Choctaws. Stuart asked his brother, Charles, to mediate for the Choctaws, and the offer was “Chearfully accepted” by the Indians. The Choctaw overtures were “joyously received by the Creeks,” and Stuart happily reported to Gage that the issue of the Indian boundary was being resolved, thanks to the help of Emistisiguo and the Mortar.¹⁴⁴

The impending concord was threatened when young Creek men killed four Choctaws who were hunting, and abducted the niece of Great Medal Chief Mingo Houma Chito, the man designated to oversee the final armistice. Tensions threatened to spiral out of control, but Charles Stuart intervened to soothe the “old sores” rubbed over by the event. In June of 1770, Emistisiguo met with Charles Stuart in Pensacola, where he was presented with three strings of

¹⁴³ Stuart quoted in Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 81.

¹⁴⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 351-356. The British spied on Shawnee moves with an especially suspicious eye, fearing that an attack on the frontier was almost always imminent. See John Wilkins to Gage June 1, 1772, GAGE Reports and Journals Volume 138.

white beads, one from each division of the Choctaws, along with pipes and tobacco. He received them with “Great Joy,” wrote the Deputy Superintendent, “and it was Observed that he had not till then been seen to Smile.” Emistisiguo said that he would carry the talk into his nation, where it would “make his People glad.” As proof of the peace, he returned to Stuart Mingo Houma Chito’s niece and two white strings, one from himself and one from the Mortar, along with tobacco to be sent to the Choctaws.¹⁴⁵

John Stuart was thrilled with the peace, though this was not uniform throughout the colonies. Georgia Governor James Wright worried that with no enemies the Indians would loose their aim on his settlers. Lord Hillsborough, the plantations secretary, expressed concerns about a pan-Indian alliance targeting the English. However, both Stuart and Gage felt that their participation in the peace process would result in the Indians viewing them in a “respectable and friendly Light.”¹⁴⁶

But in the hills and forests of the American Southeast, darkness can overtake the light in stunning fashion, and the peace of the woodlands quickly fell to pieces.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 358-360; Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 84-86.

¹⁴⁶ Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 86.

CHAPTER 5

A GROWING STORM

Until 1770, the Creek-Choctaw War was best characterized as the *Upper Creek-Choctaw War*. Engagements were confined between the Eastern, Western, and Sixtowns divisions of Choctaws, allied for a short time with the Chickasaws, against Upper Creek Tallapoosas, Abihkas, Okfuskees, and Alabamas. While the Upper Creeks enjoyed many successes (and some defeats) in the fight, they were handicapped by being outnumbered by their foes. A seemingly logical way to alleviate their distress would be to recruit the Lower Creeks into the contest, and multiple attempts were made to do so. Lower Creeks demonstrated their autonomy by repeatedly rejecting their kinsmen's requests, and notably advised the British not to cut off trade to the Choctaws. Not only did this hurt the Upper Creeks, but it also made for quite a bit of acrimony between the two divisions. Against the Choctaws and Chickasaws, the Upper Creeks fought alone. After four years of bloodshed, leaders such as the Mortar and Emistisiguo were tired of the fight. The late spring peace mediated by Charles Stuart was a relief.

All of that changed in July, as West Florida Lieutenant Governor Elias Durnford worriedly advised Lord Hillsborough:

I wrote to Your Lordship some time ago, respecting the Peace that was about to be made, between the Chactaw and Creek Indians. It was apparently concluded, but it doth not appear to be with the Consent of the lower Creek Towns; a Party of which to the number of 20 are actually gone out to War against the Chactaws, which it is supposed will rekindle the flame, and there are several other of the lower Creeks that seem to entertain the same hostile Intentions. And I am firmly of the Opinion, that if they are not at Variance amongst themselves, we shall not only find them troublesome, but very mischievous.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 360.

A month later, Lower Creek and Seminole warriors attacked Choctaws on multiple occasions. The Choctaws were obviously enraged, believing the Upper Creeks had negotiated a peace only to sic their brethren upon them. They petitioned the Upper Creeks to call back their kinsmen and hoped to reaffirm peace in Mobile.

It is possible that Lower Creek men wanted to earn their war names in the same fashion that Tallapoosa and Okfuskee men earned their titles over the last four years, but this is unlikely. For instance, in July, General Gage advised Lord Hillsborough that despite a recent dust-up, the Lower Creeks were thought to be “very pacifick.”¹⁴⁸ Instead, the Lower Creeks were probably stirred up by British traders in the region, who hoped to reap the rewards brought on by increased demand for goods. Lower Creek entry into the war at the behest of British traders is symbolic of one of the root problems of the period: uncontrollable freelance colonial traders that were the bane of existence for Indians and administrators.

John Stuart struggled for years to control the Indian trade. Stuart pushed his power to the limits, and often ruffled the feathers of other administrators in the process. Some, such as Governor James Wright of Georgia, saw Stuart’s appointment of commissaries to control traders as an unlawful abuse of power. But Wright was overruled by the Earl of Shelburne, who became secretary of state for the Southern Department in 1766. Lord Shelburne ordered Stuart that year to hold traders back until new regulations took place, and to snuff out those who worked against His Majesty’s wishes.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Carter, Gage Correspondence Vol. I., 262. The incident in particular was a raid by a group of Cowetas that “came among the People settled at Wright’s Borough, on Little-River, and carried off some of their Horses, but attempted nothing farther.” A white posse chased down the Indians and reclaimed the horses, along with a brass kettle and a looking glass. Shots were fired between the parties and although no one was killed in the incident, many backcountry settlers fled to Augusta. *The New-York Gazette*, June 11, 1770.

¹⁴⁹ Snapp, *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire*, 68-71. Not every administrator butted heads with Stuart. The ever-blusterous George Johnstone was a huge fan of the superintendent, writing he was “one of the most Judicious and Intelligent Men I have ever Conversed with.” Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 224.

Traders in Indian country proved to be two sides of a razor blade. Some, such as James Adair, were able to make strong connections with native townspeople and cohabitate with them for decades. In the right circumstances, traders could prove to be the most valuable links between the British Empire and indigenous confederacies. Adair was not the only man living amongst his patrons. George Galphin emigrated from Ireland in 1737 and quickly moved to Coweta. He married the headman's daughter and with her sired three children. Galphin's ties to the town and kinship led him to become the principal trader to the Lower Creeks, and he wielded far more influence there than the superintendent. Another man of note was Lachlan McGillivray, a Scotsman who immigrated to North America as an indentured servant who rose to become a prominent trader in Upper Creek territory. The two held such sway in their respective divisions that Adair credited them with keeping the Creeks out of the First Cherokee War.¹⁵⁰

Traders maintained a special place within native communities as well. As noted, they often married indigenous wives and sired offspring. These couplings were particularly important. Because southeastern Indian kinship was matrilineal, traders marrying townswomen were immediately adopted into the community as full members. Women also often rose to prominence within the community as a result of the coupling. But most important were the children the marriages produced. When Sehoy of the powerful Wind clan gave birth to Lachlan McGillivray's child, the boy was considered a full member of both societies. In Alexander McGillivray's case, he received the finest English education his father could afford, but eventually returned to his mother's people. As he rose in prominence in both societies, he and others like him became what Andrew Frank refers to as "cultural brokers." They were adults who

¹⁵⁰ Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, 46; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 366; James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 86-87.

fully understood the customs of both worlds, and had the ability to bridge the gaps between them.¹⁵¹

But not every trader/Indian relationship was as congenial as the Galphin/Lower Creek McGillivray/Upper Creek dynamic. Some traders entered Indian territory with little more than a desire to profit by any means possible. The deerskin trade often operated on credit—something Indians hated. Shot and powder were sold to hunters in advance of the winter season with the expectation that skins and pelts would be delivered later. However, many refused to pay interest on extended credit, and often reneged on paying off debt entirely. A favored tactic by nefarious traders was to liquor up their patrons on a cheap rum variant called *tafia* in order to get them to purchase more items than they could possibly afford.¹⁵² The traders then persuaded Indians to sign over land to settle their debts—something expressly against Stuart’s wishes.

Rum was one of the greatest threats to Indian sovereignty in the eighteenth century. In addition to putting lands at risk, it destroyed the lives of the people on them. This was especially true in Choctaw villages, which sometimes literally stank of liquor. A small medal chief named Nashobawenya equated the thirst for alcohol to lust for a woman: “when a man wanted her [rum]—and saw her—He must have her.” English traders brought far more liquor into Choctaw

¹⁵¹ John Walton Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 12-13; Andrew K. Frank, “The Rise and Fall of William McIntosh: Authority and Identity on the Early American Frontier,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (Spring 2002), 18-48; Paulett, *An Empire of Small Places*, 165. So present in their lives were traders that Indians began breeding their own packhorses. The Choctaws called them *isuba*, and they could carry 150 pounds of deerskins, plus a few kegs on rum with their specially designed packsaddles. Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 256-257. James Taylor Carson hypothesizes that Choctaw linguistics may show that horses were accepted in ways that cattle were not. *Isuba* literally translated to “deer-resembler,” while the word of cow, “waca,” was a loanword taken from the Spanish *vaca*. Horses were accepted into native societies, but animals such as cattle “became inseparable from the European colonial presence.” Horses were stolen and used within the native community, but cattle, being seen as innately foreign, were slaughtered. James Taylor Carson, “Native Americans, the Market Revolution, and Culture Change: The Choctaw Cattle Economy, 1690-1830,” in O’Brien, *Pre-removal Choctaw History*, 185.

¹⁵² Daniel H. Usner, Jr., “The Frontier Exchange Economy of the Lower Mississippi Valley in the Eighteenth Century,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 44, No. 2 (April, 1987): 178-179.

country than the French ever did; the French only occasionally traded brandy, considering the practice dangerous.¹⁵³ Choctaw elders saw the devastation inflicted onto their people and pleaded for help. Said Mingo Immita in 1772:

I must Complain of the great Quantity of Rum carried into our Towns. It is what Distracts our Nation. We wish to See a Stop put to this Pernicious Practice, and that the Traders be allowed to carry no more than a small Quantity sufficient to procure provisions and Pay for the Building [of] Stores and Houses. When the Clattering of Packhorses Bells are heard at a Distance, our Town is immediately deserted. Young and old run out to meet Them Joyfully Crying Rum! Rum! They get Drunk, Distraction, Mischief, Confusion, and disorder are the Consequences, and this is the Ruin of our Nation.¹⁵⁴

The distraction and mischief Mingo Immita complained of were incidents like what happened at Natchez in early 1770. One night several Choctaw hunters traded away all of their winter's deerskins for rum and got horribly drunk. In their drunkenness, they destroyed the warehouse of a local trader, though reports do not indicate if it belonged to the man that provided the liquor. As Richard White noted of the occasion, when sun dawned the next day, the Choctaws "woke up to find that the entire proceeds of months of labor was a collective hangover."¹⁵⁵ Therefore, not only did the mass consumption of liquor threaten native lands, but it threatened hunters' abilities to provide for their families, and in turn, tugged at the strings that were woven into indigenous concepts of masculinity.

Even with the onslaught on alcoholism and violence that accompanied the appearance of packhorses on the trails, Indian headmen understood traders' importance to their towns' prosperity. As Joshua Piker has shown, a town's prominence was directly related to its position on the trading path. As noted above, new trails from Mobile and Pensacola were problems for

¹⁵³ White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 84.

¹⁵⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 413-414.

¹⁵⁵ Carter, *Gage Correspondence Vol. I*, 258; White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 85.

Upper Creeks because they endangered the established status quo. But even within confederacies disagreements could erupt as to the establishment of new path. A new path established after 1763 going through the Upper Creek town of Tuckabatchee threatened the dominance of both Okfuskee and Okchai. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Mortar of Okchai and Handsome Fellow of Okfuskee gave a talk in 1764 and requested, “That the Great Old Path between Augusta and the Nation, may be kept White & Clean, and that they may be supplied with goods &c by that Path, as they want to know no Other.”¹⁵⁶ Despite the friction that could be the result of Anglo traders in the Southeast, the Creeks, Choctaws, and British all understood their necessity.

Stuart hoped to at least contain the traders by using the Grenville-Bedford Plan of 1764 to name Alexander Cameron commissary to the Cherokees and Roderick McIntosh to the Creeks. For a time they made their presence felt—McIntosh even forced one trader to leave the Creek nation because he was trading without a license.¹⁵⁷ In addition to enforcing Stuart’s regulations, J. Russell Snapp argues that the merchants felt the commissaries competed with them for the Indians’ affections. This is validated by James Adair’s negative comparison of Stuart to William Johnson in 1775:

Sir William Johnson acted very differently—he was kind, intelligent, intrepid—he knew when to frown and when to smile on the Indian nations he was connected with, and blended the serpent with the dove. He chose his deputies or representatives in the Indian countries, according to their qualifications in the Indian life; and not unskillful men, and mere strangers, like some who have been obtruded into our southern nations.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶Creeks called the path Chelucconene, literally meaning “the Big Deer Path,” but more colloquially, “the Old Horse Trail.” Joshua A. Piker, “‘White & Clean’ & Contested: Creek Towns and Trading Paths in the Aftermath of the Seven Years’ War,” *Ethnohistory* 50, No. 2 (Spring 2003): 317-318, 321.

¹⁵⁷ Snapp, *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire*, 99.

¹⁵⁸ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 369.

Unfortunately for Stuart, the Board of Trade decided in early 1768 to return control of the Indian trade to the colonies, claiming the Proclamation of 1763 was a temporary measure in response to Pontiac's rebellion. Without Stuart in the South (or Johnson in the North) to quell them, traders ran amok. On September 5, Emistisiguo complained in Savannah of trade practices. He grumbled about the number of traders in Upper Creek territory who made shady deals in the woods, and flooded the towns with rum. The Little Tallassee headman was seconded by Chickasaw Paya Mataha, who on April 23, 1770, appeared before Elias Durnford and Charles Stuart and asked that "no Skins be Sold for Rum, and that Good Talks may be given to the Traders to live Quiet and easy, and not to cheat us, for I believe they do not all abide by the Regulations."¹⁵⁹

The change in policy was a major blow to Stuart's authority and prospects for Anglo-Indian peace on the frontier. The superintendent knew that it would be nearly impossible to get all six colonies on the same page regarding Indians and bitterly wrote to Georgia governor James Wright that, "had the commissaries been supported properly they would most probably have succeeded in introducing some order amongst a set of lawless people."¹⁶⁰ However, Stuart was not alone in his ability to reprimand backcountry traders. Indian leadership was more than capable of doling out punishment to those who crossed them, and Stuart turned a blind eye to some events and even sanctioned others. In one instance, a party led by Emistisiguo and the Mad Dog of Tuckabatchee raided the illegal trading house at Buzzard's Roost, which lay about seventy miles east of their villages. The owner was a man named Edmund Barnard, who happened to be the nephew of George Galphin. Barnard had set up shop to catch Creek hunters

¹⁵⁹ Kathryn E. Holland, "The Path between the Wars: Creek Relations with the British Colonies, 1763-1774," (master's thesis, Auburn University, 1980), 111; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 355-356.

¹⁶⁰ Stuart, quoted in Holland, "The Path between the Wars," 113.

before they could do business in their hometowns. Emistisiguo and Mad Dog threatened Barnard, but allowed him to live before ransacking his post. Emistisiguo later claimed to Roderick McIntosh that “they were Authorized to take the Goods and Leather from any person they should find so Trading.” Robert Paulett has noted that raids on storehouses carried a greater social message. The store’s locked door “stood out as a clear symbol of competing Indian and European notions of property and propriety.” Door-breaking and raids were ways of reminding traders that they were “guests in town.”¹⁶¹

Despite the messages from Stuart and Emistisiguo meant to keep them in line, merchants continued to stoke the fire between Creeks and Choctaws. Charles Stuart harangued Tipoy, the headman of the displaced Koasatis, for taking two Choctaw scalps near Pensacola. Tipoy agreed not to continue man hunting only if the Choctaws promised not to seek satisfaction for the deaths. The deputy promised he would placate the Choctaws, prompting Tipoy’s return home. The younger Stuart was less than positive on his chances of success, though, writing to his brother that “I fear it will not be an Easy Matter to make them Sincere.” While Charles worked with the Choctaws, he asked John to intercede with the Lower Creeks and Seminoles to restrain any further war parties from taking to the path.¹⁶²

Efforts towards peace proved to be futile. Autonomous war parties bloodied their hatchets despite the wishes of their nations’ majorities. Charles Stuart failed to convince the Choctaws not to seek retribution, and four or five died as a direct result of Tipoy’s

¹⁶¹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 44-46; Robert Paulett, *An Empire of Small Places: Mapping the Southeastern Anglo-Indian Trade, 1732-1795* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2012), 167-168; Joshua Piker, “Colonists and Creeks: Rethinking the Pre-Revolutionary Southern Backcountry,” *The Journal of Southern History* 70, No. 3 (Aug., 2004): 534. Stuart may have given his blessing on the raid, but Barnard had actually set up shop with the permission of Lower Creek headmen Ishenpoaphe and Escochabey of Coweta, neither of whom were pleased to hear of the action. Corkan, *The Creek Frontier*, 266-267.

¹⁶² Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 94.

transgressions. Emistisiguo reluctantly agreed that the two peoples were again at war, claiming peace talks were useless now that his own people would seek revenge.¹⁶³

Charles Stuart may have feigned sadness at the news, but actually worked against a consolation.¹⁶⁴ By late 1770 British policy regarding a Creek-Choctaw peace had reversed course. Recent settler deaths at the hands of both peoples sent the frontier into a tizzy. Several administrators feared the violence would only escalate in West Florida without the war to keep the Indians occupied. Lieutenant Governor Elias Durnford petitioned Gage for additional troops in West Florida, citing that the colony was “certainly the Western Barrier of America, and the great numbers of Indians near us, require a particular Protection.” Durnford also complained that East Florida was “much more the Child of hope than this Colony,” which highlighted the disaffection felt by the Lieutenant Governor and, ostensibly, British citizens in the colony.¹⁶⁵ Lord Hillsborough agreed. On September 28, he confessed to Gage that “I have less Apprehension of it [an alliance between Indian tribes] than what may happen to the Southward by the Re-establishment of Peace between the Creeks and Chactaws; an Event which according to late Advices may greatly endanger the Security of West Florida, and my Fears on this account are the greater, as that Province has been lately insulted by those Savages.”¹⁶⁶

It was no coincidence that Lord Hillsborough referenced an alliance. By the winter of 1770-1771, Shawnees, freed from war with the Cherokees and Iroquois, were sending belts to Southern and Western Indians in hope of forming yet another grand coalition. In April of 1771, the Shawnees met with the Chickasaws and the Illinois about establishing “a peace between

¹⁶³ Ibid., 95-96.

¹⁶⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 380-381.

¹⁶⁵ Durnford to Gage, 27 January 1770, GAGE American Series 89.

¹⁶⁶ Carter, *Gage Correspondence Vol. II*, 117.

them,” and the Kaskaskias were expected to follow suit.¹⁶⁷ Unsurprisingly, Creeks led by the Mortar were interested. In February of 1771, the Mortar sought out the Chickasaws to affect a cease-fire with the Choctaws. He then sent a belt with white and black beads to Cherokee country, where Deputy Secretary Alexander Cameron watched the proceedings with great interest. Cameron need not have worried. Cherokee participation in a grand alliance was unlikely in 1771. With peace established with the Iroquois in 1768, some factions turned against the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws. Even their former enemies, the Senecas and Cayugas, joined in the fray, though the attacks were isolated and sporadic. Cameron also made note of another worrisome development: the Creeks had been trading with the Spanish.¹⁶⁸

The Creek-Spanish relationship had been a concern for the British administration for several years. With the French no longer in the picture, the British believed they could control the Creeks by managing the trade goods going into Upper and Lower towns. The Spanish were a threat to Muskogee economic dependency. While the Spanish evacuated the Floridas in 1763, they still maintained contact with Southeastern Indians from their stations at New Orleans and especially Havana. Claudio Saunt estimates that Creeks made the twelve-hour paddle to Cuba at least nineteen times between 1763 and the end of 1776. Creeks were inclined to seek out the Spanish because they offered far more lavish gifts than the English, though they refrained from selling the Indians guns. With the Creeks, the Spanish found a market for goods such as scissors, knives, axes, and fishhooks in exchange for deerskins, dried meats, fruit, and tree bark.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ John Wilkins to Gage June 1, 1772, GAGE Reports and Journals Volume 138.

¹⁶⁸ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 275-276; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 362; Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 97-99; *South Carolina Gazette*, August 9, 1770; Theda Perdue, “Cherokee Relations with the Iroquois in the Eighteenth Century,” in Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003): 147; *The Connecticut Courant*, April 16, 1771.

¹⁶⁹ Muskogees made the voyage in typically one of three ways: by large, ocean voyaging canoes that were paddled by a multitude of men, by Cuban fisherman who transported them to the island, and by official Spanish vessels.

Thomas Gage was particularly aggrieved by the Spanish presence. Though he had been assured by Don Ulloa that they wanted peace and harmony, Gage accused Spain of “tampering with our Indians.” On April 24, 1768, Gage reported to Lord Shelburne that Lower Creeks had offered a tract of land near the Apalachicola River and hoped they would accept.¹⁷⁰ In 1769, Spain stationed 5,000 troops in New Orleans and met with Seminoles near the St. Mark’s River, leading the *South Carolina Gazette* to wonder if the moves were part of a plan to retake West Florida.¹⁷¹ At the same time, six Creeks returned from Havana, where they had received copious presents. The party served as emissaries that were to arrange a meeting between the Spanish and Upper and Lower Creeks at the mouth of the Apalachicola River.

John Stuart was especially concerned about Spanish-Creek intercourse, calling it “an object of jealousy.” Stuart bitterly complained about Cuban fishing vessels on the coasts of Florida, but his sentiments were not echoed by everyone. East Florida Governor James Grant welcomed their presence, believing they gave colonial merchants the opportunity to trade with Havana.¹⁷² But by 1771, tensions in Florida were heightened due to the standoff between England and Spain over the Falkland Islands. Stuart bristled when trader John Caldwell reported the Creeks had again been to Havana, where they were told that the Spanish navy would support any ground-based attacks by the Indians. Fortunately for everyone involved, the crisis ended before an Anglo-Spanish war could metastasize, and Spanish intrigue with the Creeks died down for the moment.¹⁷³

Claudio Saunt, *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2014), 195-198.

¹⁷⁰ Carter, *Gage Correspondence Vol. I*, 138, 170; *Essex Gazette*, January 10, 1769

¹⁷¹ *South Carolina Gazette*, October 9, 1769.

¹⁷² Carter, *Gage Correspondence Vol. I*, 236, 262; *New-York Journal*, July 13, 1769.

¹⁷³ Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 98; Robert R. Rea, “British West Florida: Stepchild of Diplomacy,” in Samuel Proctor, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Florida and Its Borderlands* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1975): 69.

In the meantime, the Creeks and Choctaws remained “as inveterate against each other as ever.” In April, the old Wolf King of Muccolossus suffered the deaths of five men at the hands of the Choctaws. That same month, young Alexander McGillivray and a band of twelve followers killed three opponents in a skirmish, and captured four others. The three women were destined to be slaves; the lone male was ritually burnt alive upon his delivery to the town of Tuskegee. The Choctaws even the score a short time later by killing nine foes, while losing only “two or three.” “The War between the Creeks and Chactaws continues with usual Animosity and Rancour,” Thomas Gage informed Lord Hillsborough, “all Negotiation for accomplishing a Peace between them, is laid aside.”¹⁷⁴

Despite the war, the main problem for the Creeks in 1771 was the continual encroachment of settlers onto their lands. Angry Upper Creek men chased planters Andrew Hampton and Thomas Fleming out of their territory in April. On May 1, Upper Creek headmen gathered at Okchai to air their grievances in a letter to John Stuart. Emistisiguo reminded the superintendent that the British had previously agreed that “no Cattle should be drove through the Nation.” Yet, “a Man of Substance” named James McQueen had settled within their boundaries and “has forty Negroes with him.” Some of McQueen’s property was confiscated, including two pieces of gold and a rifle. “It was not done by way of Robbery,” he explained, “but only to assert our Rights.” The Gun Merchant simply asked for Stuart to continue to supply his people “with Plenty of goods especially Ammunition and guns” so that the young people would be convinced of “the White people’s Intentions to Hold fast the Chain of Friendship.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ *The Connecticut Courant*, April 16, 1771; *The New-Hampshire Gazette*, July 19, 1771; Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 100; Carter, *Gage Correspondence Vol. I*, 293.

¹⁷⁵ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 96-98. Planters and ranchers had good reason to drive their cattle through Indian lands. They noticed that cattle gorging on cane breaks not only grew larger, but produced superior milk and butter. Mart A. Stewart, “From King Cane to King Cotton: Razing Cane in the Old South,” *Environmental History* 12, No. 1 (Jan., 2007): 68-69.

Stuart hoped to make good on Anglo-Creek amity by calling together a congress at Pensacola in September. The meeting did not take place until late October, but featured a number of Upper and Lower Creek notables, including Emistisiguo, Nealatchko, Tipoy, and the Beaver Tooth King. Representing colonial interests were Stuart, his brother Charles, Brigadier General Frederick Haldimand, new governor of West Florida Peter Chester, Elias Durnford, along with several other military officers and administrative officials. The Creeks had undoubtedly assembled en masse to air grievances and receive large quantities of guns, ammunition, and rum. Stuart first addressed the boundary line dating to the 1765 meeting that had yet to be finalized and then shocked the Indians by requesting additional lands. This was a gambit on the superintendent's part; the Lower Creeks were already hostile about a tract the Cherokees sold. Still, Stuart explained the need for fertile grounds running alongside the Escambia River. "We are not Hunters, we are Planters," he told them. Stuart explained that Creek hunting grounds were not in jeopardy. "An Hundred Miles of pine Land would be of no Value to us. What we ask you can easily spare." Regarding the Cherokee cession, Stuart claimed that it could not take place without His Majesty's express permission and suggested the Creeks speak with their neighbors about the deal.

Emistisiguo was not thrilled about the new development, nor was he happy about a reported Choctaw cession of lands at the junction of the Tombeckby and Coosa rivers. According to him, the Choctaws had no right to make the deal. Leaning on ancient principles of familial kinship that ran throughout the Southeast, the Great Medal Chief explained: "The Chactaws are our younger Brothers, and not so considerable as we are. They may give Lands on the other side [of the] Tombeckby River, but on this side of it, the Land belongs to us." With that, the meeting adjourned for the evening. The following two days were filled with diplomatic

jockeying of the highest degree by both Emistisiguo and Stuart. The headman offered Stuart a small piece of land, which Stuart kindly declined, claiming it to be too sandy to be of much use. Emistisiguo also complained of cattle being run through Creek country, against the wishes of the nation. Stuart danced around the objections by promising to personally redress them with King George III and made protests of his own. Lower Creeks had been raiding frontier settlements under the pretense of going to war but instead plundered plantations and killed cattle. Stuart played to the crowd and asked the headmen assembled to “Exert your power and Authority so as to prevent any of the like Transactions for the future.” He spoke of the Creeks’ offer and continued to claim it to be insufficient, though, understanding that the leadership assembled had no authority to grant a large claim, finally accepted his position. On November 2, 1771, the congress ratified the 1765 agreement, without with the new tract. The Creeks dispersed for the winter’s hunts and Stuart went to Mobile to treat with the Choctaws and Chickasaws.¹⁷⁶

In Mobile, Stuart met a group in a far different position than the one in Pensacola. The Chickasaws had exited the war three years earlier, and the Choctaws now stood alone against the full might of the Creek confederacy. Making matters worse was that Stuart had stopped the flow of munitions into Choctaw towns due the rampant actions of their young men. When the meeting convened on December 31, the Indians were desperate for British assistance. Peter Chester addressed the Choctaws, telling them their recent attacks and storebreaking represented “almost unpardonable” offences, and showed “the great Want of Gratitude” of a people under protection. Chester advised the Choctaws to punish those guilty of crimes against their “Brothers,” the English, so that the people might live as friends. Stuart addressed the complaints he knew were about to come:

¹⁷⁶ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 387-403, 482.

When the French gave up this Country to the Great King, you the Chactaws were received under His Royal protection upon your engaging to Observe the Articles of this Treaty. And in Consequence English Traders resorted to your Nation, and carried Such a Supply of goods amongst you, as you had not been accustomed to, under the French Government. And if You have not been Happy and easy it has been your Own Fault, for had you been Industrious good Hunters you could not have been so poor and destitute of all necessaries as I see you are. But instead of being Employed in getting Skins, your People's time was taken up in Insulting and Plundering our Inhabitants and Wantonly Killing their Cattle while the Very Traders Employed in carrying Goods to Relieve your Necessities have been Robbed and plundered not only on the Highway But also in your very Towns.

You complained that You were neglected and not called to Congresses as when the French were Masters of this Country. The French Employed You as Soldiers and as Such, paid you annually with Presents. We never have had Occasion for your Assistance in that Way. Should we ever call upon you to take part in any Quarrel of ours, we are full as able and you will find us as generous, and Willing to reward your Services as the French were. But instead of annual Presents we have given You a plentiful Trade, and if you are not Industrious to reap the Benefit of it in its full Extent you must Blame Yourselves.

Stuart's words regarding gifts tells much about how little progress the Choctaws and British had made in understanding one another since 1763. Almost nine years later, the superintendent was still explaining the British capitalist system. To make his point, Stuart bestowed "the Handsomest presents of any Nation" upon the Chickasaws, including so much rum that Paya Mataha stayed drunk for three days.

Reaffirming the chain of friendship also meant selecting new medal chiefs. The Red Captain had been dead for over four years, and his place had yet to be filled. Certainly, he was not the only fallen anglophile who needed to be replaced. Captain Houma of Seneacha claimed that, except himself, all the chiefs of the Sixtowns were dead. So, in addition to the gifts of food, clothes, rum, guns, and ammunition, Stuart bestowed Great Medals upon four men, and Small

Medals on another four, bringing the roster to nine Great Medal Chiefs and seventeen Small Medal Chiefs.¹⁷⁷

The Choctaws must have emerged from the Mobile congress feeling much better about their position. Though the Chickasaws continued to refuse to help them, they had new supplies and full stomachs. Unfortunately for them, the Creeks landed yet more body blows. Immediately following their meeting with Stuart in Pensacola, a war party sneaked into a Choctaw hunting camp while the men were away. The Creeks stole most of their skins, along with two horses, and took five women captive. They decided, however, to scalp the eldest woman as a sign of bravery and left her body at the camp as they made their way back across the Yazoo River. Another Creek war party killed fifteen Choctaws while suffering zero casualties. Emistisiguo demonstrated that he was a man who could do more than just talk by leading a group that took seven scalps later in the year. In 1772 alone, the Choctaws lost Tattouly Mastabé and Cholko Oulacta, both of whom were Great Medal Chiefs, and Small Medal Chief Yasi Mataha.¹⁷⁸

John Stuart dispatched Indian agent David Taitt to the Creeks in February in order to obtain the Escambia cession. There he found the Mortar, who fumed at all the attention lately paid to Emistisiguo. The Mortar, who was an Abihka from Okchai, saw Emistisiguo's rise from the Tallapoosa town of Little Tallassee as a threat to his dominance, and that of his region. The Mortar was not the only one in opposition to the deal. Taitt reported that West Florida traders worked against it simply because it was Stuart's plan. George Galphin, along with several other merchants, attempted to get the Creeks' cooperation with a carrot and stick approach. They threatened to cut off the trade entirely if the deal was not made, but promised to lower their prices once the deal went through. The Indians called the bluff. At a meeting at Okchai in April,

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 404-423, 425-426; O'Brien, "Protecting Trade through War," 112.

¹⁷⁸ Fletcher, "They Lived; They Fought," 106; O'Brien, "Protecting Trade through War," 112.

Emistisiguo sent word to Stuart that the Creeks planned to settle the Escambia River valley as soon as the war was over, and therefore could not agree to a cession. He again protested the Choctaw cession as lands that belonged to the Creeks, not their neighbors. The Mortar was frustrated, too. He attempted to resign his English medal, claiming Stuart was “throwing him away,” but was persuaded by Taitt to keep it after gifting him with a rifle and other goods.¹⁷⁹

In October, Taitt reported to Stuart about his inability to convince the Creeks to sign off on the entire Escambia cession. He did believe that Upper Creeks would go along with the Lower Creeks in regards to the land, but stated that the Mortar and Handsome Fellow sent the White Lieutenant of Okchai to Coweta to stop any further discussions. Furthermore, Taitt notified Stuart that the Mortar had sent a belt and red hatchet to the Choctaws by way of the Chickasaws, both of whom he hoped to unite against the English.¹⁸⁰

But the Mortar’s efforts failed. In November, *The Massachusetts Spy* reported that the Choctaws had recently “obtained a very considerable advantage over their enemies the Creeks, and have carried off a great number of their scalps.” The paper reported that it seemed the war would carry on indefinitely. Buried farther down the column was a report that the Creeks had recently killed a trader, “and otherwise maltreated several other traders in their towns, and threaten to commit further outrages.” Neither John Stuart nor the leadership of the Creeks nor Choctaws knew it then, but both incidents were foreshadowing yet another turn in the direction of the Creek-Choctaw War.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 427-431; Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 114-116; Holland, “The Path between the Wars,” 198-200.

¹⁸⁰ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 114-115, 434-435.

¹⁸¹ *The Massachusetts Spy*, November 5, 1772.

CHAPTER 6

VICTORY, DEFEAT, AND WHITE BIRD'S WINGS

That the Mortar sought peace with the Choctaws in late 1772 in order to build an anti-English coalition was not surprising; neither was his failure. But it was another sign of growing discontent within the Creek confederacy. Most of this was due to two factors: British land lust and the growing feeling that the British were preventing a peace with the Choctaws. Even solid allies such as Little Tallassees began to question their allegiance. Emistisiguo reluctantly believed that war was at hand. Second Man voiced his displeasure with traders' desires for land, hoping that the Maker of Breath would "open the earth and swallow up all the lands and themselves too rather than a war be brought about."¹⁸²

Some even worked to make an Anglo-Creek war a reality. In February of 1773, Lower Creek warrior Estimaslayche departed for Havana, where he announced his intentions to attack English fishermen and colonists along the Florida coast. In the spring, he declared the Creeks would paint their *atassas* (war clubs) red with colonial blood and would not stop until the invaders had been driven from the continent. They needed only gifts of Spanish guns, powder, and shot. True to Spanish form, Estimaslayche was presented with the finest Iberian hats, mirrors, and thread. The Spaniards could not assist the Creeks in a war, he was told, lest it disturb the friendship with England that existed since the conclusion of the Seven Years' War. Cuban leadership rejected Creek requests for support because they believed the Indians lacked sincerity and were using the visits only to receive food and presents. The Marqués de la Torre

¹⁸² Holland, "The Path between the Wars," 199.

actually attempted to curtail the social calls, but with no luck. Over the next three years more and more emissaries arrived from Upper and Lower towns asking for assistance.¹⁸³

Nevertheless, John Stuart secured a large tract of land from the Lower Creeks at Augusta on June 1, 1773. According to David Corkran, the parcel was “a huge forward thrust” for the English frontier. It totaled 2,100,000 acres and ran from the Altamaha River to the Ogeechee River then up to the Oconee and Savannah rivers, almost to Cherokee territory. The sale was opposed by most of the Upper Creeks, including Emistisiguo, though the Gun Merchant claimed the decision was the responsibility of the Lower Creeks. Many of them were happy about the cession, especially Escochabey, who was in significant debt to George Galphin. Though many hunters were freed of their fiduciary obligations, it was a sign to others that the English were a far greater threat than the Choctaws.¹⁸⁴

While the Creeks dealt in land, the Choctaws dealt in lead. A report from the *Essex Gazette* offered a detailed account of an early summer Creek assault gone terribly wrong:

Twenty Creeks went out on an expedition against the Choctaws, and were so bold as to penetrate among their towns, where lying in wait near one of their watering places, they saw two Choctaws coming to fetch water, at whom they fired, & killed one of them, the other made his escape and alarmed the town, the inhabitants of which immediately ran to arms, and went in pursuit of the enemy: The Creeks, finding themselves discovered, made off as fast as they could; but mistaking the road they went straight upon another town of the Choctaws, which also being alarmed, they had no choice left than to sell their lives so dear as they could; they fought till night, and most of their number being killed, the rest finding themselves cut off from every other means of escape, went into a pond that was near, and kept themselves under water to their mouths and noses; the Choctaws, in order to find them out, cut canes with sharp ends, and went pushing and poking about in the water, by which means they found them all but one, who notwithstanding he was pushed and pricked two or three times, withstood the pain, and after the Choctaws had gone with those they had found, made his escape, and came home alone with the bad news.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Saunt, *West of the Revolution*, 198-199.

¹⁸⁴ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 281.

¹⁸⁵ *The Essex Gazette*, May 29, 1773. Gally notes that a favorite Choctaw tactic was to ambush parties in their territory, believing it to be nobler to fight on their own land. Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 182.

The Creeks were suffering. Years of warfare combined with an inability to hunt had left them low on supplies. Some of their nation had already turned to the Spanish for assistance but left unsatisfied. The Mortar appealed to the Cherokees, where he was known by the honorary title of “King of Chote.” He recruited a few men to join him, but most of that nation refused to enter the war. Instead, Attakullakulla personally visited the Choctaws and Chickasaws in an attempt to mediate an end to the fighting. He failed. More drastic measures were called for. In September, men from Okfuskee, Okchai, and Hillabee robbed traders from Natchez of “Thirty Six Horses, their Cloaths, riding saddles, Guns and Provisions.” The Hillabee and Okchai raiders eventually returned the horses to their owners, but the Okfuskees refused, claiming it was the fault of white people for allowing their traders to go so deep into the woods where young men were enjoined to attack them. Commissary David Taitt agreed, sighing, “I wish those free born Gentlemen would content themselves with the Land on which they are raised, or else settle on the Mississippi when they get there, and not be passing to and from in the Savage Country where they cannot expect more Civil Treatment than they give to Others.”¹⁸⁶

Things continued to spiral downhill for the Creeks, and the English. On November 12, Emistisiguo led a party of ten warriors into Choctaw country. They were ambushed about fifty miles north of Mobile and suffered one captured, one killed, and another three men wounded, including Emistisiguo, who was shot in the chest. The Little Tallassee leader would have made an excellent prize for the Choctaws. He was saved by three of his sons, who hid him in the swamp. His condition was a threat to the wellbeing of the Anglo-Creek relationship. Should he

¹⁸⁶ Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 118; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 437-440.

have perished there would have been few people who had the power to check the Mortar and Handsome Fellow. Still, he clung to life.¹⁸⁷

Before he could recover, a seemingly random incident occurred that threatened the entire Creek nation. A Coweta and kinsman of Escochabey named Togulki killed a fellow townsman in December. In order to avoid vengeance from his victim's clan, he blamed frontiersman William White for the murder. The clan took the bait. They stormed his home on Christmas and killed him, along with his wife and four children. The attack seems to have provided inspiration for other Lower Creeks upset with colonial encroachment. Another scalping party took to the path three weeks later. This time, they struck the home of the William Sherill near Ogeechee Creek. They then proceeded to Sherill's neighbors, where they continued the assault. Over a dozen settlers died. The Creeks suffered nine casualties, including five deaths.¹⁸⁸

While John Stuart demanded satisfaction for the Ogeechee deaths, Governor James Grant took action. He ordered militia to take the field to avenge the murders and secure the area, but the first militia fled after hearing they were surrounded by Creeks. A second force of 35 men led by a Colonel Grierson made their way to the Sherill homestead, where they were attacked by 100 Creeks, "who were all naked, and painted black, with a little red about their eyes, the signs of war."¹⁸⁹ Two Georgians were injured in the skirmish, and seven died, including a Lieutenant Grant. The *Essex Gazette* reported his demise:

There are two accounts of the circumstances attending that unfortunate Gentleman's falling into the hands of the barbarians, and equally shocking. Both which we shall lay before our readers, but cannot pretend to vouch the truth of either. One says that he was not killed at the first onset; that he was only stunned, fell from his horse, and supported himself by the mane; that the Indians seeing him deserted, returned, seized and bound him to a tree, then retired to some distance,

¹⁸⁷ Fletcher, "They Lived; They Fought," 119; Holland, "The Path between the Wars," 208.

¹⁸⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 440-441; Holland, "The Path between the Wars," 208; Fletcher, "They Lived; They Fought," 119; Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 282.

¹⁸⁹ *The Providence Gazette*, March 5, 1774; *Essex Journal*, February 23, 1774.

and shot 30 arrows into his body; after which they cut off his genitals, struck a tomahawk into his head, another into his fundament, and burnt his body.—The other says, “body was found tied to a tree, a gun-barrel, supposed to have been red hot, was thrust into, and left sticking in his body; his scalp and ears taken off, a painted hatchet left sticking in his skull, twelve arrows in his breast, and a painted war club left upon his body.”¹⁹⁰

The Ogeechee murders and destruction of the militia touched off a panic on the frontier. David Taitt told Peter Chester that he wanted to stop the raids, “but No Man dare go with me... If this Affair should become General here I have very little hopes of making my Escape.”¹⁹¹ Settlers fled for their lives, believing the attacks to be the commencement of an Anglo-Creek war. “All the people up this river are moved off, and this place [Augusta] is now become the frontier of the province,” published *The Providence Gazette*.¹⁹² Upper Creek leadership did what they could do to salve the wounds inflicted by the Cowetas. They demanded Togulki’s life as satisfaction. When the Lower Creeks balked, Emistisiguo warned Escochabey the divisions were on the brink of civil war. He then attempted a new tactic. Emistisiguo wrote to his “friend and Brother” John Stuart in February, claiming the violence was the sole work of the renegades. “The Cowetas who are the Front Part seem to want to bring us who are the back Part into poverty by their doings.” Emistisiguo understood that the Creeks could not afford a two-front war, nor could they afford to lose supplies arriving via English packhorses. His plan was to reroute the trading paths away from the belligerent Lower towns. For the time being, Pensacola and Mobile could be “just enough to supply our Wants.” The trade from Augusta could continue once it became safe again. He reassured Georgia traders and Creek towns on the old route by reminding them, “When a path is new it does not at once become a great Path.”¹⁹³ He then took the talk to

¹⁹⁰ *Essex Gazette*, March 22, 1774.

¹⁹¹ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 440-441.

¹⁹² *The Providence Gazette*, March 5, 1774; *The South Carolina Gazette*, January 31, 1774.

¹⁹³ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 441; Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 283.

Peter Chester and told the governor that the Creek nation wanted in no way to become embroiled with the English; they had “war enough with the Choctaw.”¹⁹⁴

The headman’s assurances were not enough for the British. The King’s subjects had grown tired of the Mortar’s schemes and frontier deaths dating all the way back to the Payne and Hoggs murders of 1765. The Ogeechee slaughter and militia rout was confirmation enough that “it is now beyond a doubt that the Creek Indians are our enemies, and they mean to extirpate us if they can.” The only solution, therefore, was to starve the Creeks out and allow the Choctaws to deliver English punishment. All traders in the Creek nation were recalled until satisfaction was given for the Georgia murders. The Choctaws rubbed salt in the wound by offering to “tender their services” to their English brothers. In Mobile, Captain Houma of the Six Villages promised “never to make Peace with the Creeks, till they have given us [the English] full Satisfaction.”¹⁹⁵

One of the men behind the Ogeechee attacks, a man called Big Elk, made the mistake of traveling into Cherokee country with the scalp of Lieutenant Grant. He bragged that his party “made the white People run like so many Fowls, that now was the Time to drive them to their Big Canows; and that the Creeks were all ready to take up Arms.” But the residents of Tugaloo were anything but persuaded. Instead, they shot and scalped him as proof to all parties of their allegiance.¹⁹⁶ Upper Creek leaders were actually relieved at Big Elk’s death and hoped it would satisfy English concepts of justice. It did not. Other murderers were still at large, and runners were dispatched to end their lives.

Around the same time, a well-respected Upper Creek man named Mad Turkey traveled to Savannah to escort traders from his nation and to carry a message from Escochabey on the status

¹⁹⁴ *The Providence Gazette*, April 2, 1774.

¹⁹⁵ *The Providence Gazette*, March 5, 1774; Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 442-443.

¹⁹⁶ *The South Carolina Gazette*, March 13, 1774.

of the Ogeechee killers. While there, a man named Thomas Fee invited him to share a drink. But Fee had ulterior motives. Claiming vengeance for a family member killed by Indians, Fee struck Mad Turkey in the head with an iron bar, killing him. Fee was arrested for the crime, but was subsequently broken out of jail by ten men. Both Stuart and Wright posted rewards for his capture but he remained free.¹⁹⁷

Mad Turkey's death sent a shockwave throughout the Creek nation. Leaders who were meeting with James Wright withdrew home upon learning the news. Escochabey traveled again to Havana, where he hoped to find an answer to the British embargo. Emistisiguo argued that Mad Turkey's death should count as satisfaction for the Ogeechee murders, and that, at least the Upper Creeks should have trade restored since it was the Cowetas who were responsible for the unrest. Wright denied his petition, claiming that the entirety of the Creek nation should suffer in order to persuade the Lower Creeks to fall in line. The governor offered a compromise: kill the ringleaders and all transgressions since 1765 would be forgiven. On May 23, a group of 26 Upper Creek headmen resolved to end the strife and ordered the assassinations of three remaining ringleaders: Togulki, Houmacha, and Sophia. A meeting of Lower Creeks (except Cowetas) a month later agreed. Togulki was assassinated by warriors from Cusseta, though the other two escaped.¹⁹⁸ Shortly thereafter, several Creek headmen appeared in Charles Town to present George Galphin with a white wing. In addition to Togulki, a man called Miley, as well as his nephew had been killed. With that, the Creeks hoped the trade would be reestablished. It was

¹⁹⁷ *South Carolina Gazette*, April 4, 1774, April 11, 1774, April 16, 1774, April 18, 1774; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "Pipesmoke and Muskets: Florida Indian Intrigues of the Revolutionary Era," in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida and Its Borderlands*, 19.

¹⁹⁸ Saunt, *West of the Revolution*, 200-201; Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 284-285.

not. Wright claimed the wrong people had been killed, and continued his demands for satisfaction.¹⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the Choctaws continued their assault on the weakened Creeks. Little Tallassee suffered a woman killed, which required Emistisiguo to miss the Charles Town meeting. Desperate, Creek leadership again met with Stuart in Savannah, where they agreed to kill Houmacha and Sophia, both of whom were hiding in Cherokee towns. They returned stolen cattle and fugitive slaves in their country. They also agreed to break up the town of Standing Peach Tree and forbid Indian settlement on the Okmulgee and Oconee rivers. The Savannah meeting was a demonstration of English superiority. By withholding ammunition, the English forced the nation the once feared most on the continent to accede to their demands. The Creeks had little choice and Stuart knew it. In October, he advised his superiors of the Creek position, “They were obliged to comply or fall victims to their enraged Enemies the Choctaws; who... are out in great Bodies to harass them.”²⁰⁰

In desperation, the Mortar gathered 80 men to seek French assistance at New Orleans to end the war. As they paddled down the Alabama River, they were fired upon by a party of 30 Choctaw warriors. The Creeks gave chase to their opponents, who barricaded themselves in the home of trader William Struthers. The two parties traded shots for three days until the Creeks lit the house on fire. The Choctaws removed to a small garden with a picket fence, where they killed six Creek attackers and wounded half a dozen more. The Mortar, already suffering a wound to his thigh and frustrated with the Choctaws’ success, determined that the best course of action would be for the entire Creek force to rush in upon their enemies. It was after he

¹⁹⁹ *South Carolina Gazette*, June 27, 1774.

²⁰⁰ Fletcher, “They Lived; They Fought,” 126; *South Carolina Gazette*, October 24, 1774; *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 16, 1774; *The Newport Mercury*, January 9, 1775.

personally ripped down two pickets that he received the shots that claimed his life. The Mortar's fate stunned his people, who loaded him onto a canoe bound for Okchai. Tipoe, the second-in-command, led the rest of the war party in seven canoes to Mobile. The remaining Choctaws escaped during the mayhem.²⁰¹

It is difficult to overstate how much significance the Mortar's death carried. 100 Lower Creeks en route to New Orleans promptly returned home after learning of his fate.²⁰² Choctaws must have been overjoyed. He was one of their most hated foes, and though no one claimed his scalp, the victory dances celebrating his demise must have taken on an epic quality. Both Saluy of the Cherokees and Paya Mataha of the Chickasaws probably smiled upon learning of his death; the Mortar had often backed challengers to their authority in their respective nations. Most significantly, John Stuart and Thomas Gage were able to finally exhale just a bit. The Mortar was the last of the three men they feared could lead a pan-Indian uprising against them.

Though they sent a message to the Choctaws claiming "they came not intentionally against them," the Creeks continued to take a beating. As Fletcher noted, the Choctaws, riding the high of the Mortar's death, carried on the war with great tenacity into 1775. As if to demonstrate how far the tables had turned, six Choctaws defeated 25 Creeks in June, losing none. With the Spanish unwilling to provide arms, the Creeks had to give satisfaction to the English. Five men were dispatched into Cherokee territory to take down Houmacha and Sophia, something they finally accomplished in late summer. Unfortunately for the Creeks, the gifts of ammunition were far less than they had expected.²⁰³

²⁰¹ *The Norwich Packet*, February 9, 1775. It is possible that Tipoe was actually Koasati leader Tipoy.

²⁰² Fletcher, "They Lived; They Fought," 129.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 128-129; Alden, *John Stuart and the Colonial Frontier*, 311

Despite all the trouble the Creeks had with backcountry settlers, it may have been lawless colonists who saved them from even more Choctaw attacks. Part of the reason the Creeks received so few presents was because the British administration was primarily concerned with quelling the restlessness of American rebels. On October 20, 1775, the Second Man of Little Tallassee wrote to John Stuart, asking him to intervene in the Creek-Choctaw War.

You know that we have been at War a long time and have lost a great many of Our leading Men that we esteemed, and that assisted in keeping peace between the white people and us, and I hope we have yet Good Men remaining that will use their endeavour to keep peace. We in this part of the Nation are made very poor by so long a War not being able to hunt, to feed, and Cloath our Women and Children as we used to do, and as the rest of our Nation can now do. I therefore hope that you will take pity on your friends and endeavour to get a peace made for us.²⁰⁴

Both Thomas Gage and John Stuart agreed that the Creeks had been sufficiently humbled and no longer presented a threat to His Majesty's subjects along the frontier. In an ironic twist of fate, it was now the British who desired a pan-Indian alliance. If the Creek-Choctaw War could be brought to a close with British aid, perhaps both nations might be of assistance with the rebel colonists. On October 25, Stuart wrote to the Earl of Dartmouth about Creek allegiance, telling him, "in order to induce the Creek Indians to act heartily in His Majesty's service it will be necessary to mediate a peace between them and the Chactaws, for while they have such a powerful Enemy at their Backs they will not willingly engage in distressing the Rebels."²⁰⁵ However, Stuart was not the only man in North America with a plan for the Southern Indians.

The Continental Congress on July 13, 1775, delivered a talk to the Six Nations Iroquois meant for all native peoples, comparing the war as a fight between father and son and asked that Indian nations not attack the British and "keep the hatchet buried deep." At the same time, the

²⁰⁴ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 444.

²⁰⁵ Robinson, *North and South Carolina Treaties*, 380-381.

Americans sought to explain their position and gain sympathy with Indians by stating that King George's counselors were "proud and wicked men," who had persuaded the king to break his bond with the colonies and were stealing from the colonists. Preying on Indian fears of land loss, the Americans questioned, "If the king's troops take away our property, and destroy us who are of the same blood with themselves, what can you, who are Indians, expect from them afterwards?"²⁰⁶ The South Carolina Council of Safety asked George Galphin (who had become John Stuart's de facto counterpart) to "Strike them with awe and tend to confirm their resolutions to remain neuter [*sic*]" by gifting them with copious amounts of ammunition.²⁰⁷

The Creeks as a whole were not interested in joining the fray to the north and east. The nation's stance was determined in large part by the Lower Creeks, especially Coweta and Cusseta. George Galphin had a following greater there than did Stuart among the Upper Creeks. Even Emistisiguo was willing to set aside his affection for the English to follow the Lower Creek lead. In late September, headmen from the nation announced their decision to Stuart:

We hear there is some difference between the white People and we are all sorry to hear it.... We are all glad to hear you desire us to keep in friendship with all white men, our friends as we dont want to Concearn in the matter but leave you to settle the matter yourselves and will be glad to hear the difference settled and all at peace again.²⁰⁸

It is apparent that in the closing days of 1775 and early 1776, what concerned the Creeks most was not the Choctaw war, or the American Revolution. It was the resumption of trade. James Wright lifted the Georgia embargo in 1775, but the chaos between the colonies was disrupting the supplies that were sorely needed for Creek ways of life. Without guns and munitions Creek warriors could not only not make war against the Choctaws, but they could not

²⁰⁶ *The New-York Gazette*, January 23, 1775.

²⁰⁷ Robinson, *North and South Carolina Treaties*, 379.

²⁰⁸ Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 177-178.

hunt, nor could they provide clothes, blankets, and other European goods upon which their society had become so dependent. On March 2, 1776, Emistisiguo asked that, “the path will be kept Clear and white from Chotey [Chota] to this Nation and from this to Pensacola.” A couple of weeks later, Lower Creek headmen said, “We hope that our new Path will be white and Streight from the Creeks to our White Brothers doors at Pensacola.” In May, Creek delegates met with American representatives in Augusta. The rebels apologized for the delay in supplies but promised they would arrive soon and continued to ask for Creek neutrality. Captain Alleck of Cusseta replied that traders such as Galphin “always supplied me and my people with goods (as far as the Choctaws) and my Ears shall be open to what they have to say, but what Stuart says I will not listen to.”²⁰⁹

Stuart understood that he had to demonstrate British power in order to regain the dying affection of the Creeks. To do so, he decided to do the one thing American rebels could not do: end the Creek-Choctaw War. He found the two nations eager to make an accord. After a decade of bloody conflict that weakened both nations, rival headmen met at Pensacola in the fall of 1776 to bury the hatchet. Stuart recalled:

Both parties appointed to meet in the street before my door; each party had a white flag as an emblem of peace and were highly painted. They halted about three hundred yards distance from each other, their principal chiefs singing the peace song and waving eagles’ tails and swans’ wings over their heads. Then they began to advance slowly when at a signal given a number of young men sallied out from each party and made a sham fight in the space between them. At last the parties met and after saluting each other joined hands in my presence. Their chiefs then came into my house and delivered into my hands two war clubs painted red as the last ceremony of laying down their arms; which I promised to bury very deep in the earth and made them a short congratulatory speech. . . .²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 181-191.

²¹⁰ John Richard Alden, *The South in the Revolution 1763-1789* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 270-274; Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 299.

With that meeting in West Florida, the two belligerent nations, exhausted from combat and mutual antagonism, finally made a peace between themselves. The two peoples would never engage one another on such a large scale again. The great Creek-Choctaw War was finally over.

CONCLUSION

MORE THAN A SEVEN-YEAR WAR

More than a Seven-Year War

The Creek-Choctaw War was the most important event in the American Southeast between the years of 1715 and 1776. Even more than the French and Indian War, the conflict shaped the balance of power in the region and its events shaped American Indian history for decades following its conclusion. It is remarkable that the war has received so little scholarly attention. That should not be the case. The Creek-Choctaw War presents the perfect opportunity to study the inner workings of two indigenous nations in the late colonial era. Obviously, the military tactics and strategies of both peoples are on display. The war also allows scholars the chance to see how those nations adapted to the new set of circumstances pushed upon them as the French and Spanish left the area, and the British alone offered a supply of goods and services.

Fighting between the Creek and Choctaw nations was not novel in 1765. But the ferocity of its combat was. Prior to the war, Creek and Choctaw peoples fought often, but mostly in small skirmishes fueled by the desire to avenge a departed loved one. The squabbles continued for a short while until elders considered the souls avenged and the matter settled. It is apparent that the murder of Suci Nantla and war challenge to the Choctaws was not the act of a united Creek confederacy. Rather, it was yet another challenge to indigenous concepts of masculinity in Indian country. But rather than the call be answered and answered again until finally petering out, the war grew in size. Involving first only a handful of Upper Creek towns against a scattering of Choctaw villages, it metastasized into a rage cloud covering not only the Choctaw and Creek

peoples, but the Chickasaws, Cherokees, English, French, and Spanish. Much of this was due to the English.

With victory over the French finally in hand in 1763, English administrators faced the daunting task on governing the massive new additions of land and people. The Seven Years' War nearly bankrupted the royal coffers, and every effort was made to cut costs wherever possible. In the Northwest, General Sir Jeffrey Amherst sought to do this by eliminating gift-giving practices among the native peoples. The move backfired horribly. A Delaware prophet named Neolin convinced Ottawa war chief Pontiac that Amherst sought to enslave all Indians. Pontiac's response was the first major anti-English pan-Indian alliance. It cost the English thousands of lives, boatloads of money, and Amherst his job.

Amherst's successor, General Thomas Gage, wanted to avoid the fate of his predecessor. He saw in Choctaw leader Alibamon Mingo and Creek headman the Mortar two other men who could equal Pontiac's trouble. Despite the wishes of a young King George III, Gage ordered Superintendent of Southern Indian Affairs John Stuart to foment wars between Indian nations as a way of protecting British citizens and coffers. Gage and Stuart's actions demonstrate that even loyal colonial administrators were willing to defy the king's orders when they believed it to be in His Majesty's best interests.

Neither Gage nor Stuart need have worried about starting a Creek-Choctaw war. By early 1766, the Choctaws gladly accepted the Creek challenge, and the forests of the American Southeast were filled with the sounds of war-whoops. Elders of both nations seemed pleased with the new conflict, believing their consent to the fighting would prove them to be men of action, thereby ensuring their continued claims to power. They also believed the war would redirect violence away from colonial settlers and traders, and for a time this was true. Traders

reported doing big business along the frontier in the late 1760s, no doubt fueled by Indian needs of guns, shot, and powder.

Trade was also a large reason the Creeks enjoyed such success early in the conflict, and why the Chickasaws decided to enter the fracas in 1768. For all their promises to the Choctaws, the British failed to station a gunsmith in Choctaw country in 1765. When guns failed, their owners died. Early in the war, Choctaws were too far removed from the trading paths to enjoy the numbers of traders or quantities of goods that made their way into Creek country. Not only were the Creeks closer to British traders, such as George Galphin at Silver Bluff, they paid lower costs for their supplies. This meant that Creek men could spend proportionately less time hunting deer and more time hunting Choctaws. The Creeks also controlled the main land trading routes heading into Choctaw and Chickasaw country, though this finally incited the Chickasaws to ally with the Choctaws against them in 1768. The results were devastating for the Creeks, who took repeated beatings from the new alliance.

Upper Creek leadership sought, and nearly procured, a peace in 1770. But the actions of Lower Creek warriors prompted a retaliatory exchange from the Choctaws that in turn, dragged Upper Creek headmen back into the war. Even leaders such as Emistisiguo, who searched for a truce at nearly every turn, were honor bound to raise the hatchet.

The war forced Indian leadership to dramatic actions. Both Creek and Choctaw headmen alike believed the English were manipulating the war to their own ends, though many from both sides feared the loss of British goods. Some, such as Coweta Escochabey, made multiple attempts to sway the Spanish into the conflict in an attempt to resurrect the Creek play-off system. Others, like the Mortar, attempted to end the war altogether in hopes of creating a great

pan-Indian alliance against the English. But his dreams died with him at William Strothers's plantation in 1774.

The Mortar was not the only man to die during the war. Alibamon Mingo's departure created a vacuum in Choctaw society. So, too, did the death of the Red Captain, a staunch English ally who perished horribly in 1767. The English spent years cultivating new alliances within the Choctaw confederacy only to see them, too, die at Creek hands. The war consumed hundreds of native lives and took a massive toll on the Indians' economy. When a man died, not only were his martial skills no longer available, but neither were his hunting abilities. A dead father or uncle could not provide for his family, and those responsibilities compounded on his relatives.

Not all souls were destroyed by tomahawks, arrows, and gunshots. As the Creeks waged war against the Choctaws, John Stuart fought against unscrupulous traders that invaded Indian country and flooded the region with rum. It was a battle Stuart could not win. Young men's lives of both sides, but especially Choctaws', were washed away in the river of liquor.

As the war carried on, warriors lost their opportunities to hunt and instead raided frontier settlements for horses, guns, clothes, and food. Indians and settlers died. Instead of providing an outlet to indigenous aggression that saved British lives, the war provided a reason for young men to raid the frontier. So, too, did the settlers who continually muscled their way onto native lands despite the orders of colonial administration, and most notably, the Proclamation of 1763. The British, it turns out, were just as guilty as the Creeks and Choctaws of an inability to control their subjects.

What the British could control, however, was the flow of munitions into Indian country. The war became a one-sided affair after the British finally stopped the Creek trade in 1773. The

results were devastating, much to the pleasure of their European neighbors. Humbled and humiliated, the Creeks begged for peace but would not have it for another three years. The Choctaws, however, continued their own struggles, most especially with alcohol. For all his power, John Stuart was never able to reign in rogue traders in Indian country. Stuart did have the power to manipulate an end to the war, something that was required when American rebels began their insurgency.

“It was a happy circumstance for the Southern states, suffering as they did from Cherokee onslaughts,” wrote John Richard Alden in 1957, “that the belligerent Creeks never threw their full weight into the war on the Southern frontier.”²¹¹ While the Choctaws were too far removed from most of the action to be a factor in the American Revolution, the Creeks were heavily courted by both sides. But they were in no position to join the fray, at least not immediately. For several years Upper and Lower Creek headmen maintained an uneasy neutrality regarding the war before finally pitching in with a half-hearted effort to support the British. Stuart might have noticed this if he had been paying close enough attention. The war with the Choctaws exposed fault lines within the Creek confederacy that would widen further during the American Revolution before erupting fully in 1813.

If anything, the war actually drew together two of the region’s greatest rivals: the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations. After fighting bitterly for the better part of a century, the two united in opposition to a common foe: the Creeks. Clearly, this action paved the way for future amity between the two peoples, and they briefly united as one nation in the 1840s.

For over a decade, the Creek-Choctaw War saturated the American Southeast in native and European blood. Old feuds were tossed aside and new allegiances formed. Once the arbiters

²¹¹ Alden, *The South in the Revolution*, 274.

of power in the region, the Creek confederacy was finally replaced, though not by their battlefield opponent. The new masters of the land came from England, though their grip soon slipped. That its story is often untold is almost tragic: the Creek-Choctaw War should be remembered.

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