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The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery

By KATHRYN E. HOLLAND BRAUND

EMISTESEGUO OF THE LITTLE TALLASSEE, CALLED BY DEERSKIN TRADERS THE Big Fellow, was a prominent Upper Creek warrior and headman in the years preceding the American Revolution. War honors and skillful elocution had earned him the position as spokesman for the majority faction in the Upper Creek Towns, located in what is now central Alabama. John Stuart, the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, was a special friend and ally of the headman. Stuart recognized Emistesequo's importance and ability and bolstered the warrior's position by presenting him with a Great Medal, symbol of His Majesty's pleasure and support, at the 1765 Congress of Pensacola. But by 1772 Emistesequo faced serious challenges in Upper Creek councils. David Taitt, Stuart's deputy to the Creeks, cogently stated the heart of the matter. According to Taitt, political feathers in some Creek towns had been ruffled due to "the respect that has been of late showed to Emistesequo, who unfortunately is of a slave race."¹

While those unfamiliar with Creek society might take this to mean that the leading Upper Creek chief of the late colonial period was a black man, this is most assuredly not the case. The Creeks did not equate slavery with race; indeed, slavery meant different things for Creeks than it did for Europeans. The aim of this article is to examine the institution of slavery among the Creek, or Muscogulge, Indians from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. As time passed, the nature of slavery among the Creeks evolved to include white attitudes and practices. Slavery, even in the Muscogulge Southeast, cannot be discussed outside the context of Africans and their descendants, and this article will also explore how the social structure of the Creeks

¹ Copy of a letter from David Taitt to John Stuart, March 16, 1772, Colonial Office, Class 5, Volume 73, folio 259 (Public Record Office, London). The entire quotation reads: "The nation is divided one part against another which is caused by a jealousy subsisting between the Abeckas and Tallapusses in regard of the respect that has been of late showed to Emistesequo, who unfortunately is of a slave race." Hereinafter these records will be referred to as COS/ with the appropriate volume and the folio number of the first page of the document following. This study is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. BNS-8718934, "Archaeological Excavations at the Early Historic Creek Indian Town of Fusihatchee" (Gregory A. Waselkov, John W. Cottier, and Craig T. Sheldon, Principal Investigators).

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accommodated blacks, both slave and free, who came among them and the impact of these immigrants on Creek history.²

Before the arrival of Europeans and Africans in Creek country, slaves were simply war captives. Enemy warriors captured by the Creeks met certain death at the hands of their captors after enduring hours of ritualized torture, exacted to appease the spirits of those they had slain. The procedure provided a way for the brave to exit this world in a manly fashion. For the Creeks, torture of captured warriors supplied a public catharsis for grief, allowed the clans of those killed by the enemy to obtain blood satisfaction, and cooled the need for prolonged warfare.³

Noncombatant captives—women and young children—were enslaved. The exact nature of their bondage is uncertain. It does seem clear that clans who had lost members on the battlefield took captives into their extended matrilineal households and that most of these “slaves” eventually became part of the family network.⁴ The exact role and duties of these captives are not fully noted in the records, but it is easy to imagine the chores they might have done. Children would have tended the fields, frightened hungry birds from the corn crop, gathered wood and water, and helped collect wild fruits and nuts. Adult women would have performed agricultural labor, tended children, processed deer-skins, and prepared food. In other words, the captives did exactly the same work as that performed by Creek women. In time, it appears that most Indian slaves, if not returned to their own tribe at peace settlements, were adopted into the Creek clan to which they had been

² There are a number of excellent studies on the Creeks and slavery. See J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln, Neb., and London, 1986), Chap. 3; and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *Africans and Creeks: From the Colonial Period to the Civil War* (Westport, Conn., 1979). The best overall studies of Indian-black relations in the Southeast are by Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540–1866* (Knoxville, 1979); William G. McLoughlin, *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789–1861* (Macon, Ga., 1984); James H. Merrell, “The Racial Education of the Catawba Indians,” *Journal of Southern History*, L (August 1984), 363–84; and Daniel H. Usner, Jr., “Frontier Exchange in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Race Relations and Economic Life in Colonial Louisiana, 1699–1783” (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1981), and “American Indians on the Cotton Frontier: Changing Economic Relations with Citizens and Slaves in the Mississippi Territory,” *Journal of American History*, LXXII (September 1985), 297–317.

³ John R. Swanton, *Social Organization and Social Usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin no. 42 (Washington, D. C., 1928; rpt. ed., New York, 1970), 79, 423–24. For a description of Creek torture, which was originally published in London in 1775, see James Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, edited by Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, Tenn., 1930), 416–19. See also Robin F. A. Fabel and Robert R. Rea, “Lieutenant Thomas Campbell’s Sojourn Among the Creeks, November, 1764–May, 1765,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XXXVI (Summer 1974), 108. As late as 1797 Creeks showed Benjamin Hawkins where a number of Cherokees had been burned at the stake some forty years before during the Cherokee War. They related that “young lads and a few women” had been spared death. C. L. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins* (2 vols.; Savannah, Ga., 1980), I, 38.

⁴ See Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, Chap. 1, for a discussion of war captives and their place in Cherokee society.

assigned.⁵ Major Caleb Swan, an American military officer, related that “many individuals, taken in war, are slaves among them; and their children are called, of the slave race, and cannot arrive to much honorary distinction on that account.”⁶ Philadelphia naturalist William Bartram, whose writings on the Creeks provide much valuable information that official records omit, observed firsthand the institution of Indian slavery among the Creeks and left an account in his famous *Travels*. When he visited a Lower Creek (Alachuan) chief who “owned” many Yamasee captives, Bartram noted that they were “dressed better than he [the chief], and served and waited upon him with signs of the most abject fear.” Bartram’s information about the children of Indian slaves appears to be more accurate than Swan’s, for according to Bartram, “The slaves, both male and female, are permitted to marry amongst them: their children are free, and considered in every respect equal to themselves; but the parents continue in a state of slavery as long as they live.”⁷

Such was the case with Emisteseguo, the Great Medal Chief of the Upper Creek Town of Little Tallassee, who was “of a slave race.” Taitt’s passage regarding the headman has occasionally been interpreted to mean that Emisteseguo was a non-Muskogee Creek, or stinkard, since Muskogee Creeks at times referred to stinkards as “slaves.”⁸ It seems more likely that his mother, or possibly his grandmother, had been a war captive/slave adopted by the Tyger clan of the Little Tallassee. Emisteseguo was obviously sensitive on the point; on one occasion he

⁵ Two white women captured by the Creeks in 1792 were treated as slaves. Among the tasks assigned were “hoeing corn and beating meal.” *American State Papers: Class II. Indian Affairs*, Vol. I (Washington, 1832), 634. An example of the return of a captured female prisoner occurred in 1770. See Charles Stuart to John Stuart, June 12, 1770, CO5/71, pt. 2, fo. 25; and Charles Stuart to John Stuart, June 17, 1770, CO5/72, fo. 85. As Theda Perdue notes in *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 11–12, adoption by a clan was essential for full participation in Cherokee life. The same was true in Creek society. Among the Cherokee high status Beloved Women were apparently responsible for the disposition of captives. While less is known concerning Creek Beloved Women, it is likely they performed the same function in Creek society.

⁶ Caleb Swan, “Position and State of Manners and Arts in the Creek or Muskogee Nation, 1791,” in Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, ed., *Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (6 vols.; Philadelphia, 1852–1857), V, 259–60.

⁷ William Bartram, *Travels of William Bartram*, edited by Mark Van Doren (New York, 1955), 164.

⁸ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 17, declares that Emisteseguo, from the Muskogee Upper Creek Town of the Little Tallassee, “in fact was not a Creek, that is, not a Muskogee.” Wright also states that the Tyger clan was usually associated with Hitchitis and other non-Muskogees (p. 19). Yet the Tyger clan was one of only four Creek clans mentioned in British colonial records and was the clan of the leading men of Coweta, widely acknowledged as Muskogees. Reference to “slave race,” when used, as it is here, in the context of Abeika and Tallapoosa rivalry, must surely mean one born of a slave mother rather than one who is a non-Muskogee speaker, as both the Abeika and Tallapoosa divisions were Muskogee. The headman’s origins and the meaning of Taitt’s passage will doubtless provide fodder for historical debate for some time to come, due to the scanty nature of the documentary record and the continuing debate over the ethnicity of various Creek towns, clans, and individuals.

thought it necessary to remind the governor of Georgia that he was of the Tyger clan and that all Tygers were of royal descent.⁹ His successful career is ample proof that adoption by a Creek clan meant full incorporation into Creek society.

The matrilineal clans of the Creeks, like those of other southern Indians, regulated all aspects of an individual's life by providing an elaborate set of social rules and personal etiquette. Clan custom determined where a man sat in the town square, which women he could legally wed, when he went to war, and even with whom he was allowed to joke. Those without membership in a Creek clan had no rights—unless they were protected by a powerful foreign government with whom the Creeks were at peace. Among the Creeks, slaves had no rights within the economic or social structure. Thus it is easy to understand the differences Bartram noted in the conduct of slave and free Indians. He found enslaved Indians “the tamest, the most abject creatures that we can possibly imagine: mild, peaceable, and tractable, they seem to have no will or power to act but as directed by their masters; whilst the free Indians, on the contrary, are bold, active, and clamorous. They differ as widely from each other as the bull from the ox.”¹⁰

In addition to the adoption of individual war captives by Creek clans, Creek towns also took defeated and displaced tribal groups under their protection. Caleb Swan noted in the 1790s that “it appears long to have been a maxim of their policy, to give equal liberty and protection to tribes conquered by themselves, as well as to those vanquished by others”¹¹ Many white observers attributed the strength of Creek political organization to the incorporation of those they had conquered. This facet of Creek social and political organization was an important factor in maintaining population in the face of increased warfare and epidemic disease that had followed the initial contact between the southeastern Indians and European explorers and colonists. The result was a confederacy of towns composed primarily of Muskogean speakers but also peopled by other ethnic groups including Yuchis, Natchez, Apalachee, Chickasaws, Alabamas, Tuskegees, and Hitchitis.¹² Such

⁹ Georgia Council Minutes, September 6, 1768, in Allen D. Candler, Kenneth Coleman, and Milton Ready, eds., *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (32 vols. to date; Atlanta, 1904–1916; and Athens, 1974–), X, 582.

¹⁰ Bartram, *Travels*, 164.

¹¹ Swan, “Position and State of Manners and Arts,” 259–60 (quotation on p. 259).

¹² Other tribes, including the Catawbans, also accepted refugee groups into their ranks. The Cherokee adopted several other small tribes, such as the Tuskegees, and the Choctaw seem to have incorporated several previously separate tribes into their ranks. However, the Creeks did it more often and on a larger scale, and it appears that especially among the Creeks the remnant tribes retained much of their individual heritage. James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbans and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill and London, 1989), 110–13; Robert S. Cotterill, *The Southern Indians: The Story of the Civilized Tribes Before Removal* (Norman, Okla., 1954), 6–8; Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 235–36; and John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (Washington, 1946; rpt.

diversity was at once a source of strength as well as weakness, and the process of allowing foreigners to settle on Creek lands under Creek jurisdiction eventually provided the means for the incorporation of both white and black settlers into the confederacy. Bartram, that astute observer of the Creek condition, noted that they were really no more than "remnants of conquered nations, united"¹³

With the arrival of Europeans and the establishment of trade between the Creek towns and the English settlements in Carolina and the French and Spanish settlements in Louisiana and Florida, the fate of captured Indian slaves changed. As lucrative markets for slave laborers developed, captured enemies were traded to Carolinians for European manufactured goods. The best-known victims of the Creeks in this Indian slave trade were the Apalachee Indians. At first, the Apalachees were middlemen in the Creek-Spanish trade that grew slowly after the establishment of the Spanish mission system in northern Florida. In 1702 the Creeks reacted to the market demand for slaves and horses by raiding the Apalachee settlements. When the Apalachees attempted to retaliate and marched northward to punish the Creek raiders, they were repulsed by better-armed Creek forces who enslaved or killed six hundred of the Apalachees. The raids climaxed in 1704 with the destruction of the Spanish mission villages by Col. James Moore and his "army" of fifty Carolinians and an estimated one thousand Creek warriors.¹⁴

With the destruction of the Apalachee villages and the dispersal of the survivors to Carolina, the Creeks sought new victims with whom to supply the Carolina slave markets. Thomas Nairne, sent by South Carolina as an emissary to the Creeks and the Chickasaws, recorded in 1708 that Creek slave catchers were "obliged to goe down as farr on the point of Florida as the firm land will permitt. They have drove the Floridians to the Islands of the Cape, have brought in and sold many

ed., New York, 1969), 150–51, 196, 200.

¹³ William Bartram, "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians, 1789," with Prefatory and Supplementary Notes by E. G. Squier, *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*, Vol. III, pt. 1 (New York, 1853), 12. The incorporation of displaced groups was a continuing process in Creek political life. See David Taitt to John Stuart, March 16, 1772, CO5/73, fo. 259.

¹⁴ For more information on the Apalachee and Colonel Moore's raids see John H. Hann, *Apalachee: The Land between the Rivers* (Gainesville, Fla., 1988); B. Calvin Jones, "Colonel James Moore and the Destruction of the Apalachee Missions in 1704," *Bureau of Historic Sites and Properties, Bulletin No. 2* (Tallahassee, Fla., 1972); Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670–1732* (Ann Arbor, 1929), 76–81, 85–86; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of the American Indians in the Old South* (New York, 1981), 112–16; and Mark F. Boyd, Hale G. Smith, and John W. Griffin, *Here They Once Stood: The Tragic End of the Apalachee Missions* (Gainesville, Fla., 1951). William R. Snell, "Indian Slavery in Colonial South Carolina, 1671–1795" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1972) explores the topic of Indian slavery in detail, as does Amy Ellen Friedlander, "Indian Slavery in Proprietary South Carolina" (M.A. thesis, Emory University, 1975); and James W. Covington, "Some Observations Concerning the Florida-Carolina Indian Slave Trade," *Florida Anthropologist*, XX (March-June 1967), 10–18.

Hundreds of them, and Dayly now Continue that Trade so that in some few years they'll Reduce these Barbarians to a farr less number."¹⁵

By the early years of the eighteenth century the Creeks had finished what European diseases had begun: the depopulation of the aboriginal tribes of the Florida peninsula. But there were still other victims, including neighboring Choctaws. As was Creek custom, enemy males were honored with a warrior's death, while their women and children made the long trip to Charleston, and from there, to the sugar islands.¹⁶ In exchange for their prisoners, the Creeks received English-made guns, which supported their slaving efforts and made them the best-armed and most feared Indians in the Southeast.¹⁷ According to Captain Nairne, slaving made sound economic sense. He observed that among the Chickasaws success on slaving expeditions not only brought honor because they had captured an enemy but also "procures them a whole Estate at once, one slave brings a Gun, ammunition, horse, hatchet, and a suit of Cloathes, which would not be procured without much tedious toil a hunting."¹⁸ The same observation held true for the Creek raiders. Moreover, the energetic Creeks then claimed the newly vacated land as their own by right of conquest.¹⁹ Trade reforms enacted on the heels of the Yamasee War of 1715-1716, the rise of a market for deerskins, and the wider availability of black slaves on the mainland and on island colonies largely ended the Indian slave trade.²⁰

During the Yamasee War, some blacks were believed to have joined the Indians against South Carolina.²¹ Such cooperation, though sporadic, continued after the war as Yamasee Indians assisted blacks in their efforts to reach freedom in St. Augustine. In the years that followed the conflict, many of these escapees proved to be valuable allies, working closely with Spain and their Yamasee allies to help thwart the developing trade relationship between the Creeks and the British

¹⁵ Thomas Nairne, *Nairne's Muskogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River*, edited with an introduction by Alexander Moore (Jackson, Miss., and London, 1988), 75.

¹⁶ Snell, "Indian Slavery in Colonial South Carolina," 110, 133-34; and Peter H. Wood, "Indian Servitude in the Southeast," in Wilcomb E. Washburn, ed., *History of Indian-White Relations*, Vol. IV of *Handbook of North American Indians*, William C. Sturtevant, general editor (9 vols. published out of sequence; Washington, D. C., 1978-), 407-9.

¹⁷ Vernon J. Knight, Jr., and Sheree L. Adams, "A Voyage to the Mobile and Tomeh in 1700, With Notes on the Interior of Alabama," *Ethnohistory*, XXVIII (Spring 1981), 182.

¹⁸ Nairne, *Muskogean Journals*, 47-48.

¹⁹ John Stuart's Report to the Board of Trade, 1764, CO323/17, fo. 240.

²⁰ Converse D. Clowse, "Charleston Export Trade, 1717-1737" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1963), 65, 83-84; and Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974), 39-40, 43.

²¹ Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 162-86. South Carolina slaves were armed so that they could help defend the colony during the war, but there is very limited evidence that they accompanied Indian war parties against white settlers. Wood, *Black Majority*, 129-30; and Jane Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," *American Historical Review*, XCV (February 1990), 15.

colonies. Blacks likewise assisted the French at Mobile. British, Spanish, and French diplomats were not very adept at learning the various Indian dialects they encountered among the Creeks. Black slaves, forced to seek the aid and assistance of Indians, found it prudent to listen and learn. Black linguists served all three European powers as interpreters, messengers, spies, and, occasionally, as soldiers.²²

After 1716, and particularly with the establishment of Georgia in 1733, Creek relations with the European colonies were firmly tied to the trade of deerskins for manufactured items. Creek slavers became commercial hunters. Though they allowed themselves to be courted by all the Europeans, the British tie was the strongest because of increasing Creek trade dependency and the unreliability of French and Spanish supply lines. At the same time that traders from South Carolina and Georgia established stores in the Creek towns, they also introduced black chattel slavery. It was through the deerskin trade that Creeks came to observe and mingle on a regular basis with blacks, whether of African or American birth.²³ By the 1750s most traders living in the Creek country had at least one slave.²⁴

After 1763 the phenomenal growth of Georgia and the active development of the colonies of East and West Florida by Britain caused a tremendous increase in the number of black slaves on lands adjacent to or within Creek territory. Occasionally white squatters—and their black slaves—felt the wrath of Creek raiders who attempted to drive them off Creek hunting grounds. Some slaves, fleeing bondage in the English colonies, found their way to Creek country. Thus during the colonial period Creek people primarily encountered blacks as employees or servants of deerskin traders, as laborers for white settlers, or as refugees seeking protection from the oppression of slavery. And slowly, some Creeks began acquiring their own black slaves.²⁵

It is unclear exactly when the Muscogulge first laid eyes on Africans, but it most likely came during the Hernando de Soto expedition, for one

²² "Captain Fitch's Journal to the Creeks, 1725," in Newton D. Mereness, ed., *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York, 1916; rpt. ed., New York, 1961), 185–86, 199–200; and J. Leitch Wright, Jr., "Blacks in British East Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LIV (April 1976), 427.

²³ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "Mutual Convenience—Mutual Dependence: The Creeks, Augusta, and the Deerskin Trade, 1733–1783" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1986), 17–22, 42. Names occasionally provide clues to slaves' points of origin. In the case of David Taitt, discussed below, several slave names were recorded. Most are the usual names given to slaves, including Toby, Tom, Ned, Billey, Jemmy, and Sandy. One, perhaps reflecting African birth, was listed as Frederick or Yama. Account of Money Paid for the Undermentioned Negroes, March 31, 1779, CO5/79, fo. 35.

²⁴ See William L. McDowell, Jr., ed., *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754–1765* (Columbia, S. C., 1970), 357, for a 1757 list of seven traders, each of whom owned one or two slaves.

²⁵ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 83–84; and Braund, "Mutual Convenience—Mutual Dependence," 42, 60, 195–96.

of the deserters from his ranks was a black man.²⁶ During the remainder of the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, Creeks became accustomed to blacks coming among them either as escapees or as slaves of white traders and colonial officials. And when Creeks visited Charleston or Savannah or stopped at frontier trading posts to exchange their deerskins for manufactured goods, black slaves were always in sight. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the Creeks were beginning to assimilate the white view of the black race. In the late 1730s visiting Yuchi Indians were pressed for their views on the afterlife by Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck, who accompanied the devout Salzburger to Georgia. Von Reck related this "imperfect" view of Muscogulge life after death: good hunters ascended to a white man who empowered them to catch game. Poor hunters were condemned to an afterlife "below," where a black man ruled a world of "thorns, thickets and underbrush."²⁷

For the Creeks, their most frequent contact with blacks came from day-to-day interactions with traders' slaves. There were intermittent efforts by colonial and imperial authorities to limit the use of blacks in the deerskin trade. While it was understood that many traders would employ black slaves as packhorsemen, they were prohibited from keeping slaves at their stores on a regular basis.²⁸ But these regulations were widely ignored, and blacks performed a variety of tasks in the Indian trade. For the most part they tended horses, assisted in building storehouses, helped with the loading and unloading of trade goods and deerskins, tended crops and cattle in towns, helped traders in their stores, and acted as personal servants and interpreters. Some of the labor performed by black males, such as collecting wood and tending vegetable patches, were traditionally viewed by the Creeks as female tasks. Black men laboring at women's work reinforced the notion, in the eyes of Creek warriors at least, that black men were their inferiors.²⁹

²⁶ Earlier Spanish expeditions as well as shipwrecks may have provided Creeks with their first glimpse of Africans. Wright, *Only Land They Knew*, 27–52.

²⁷ Kristian Hvidt, ed., *Von Reck's Voyage: Drawings and Journal of Philip Georg Friedrich Von Reck* (Savannah, 1980), 49.

²⁸ William L. McDowell, Jr., ed., *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21, 1750–August 7, 1754* (Columbia, S. C., 1958), 88. Creek traders agreed in 1767 to refrain from employing "any Negro, Indian, or half-breed, professing himself an Indian, or under Indian government, as a factor or deputy." They also agreed to provide lists of the names and employments of all "Negroes or mulattoes" they retained to the Creek commissary and to post bond for their good behavior. Shortly after the regulations were adopted, they were struck down by the home government, and to date no list has been uncovered. "Regulations for the Better Carrying on the Trade with the Indian Tribes in the Southern District," John Stuart to Lord Shelburne, April 1, 1767, CO5/68, fo. 110.

²⁹ John Rippon, ed., "An Account of the Life of Mr. David George, from Sierra Leone to Africa, given by himself in a conversation with Brother Rippon of London, and Brother Pearce of Birmingham," *The Baptist Annual Register for 1790, 1791, 1792, & part of 1793, Including Sketches of the State of Religion Among Different Denominations of Good Men at Home and Abroad* (London, 1793), 474; and Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "Guardians of Tradition and

Creeks resented the economic impact that traders' black slaves had on their local village economy. Blacks who raised vegetables, performed household chores, and tended cattle had an adverse effect on the local trade in foodstuffs. This trade in fresh produce and processed food was essential to help offset the needs of Creek widows, orphans, and old people who were unable to procure deerskins for trade. When the local trader established a plantation replete with slave labor, the poorest Creeks suffered. To alleviate the problem headmen sought to prohibit the importation of plows, complained of cattle herds that the traders established, and protested to colonial officials that black slaves were being used to produce food in Creek towns.³⁰

It is hard to deduce the actual number of blacks employed in the deerskin trade. There are no records of blacks acting as independent traders.³¹ Even more difficult is the task of assessing their impact on Creek society. Clearly blacks were a minority.³² When in Creek towns, blacks, like their employers, joined in games and dancing, courted Creek women, drank rum, swapped tall tales with warriors, and, as much as possible, adhered to the rules set by their Muscogulge hosts. Neither the British Indian Department nor the individual colonies utilized black interpreters to the same extent that the Spanish and French did because a large number of reliable English and Scottish traders spoke the Indian languages and willingly acted as "official" interpreters when called upon.

Creek contact with slaves employed by their traders was personal and intimate. The Indians understood the fine distinctions made by the Europeans concerning slavery and race, accepted these values, and, to an extent, wove them into their own culture. Less personal was the increasing contact between the Creeks and the settlers and their slaves who cleared more and more Indian hunting land with every passing season—and with every new treaty. Georgia's black population was

Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century," *American Indian Quarterly*, XIV (Summer 1990), 242–44.

³⁰ The trade in foodstuffs was extremely important to women. For example, the headman of Saugahatchee told Benjamin Hawkins in 1797 that the women in his town needed a trader willing to "supply them with salt and thread for such articles of food as they can spare." *Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796–1806*, Vol. IX of *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah, Ga., 1916), 246; Bartram, "Observations," 48; and Proceedings of a Congress with the Upper Creeks, October 29–November 2, 1771, in K. G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770–1783* (21 vols., Dublin, Ireland, 1972–1979), III, 224–25.

³¹ Some scholars have speculated that the Black Factor, a Creek or mixed-blood trader in the early nineteenth century, might have been black or of Creek-black descent. Wright, *Only Land They Knew*, 76. This is unlikely, as white observers, particularly Benjamin Hawkins, were prone to note the racial composition of prominent Indians. The appellation is not common, but it is not unusual. It is more likely that a black trader would have been called the Negro Factor.

³² In 1757 South Carolina agent Daniel Pepper stated that most of the traders had slaves but enumerated only eight slaves held in the Creek towns, which was a violation of the traders' licences. McDowell, ed., *Documents, 1754–1765*, p. 357.

slight until the early 1760s. Following the Seven Years' War, settlers and their slaves flocked to Georgia, settling on the fertile ground that had once been Creek territory. By the 1770s blacks composed roughly half the population of Georgia. British development of the Floridas was also dependent on black labor, and after 1763 the slave population of both East and West Florida rose.³³ Even with the establishment of clearly marked boundary lines that separated Creek and British territory, white settlers poured onto Creek lands with their slaves. In 1772 Creek hunters spotted one settler and forty slaves settled "two days march" west of the Georgia boundary line.³⁴ White people who invaded the Creek domain subjected these imported Africans to a slavery vastly different from the "slavery" of the aboriginal southerners. Chattel slavery, as practiced in the English colonies after 1763, was harsh; for the first time Creeks witnessed the spectacle of healthy men and women subjected to a lifetime of servitude. Moreover, their status as slaves was inherited by their offspring.

Creeks could, and often did, visit the plantations of the white people. Sometimes they brought deerskins and fresh meat to trade, sometimes they simply came to look around. On many occasions they came to complain that the white homesteads were actually on Creek land or that settlers' cows had strayed onto their hunting grounds. These complaints might take the form of menacing action, destruction of livestock, or outright attack. The most spectacular offensive against white settlers came on Christmas Day 1773, when renegade warriors, without the authorization of their headmen, stormed onto newly ceded Creek lands in Georgia and laid waste to several homesteads. Settlers and slaves fought the hostiles together, and Creeks took scalps from both races before the trouble was quickly mended by leading men from both sides.³⁵ On such occasions, black slaves and their white masters were viewed as common enemies by Creeks who resented the degradation and loss of their hunting lands.

Stories of Creek atrocities against frontier inhabitants, both black and white, were loudly and frequently repeated by white slaveholders as a

³³ Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730–1775* (Athens, Ga., 1984), 104, 126; and Robin F. A. Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida, 1763–1783* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., and London, 1988), 17–21. See Peter H. Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Race and Region, 1685–1790," in Peter H. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley, eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln, Neb., 1989), 35–103.

³⁴ Talk from the Headmen and Warriors of the Upper Creek nation to John Stuart, May 1, 1771, CO5/72, fo. 346. For information on the boundary line see Louis De Vorse, Jr., *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 1763–1775* (Chapel Hill, 1966).

³⁵ Braund, "Mutual Convenience—Mutual Dependence," 194–200. Earlier troubles had occurred at the Long Canes region in South Carolina. Less dramatic were the numerous occasions when hunter/warriors slaughtered livestock they found wandering across the boundary line, stole horses from frontier corrals, or merely complained to British officials concerning boundary violations.

means to discourage slaves from seeking refuge among the Indians. It deterred most blacks held in bondage from setting out for Indian towns. But some slaves did seek a better life among the Indians. In 1725 Captain Tobias Fitch, in his capacity as Indian Commissioner for South Carolina, was enraged when he encountered an escaped Carolina slave sitting in the Apalachicola square ground "in a Bould Maner." Fitch tried to recover the man, along with several others, with little success.³⁶ Prior to 1763 many slaves had hoped to find refuge in Spanish Florida, and many passed through Creek lands on their way to St. Augustine. After 1763 the Indian country itself became their refuge, as the British took over the administration of both East and West Florida.³⁷ Black slaves in Georgia, of course, did not have far to run to reach the Creek country.

It was Crown policy to thwart friendliness between Indians and blacks for fear the two groups might combine forces against the minority white population.³⁸ Thus colonial officials went to great lengths to insure that the Creeks and other southeastern Indians did not form "unnatural alliances" with these black runaways. The obvious solution to this perceived threat was to reward Creek hunters for returning runaway slaves. Though the Georgia Trustees forbade slavery in their infant colony, they also included provisions for the return of slaves in their first treaty with the Creeks. Indians who delivered slaves to garrisons along the Creek-Anglo border were to receive four blankets or two guns or other goods of the same value. If a slave was killed by the Indians, they were to be paid one blanket for the return of his head.³⁹ South Carolina had also included such provisions in their early treaties with the Creeks. Bounties gradually improved, and by 1763 an Indian hunter was rewarded with a gun and three blankets for each captured slave. This was roughly the equivalent of forty pounds of dressed deerskin. An average Creek hunter probably produced about one hundred pounds of dressed deerskin per year for trade. Thus the capture

³⁶ "Captain Fitch's Journal to the Creeks, 1725," 184. This particular man was with visiting Yamasee Indians and a Spanish diplomat dispatched from St. Augustine. Fitch was duly alarmed by reports of several more escaped slaves residing among the Creeks: three in the Okfuskee (p. 195), one who lived among the "lower Tallopoopes and Mixt with the Stinging-lingo Indians" (non-Muskogee Creeks) (p. 199), and another at Apalachicola (p. 205). He attempted to recover all those he encountered, with varying degrees of success. He also noted the presence of a captive white woman among the Creeks (p. 193).

³⁷ John J. TePaske, "The Fugitive Slave: Intercolonial Rivalry and Spanish Slave Policy, 1687–1764," in Samuel Proctor, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Florida and Its Borderlands* (Gainesville, Fla., 1975), 1–12; and Larry W. Kruger and Robert Hall, "Fort Mose: A Black Fort in Spanish Florida," *Griot*, VI (Spring 1987), 39–48.

³⁸ The reasons behind this effort to keep the two races apart are explored by William S. Willis, "Divide and Rule: Red, White, and Black in the Southeast," *Journal of Negro History*, XLVIII (July 1963), 157–76.

³⁹ "Oglethorpe's Treaty with the Lower Creek Indians," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, IV (March 1920), 14.

and return of one runaway meant substantial earnings.⁴⁰ The reward was later boosted to the equivalent of fifty pounds of dressed leather per slave delivered to agents in the Indian towns, and sixty pounds for slaves delivered directly to Savannah.⁴¹

Such rewards had the desired effects, and Creeks showed no remorse in returning most fleeing slaves to their white masters. Some fugitive slaves, newly arrived from Africa, bore "country marks," spoke little English, and had little knowledge of the new land or its native peoples. Others spoke English well and presumably had acquired some knowledge of Creek habits. Most were fleeing from the Atlantic seaboard westward, but after 1763 some blacks, newly transported to West Florida, attempted to recross Creek lands to reach Georgia, as did Neptune, Bacchus, Apollo, and Limerick, the latter being a "stout seasoned fellow" with a knowledge of English.⁴² From 1763 until the outbreak of the American Revolution, the colonial governments bordering the Creeks' lands paid approximately fifty such rewards.⁴³ There are doubtless many more that the surviving record does not relate, and certainly there would have been many instances in which Creeks helped traders and settlers capture slaves for rewards that were paid directly by the slave owners and not by the colonies and were therefore not noted in the official records. Additionally, many captive runaways from South Carolina and Georgia were probably taken by the Indians to West Florida or Louisiana and sold directly to buyers eager to obtain slave labor.⁴⁴

This system did not always work exactly as planned, since many Creeks, for a variety of reasons, were hesitant to force slaves to return to their former masters. At times, traders and government officials

⁴⁰ Braund, "Mutual Convenience—Mutual Dependence," 122. Exchange rate is taken from a "Tariff of Trade in the Creek Nation agreed upon between the Traders and Indians at a Congress held at Augusta 27 May 1767," in *Journal of the Superintendent's Proceedings* (April 21, 1767–June 6, 1767), *Papers of General Thomas Gage Relating to His Command in North America, 1762–1776* (William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.).

⁴¹ John Stuart to Lord Germain, September 15, 1777, CO5/79, fo. 7; and Martha Condray Searcy, "The Introduction of African Slavery into the Creek Nation," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, LXVI (Spring 1982), 24.

⁴² Advertisement from the Savannah *Georgia Gazette*, August 17, 1768, in Lathan A. Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790* (4 vols.; Westport, Conn., and London, 1983), IV, 31. In the case of escaped slave Peter, he had been owned by a resident of Pensacola and had been taken overland and sold in Georgia. When he escaped, his new Georgia owners assumed he would go back through the Creek nation in an attempt to return to Pensacola. *Ibid.*, 43. A slave named Limerick is listed in the will of George Galphin. Galphin's will is printed in Brent H. Holcomb, *Ninety Six District, South Carolina Journal of the Court of Ordinary, Inventory Book, Will Book, 1781–1786* (Easley, S. C., 1978), 41–50.

⁴³ See Searcy, "Introduction of African Slavery," 22–27, for a summary of these. They are from the CO5 files, which include Stuart's correspondence, as well as from the official records of Georgia and East and West Florida.

⁴⁴ See Fabel, *Economy of British West Florida*, Chap. 2, for the best discussion of slavery in West Florida.

attempted to capture runaway slaves who were seen “sculking” in various Creek towns.⁴⁵ Creek commissary Roderick McIntosh faced this problem in 1767. After delivering talks to Creek headmen demanding that they abide by treaty provisions regarding the return of runaways for rewards, he was able to obtain seven escapees. Nine others, fearing they would also be handed over, made their escape. Of the nine, only one was recaptured. Another was apparently killed and scalped and his scalp was turned over to the commissary.⁴⁶ John Stuart was very pleased with the effort, and he believed that the action could not “fail of having a very good Effect, by breaking that Intercourse between the Negroes & Savages which might have been attended with very troublesome Consequences had it Continued.”⁴⁷ Still, it is obvious that Stuart was too optimistic about ending the cooperation between the Creeks and the runaways. The Creeks were expert trackers. According to the account of one slave that they captured, “They can tell the Black people’s track from their own, because they are hollow in the midst of their feet, and the Black’s feet are flatter than theirs.”⁴⁸ Surely, determined Creek warriors, renowned for their cunning and tracking ability, would have been able to retake the slaves had they so desired. It seems obvious that the remaining seven were given refuge by friendly Creeks. McIntosh himself noted that one headman had five slaves in his possession and “not all the Rhetorick of the other Headmen could oblige him to resign them.”⁴⁹ The headman’s motives for refusing to give up his captives are not clear, and he could have been simply offering sanctuary to the slaves or using them to display his contempt for the commissary or actively acquiring slaves for himself.

Creek attitudes toward returning runaway slaves are best exemplified by the unfortunate experiences of David Taitt, the British agent to the Upper Creeks, when he tried to enforce treaty terms by collecting runaways and rewarding their Creek captors. In May 1775 Taitt collected six fugitives and paid the required reward. He then employed Indian guards to escort the unlucky captives back to slavery in Georgia. Somehow, four of the six escaped. Tuckabatchee warriors managed to recapture Toby and Ned, and Taitt was forced to pay a reward for them again. These slaves, together with others Taitt had collected, were again sent off under heavy guard to Savannah. There were more escapes. A Creek warrior killed one of the escapees, another drowned while crossing a river, four were retaken by Creeks who demanded a reward

⁴⁵ McDowell, ed., *Documents, 1750–1754*, p. 272.

⁴⁶ Roderick MackIntosh to John Stuart, November 16, 1767, in John Stuart to Thomas Gage, December 26, 1767, Gage Papers; and Charleston *South-Carolina Gazette*, June 20, 1768.

⁴⁷ John Stuart to Thomas Gage, July 2, 1768, Gage Papers.

⁴⁸ Rippon, ed., “Account of the Life of Mr. David George,” 474.

⁴⁹ MackIntosh to Stuart, November 16, 1767, in Stuart to Gage, December 26, 1767, Gage Papers.

for their recapture, and one remained at large. By this time fighting along the Georgia frontier between rebels and Loyalists made it difficult to attempt another trek eastward, so Taitt sent the fugitives and their heavily armed Creek wardens to Florida. It is not surprising to learn that there were yet more escapes and additional rewards, and all the while some of the escapees "baffled all the Endeavours of their Escourt to retake them." Apart from the rewards given to the captors, which were paid in trade goods, Taitt incurred many other expenses in connection with these slaves. In addition to providing food and clothing for the runaways while they were in his possession, Taitt had to hire horses and guards, provision them, pay for handcuffs for several of the slaves, and "reimburse the Indians for items the slaves stole" while they were transporting them. In the end, Taitt paid over £114.1.10, besides trade goods given as rewards, for the capture and repeated retaking of the slaves.⁵⁰ Though Taitt appeared not to notice, the Creeks clearly had invented a very lucrative game. Only when the escort included a number of white men hired by Taitt did the slaves finally complete the trip to West Florida.⁵¹

Almost without exception until the early decades of the nineteenth century, it was black men with whom the Creeks had contact. Yet occasionally black women were carried into the Creek towns or believed to be hiding among the Indians. At least one of the slaves detained by Taitt was a woman, Peggy Evans, who had been brought into Creek territory by trader William Oates. Taitt later allowed Oates to sell her to a citizen of West Florida. At the "Instigation" of Peggy Evans, John Linder, a Swiss engineer who had a plantation on the Tensaw River, filed a lawsuit in 1788 in an attempt to gain possession of a black woman working on Alexander McGillivray's plantation. Peggy claimed that the woman, Rachael, was her sister, and McGillivray noted that both women were "Molattoe."⁵² In 1769 Sarah, who was described as "a tall Guiney wench, with her country marks down each side of her face, and her teeth look as if they had been filed," and her male companion were "taken up" by the Creek Indians in Georgia. The record is unclear about their fate or the reaction of the Creek people to an African woman.⁵³ Thirty years later, Polly Russell, a free woman of mixed-blood from South Carolina, was abducted and sold into slavery in the Creek

⁵⁰ Account of Money Paid for the Undermentioned Negroes, March 31, 1779, CO5/79, fo. 35.

⁵¹ Taitt turned the slaves over to the deputy provost marshal of West Florida, who despite a lawsuit by Taitt, sold the slaves for his own profit. Taitt's hapless efforts are duly recorded in John Stuart to Lord Germain, September 15, 1777, CO5/79, fo. 7 and Case of David Taitt, CO5/79, fo. 9 ff.

⁵² John Walton Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Norman, Okla., 1938), 212. McGillivray was infuriated by Linder's actions and stated that Linder was not the lawful owner of Peggy Evans.

⁵³ Advertisement from the Savannah *Georgia Gazette*, April 26, 1769, in Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, IV, 36.

country.⁵⁴ Such women were forced to adjust to their new life and to learn the language and customs of the Creeks. Black women, like their male counterparts, occasionally served as interpreters for whites who came into the Indian country.⁵⁵

And, as human nature dictated, some Creeks were attracted to the black escapees and to the slaves of the traders. On July 4, 1743, William Stephens of Georgia noted in his journal that, among the Creeks, "Simple Fornication is allowed, and passes too current among 'em, White and Black promiscuously . . ."⁵⁶ Occasionally romance turned to riot. In 1760 a black slave belonging to John Ross, the trader at Sugatspoges, got into an argument with a local warrior over the slave's wife, an Indian woman. The warrior killed the slave, and when Ross and a packhorseman interfered, they too were killed.⁵⁷ Fights and hostility among Creek men and the whites and blacks who competed for the attentions of Creek women were not uncommon.

The racially mixed offspring borne by Creek women suffered no discrimination in Creek social organization. Rather, the individual was born a member of the mother's clan. Thus the child of a Creek woman was always a Creek regardless of the race or nationality of the father.⁵⁸ And there were no limits to the possible combinations. One prominent deerskin trader's mixed-blood daughter had two children by a black man.⁵⁹ Sophia Durant, the oldest sister of Alexander McGillivray and owner of a sizeable number of black slaves, married a man of Creek-African descent.⁶⁰ So pervasive was miscegenation, both in the

⁵⁴ Florette Henri, *The Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins, 1796–1816* (Norman, Okla., and London, 1986), 127; and Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 254.

⁵⁵ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 13. In 1796 Hawkins recorded "the few Indian men at home visited me, I had a conversation with them, not very interesting, as my interpreter, a black woman, was not very intelligent."

⁵⁶ E. Merton Coulter, ed., *The Journal of William Stephens, 1741–1743* (Athens, Ga., 1958), 223.

⁵⁷ For an account of the Ross murder see *Charleston South-Carolina Gazette*, June 14, 1760–June 21, 1760. The event led to a general uprising against the traders, and eleven others were murdered that day. While trade abuses contributed to the animosity, personal grievances played a large role in starting the massacre. See David H. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540–1783* (Norman, Okla., 1967), 216–28.

⁵⁸ The reverse was not true. Since Creeks traced descent through the female line, a child sired by a Creek man and a non-Creek woman would not have been considered a member of any Creek clan and, therefore, not a Creek. Major Swan noted that the only difference between black and Creek women was that the latter "have Indian children." Swan, "Position and State of Manners and Arts," 272. Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society*, 12–18, explores the role of nonclan members, the *atsi nahsa'i*, among the Cherokee. See Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, 1976), 184–96, for a discussion of matrilineal kinship.

⁵⁹ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 78–79. The trader was Robert Grierson. One of his Indian-white descendants, George Washington Grayson, claimed this "marriage" to a black man was a "lasting cloud over his family's name" (p. 78).

⁶⁰ Hawkins described him as "a man of good figure, dull and stupid, a little mixed with African blood." Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 24. Earlier accounts related that he was of French descent. Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 62.

European colonies surrounding the Creek country and in the Creek towns themselves, that a variety of descriptive terms emerged to describe the multihued result of this intimate racial mixing. Widely used and undoubtedly covering a multitude of mixtures, the term *mustee*, from the Spanish *mestizo*, was generally understood to denote the offspring of a white-Indian relationship. Generally *mulatto* denoted the product of white and black admixture, while *zambo* indicated an Indian-black mixture. When these individuals combined to produce a tripartite mixture, confusion was the inevitable result. There are in fact numerous other descriptive terms that were applied, from the common *half-breed* and *black Indian* to the more exotic *quadroon*. In the current parlance of scholarly discussion, the all-encompassing term *mixed-blood* has become, understandably, the description of choice. For all the discussion and concern these mixtures have generated since the eighteenth century, the plain truth of the matter is that the Creeks themselves cared little for such distinctions. In the period under discussion, Creeks considered clan affiliation more important than skin color. Creeks of any race were known not as mustees and zambos but as Tygers, Bears, or Eagles.⁶¹

While most Creeks who had contact with black slaves did so either as slave catchers or through contact with slaves employed in the deerskin trade, a small number of Creeks were themselves retaining black slaves by the 1770s.⁶² To date only one slave narrative has been uncovered relating to the experiences of an escaped slave who found his way to the Creek country. That slave, David George, was a remarkable man, a first-generation American born of African parents in Essex County, Virginia, some sixty miles from Williamsburg. His master, a Mr. Chapel, beat his slaves severely, including George and members of his family. George related that "Master's rough and cruel usage was the reason of my running-away."⁶³ He escaped on foot and was assisted in his flight by white people who helped him reach the Pee Dee River. There he found work, but eventually word of a reward for his capture

⁶¹ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 80–83; Jack D. Forbes, "Mustees, Half-Breeds and Zambos in Anglo North America: Aspects of Black-Indian Relations," *American Indian Quarterly*, VII (Fall 1983), 57–83; and "Mulattoes and People of Color in Anglo-North America: Implications for Black-Indian Relations," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, XII (Summer 1984), 17–61; and Wright, *Only Land They Knew*, 252–78.

⁶² In *Africans and Creeks*, Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., states that "there is at present no evidence that the Indians themselves, except in the case of Mary Bosomworth, held Africans as slaves, although at times they were reluctant or uncooperative in returning runaways" (p. 22). But Mary Musgrove Bosomworth's land grants and slaves were outside Creek jurisdiction in Georgia. For information on Musgrove see E. Merton Coulter, "Mary Musgrove, 'Queen of the Creeks': A Chapter of Early Georgia Troubles," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XI (March 1927), 1–30; John Pitts Corry, "Some New Light on the Bosomworth Claims," *ibid.*, XXV (September 1941), 195–224; and Doris Behrman Fisher, "Mary Musgrove: Creek Englishwoman" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1990).

⁶³ Rippon, ed., "Account of the Life of Mr. David George," 473.

reached his employer, who refused to turn him in and advised him to head for the Savannah River. He eventually reached the Ocmulgee River, where he was captured by a hunting party led by Blue Salt of Cussita, a headman of minor distinction among the Lower Creeks who "could talk a little broken English."⁶⁴ At the camp the Indians offered the slave plenty of food, and David George, now Blue Salt's "prize," lived with the Indians from Christmas until April. While in Blue Salt's possession David George "made fences, dug the ground, planted corn, and worked hard." The Creeks, according to George, were "kind to me." In the meantime, Mr. Chapel's son turned up in the Creek nation and paid Blue Salt "rum, linnen, and a gun" as ransom for the escapee.⁶⁵ George escaped again and eventually became the slave of George Galphin, the prominent deerskin trader who served as the American Commissioner of Indian Affairs during the American Revolution. George continued to live among the Indians, working as a packhorseman for Galphin's trader. After three years, George asked to be transferred to the slave quarters at Galphin's Silver Bluff, South Carolina, plantation. There he married a black woman, another of the Galphin slaves whose brother "was half an Indian by his mother's side, and half a Negro."⁶⁶

If David George was the most remarkable of the blacks who were enslaved by Creeks, he certainly was not the only one. The headman of Apalachicola, called Bosten or Boatswain, had fifteen blacks in his household when William Bartram visited him in the years just prior to the Revolution. All were slaves except "several" who had married Indians and thereby gained their freedom. Young black slaves provided the visiting naturalist with "excellent coffee served up on fine china ware"⁶⁷ On one occasion the governor of Georgia presented Captain Allick of Cussita with a black slave as a commission for successfully completing a land cession in 1765.⁶⁸

Blacks were a common sight to all Muscogulges by the middle of the eighteenth century; many blacks worked on plantations established along the Anglo-Creek frontier, were servants of deerskin traders, or

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 474.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 477. George eventually was converted to Christianity and began preaching to local slaves. During the American Revolution, George and his wife left Silver Bluff and spent some time in Savannah before escaping to Charleston. They went to Nova Scotia at the end of the war, and from there made their way to Sierra Leone, where George preached to the natives (pp. 477–83). George Galphin died in 1780, and David George is not mentioned in Galphin's will. There is, however, "Davey (A Negroe Man)," mentioned in the will, which appears in Holcomb, *Ninety Six District*, 41.

⁶⁷ Bartram, "Observations," 37–38 (quotations on p. 38).

⁶⁸ This treaty is discussed in 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* (Ann Arbor, 1944; rpt. ed.; New York, 1966), 230–31.

were runaways seeking asylum in Creek towns. Still, they were a minority, and their tenure in the Creek domain was tenuous. Though it appears that some runaways were successful in making a place for themselves in Creek society, others found the culture alien and isolating. David George entered the Indian territory only as a last resort. After serving the Indians briefly, then working as a packhorseman in the Indian country for three years, he asked to be reassigned to more standard slave duties. It seems that George and many others like him preferred the slave quarters to the square ground. In the quarters society could be defined more on their terms than on those dictated by Muscogulges. Many other blacks were denied the luxury of George's choice. Blacks unhappy with life among the Indians could, and sometimes did, escape to New Orleans, Pensacola, or even return to Georgia or South Carolina.⁶⁹

The American Revolution reordered Creek economic life. Prior to that conflict, Augusta, Georgia, had been the center of the deerskin trade with the interior tribes. Most of the traders remained loyal to the British government; and after the war, they were driven from their homes and stores. With deerskin markets faltering and new ones opening for backcountry produce, Augusta now became the center of the expanding agricultural frontier. Loyalist exiles, under Spanish patronage, reopened the deerskin trade in Spanish Florida, but with depleted hunting grounds, lower deerskin prices, and sterner exchange rates, many Creeks began looking for other ways to obtain such necessities as guns, cloth, and rum.⁷⁰ The acquisition of slaves seemed to provide an answer to the Creek dilemma.

During the American Revolution, the black population in the Creek nation rose dramatically. Yet overall, blacks continued to be a small percentage of the total population. Many blacks entered Creek towns as war captives. The Creeks divided over which side to support during the war. Those who served the British were called upon to help defend Pensacola during the Spanish siege of 1781, but the largest Creek participation in the war consisted of organized raids against the white frontier in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. Large numbers of blacks were captured by Indians during such expeditions. The capture and enslavement of enemies—or of slaves belonging to an enemy—was a time-honored Muscogulge custom. Such was the case when a war party of roughly 70 Creek warriors captured 140 slaves during forays into South Carolina in 1779 and took most of them back into their towns.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 86.

⁷⁰ Edward J. Cashin, Jr., "'But Brothers, It Is Our Land We Are Talking About': Winners and Losers in the Georgia Backcountry," in Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, 1985), 240–75.

⁷¹ Searcy, "Introduction of African Slavery," 27–28. For more complete details of Creek

These slaves, taken as war booty, would later tell white Americans that they had been the "King's gifts" to the Creeks.⁷² In a number of instances, Creeks traded horses and cattle for slaves during the war. This trade was largely conducted by unscrupulous whites who had stolen slaves and livestock from plantations in Georgia and South Carolina during the confusion of the war and were anxious to find buyers who asked few questions and did not demand proper legal titles.⁷³ These slaves were then either leased or traded to people in West Florida and New Orleans.⁷⁴

Another infusion of slaves into the Creek country came when traders, most of whom had supported the Loyalist regime in Georgia, were banished from the state following the war. They and their mixed-blood progeny constituted the largest number of slaveholders in the Creek country. The best-known Indian slaveholder during the revolutionary period was Alexander McGillivray, whose fortunes sprang from his father's successful economic ventures in both the Creek town of Little Tallassee and in Georgia. McGillivray, whose mother was a Creek woman of the Wind clan, was educated in South Carolina as well as by his Wind clan uncles. During the early phases of the American Revolution he was appointed a British agent to the Upper Creek Towns, and his position as a spokesman for the Wind clan made him the most powerful Creek of his time. At his father's plantation in the Creek country, which actually belonged to his mother's clan according to Creek matrilineal and marriage customs, McGillivray provided refuge for his Loyalist father's slaves who fled Georgia during the war. By 1790 an American visitor to the McGillivray household estimated that he owned at least fifty slaves.⁷⁵ Though Lachlan McGillivray returned to Scotland after the war, other deerskin traders, now called Indian countrymen, retired to the security of their wives' hometowns. Among those who became large slaveholders were Robert Grierson, Richard Bailey, and Timothy Barnard.⁷⁶ John Galphin, the mixed-blood son of George Galphin, set up a household in the Lower Towns. Among his assets were the numerous slaves, cattle, and horses he had inherited

participation in the fighting see Martha Condray Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest in the American Revolution, 1776–1778* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1985); and Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Athens, Ga., 1989).

⁷² Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 316.

⁷³ Searcy, "Introduction of African Slavery," 29–30.

⁷⁴ Occasionally slaves taken during the war proved troublesome to the Creek masters. Billy, "a likely Young Negro Man," was owned by Benjamin Durant, Alexander McGillivray's brother-in-law. Billy married an Indian woman and proved to be of "No Service to him [Durant] but Steals horses from every one . . ." Billy escaped to New Orleans and ultimately obtained his freedom. His story is related in Caughy, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 159 (quotations) and 172.

⁷⁵ John Pope, *A Tour Through the Southern and Western Territories of the United States of North-America* (facsimile of the 1792 ed., Gainesville, Fla., 1979), 49.

⁷⁶ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 13, 15, 22, 49.

from his father.⁷⁷

There were also a few freed blacks living within Creek jurisdiction by war's end. Some of these were former slaves of trader George Galphin, who had either been freed by his will or who had "gon off" to live in the Indian nation, perhaps among Creek relatives or friends.⁷⁸ Others were escapees or displaced persons who had been uprooted by the fierce backcountry fighting during the war. Very few of these escapees were given sanctuary by the Creeks—most were quickly reenslaved by slave catchers who found them living in the woods. In 1784 Alexander McGillivray, responding to a Spanish request to help locate and return runaway slaves, wrote that the Creek towns were "pretty well drained of Negroes." The few that remained were not runaways but were viewed as the property of the Creeks who had captured them.⁷⁹

It should also be pointed out that not all the slaves who ended up in the Creek country following the revolutionary war were of African descent. George Galphin's will provides a good cross section of the number and types of slaves held by large slave owners along the Creek-Georgia frontier during the period. The document lists 128 adult slaves plus their many children. Most of those listed were black, although a number of mulattos and mustees are listed, including Little Frank, a mustee boy. Delia, "a half Breed Indian woman," was bequeathed to Galphin's mixed-blood son John for a period of seven years, after which time she was to be given her freedom. Galphin awarded his mixed-blood daughter Rose, whom he described as "my half breed Indian Girl Rose (Daughter of Nitehuckey)," her freedom as well as some cattle and horses.⁸⁰ Others not mentioned by name were described as "hunters, house wenches and cowpen wenches." These were charged with the care of Galphin's extensive livestock holdings. Most of these slaves were either Indians or mustees and mulattos. There is no way to ascertain the tribal affiliations of these individuals.⁸¹

⁷⁷ George Galphin's will, in Holcomb, *Ninety Six District*, 41–50.

⁷⁸ Under the terms of Galphin's will, his three mulatto daughters, Barbara, Rachel, and Betsey, were granted their freedom. Barbara, one of Galphin's major heirs, apparently did not move into the Creek country. The fates of Rachel and Betsey are unclear. A number of other slaves were also granted their freedom. Thomas Woodward stated that Mina, the mother of "Barbary," was set free and died in the Creek nation. Thomas Woodward, *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians, Contained in Letters to Friends in Georgia and Alabama* (Montgomery, Ala., 1859; rpt. ed., Mobile, Ala., 1965), 91–92; and George Galphin's will, in Holcomb, *Ninety Six District*, 41–43, 44. In addition, the will mentions slaves who had "gon off with the British & to the Indian Nation which we dont Remember" (p. 38).

⁷⁹ Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 67.

⁸⁰ George Galphin's will, in Holcomb, *Ninety Six District*; Little Frank is listed on p. 41, Delia is mentioned on p. 43, Rose on p. 41. Other mustees listed in the will include Peter, Indian Prince, Indian Peter, Cela and her children, and Sally, "an Indian wench," and her children (pp. 43–45).

⁸¹ John Shaw Billings, "Analysis of the Will of George Galphin," *Richmond County History*, XIII (Nos. 1 & 2, 1981), 29.

Whites too were captured and enslaved by the Creeks from time to time. Some were adopted by Creek clans. During the early years of the American Revolution, a young Quaker living on the Georgia frontier was captured by the Creeks, later adopted, and apparently enjoyed his sojourn among the tribe that had been responsible for the death of his mother and older brother. Contacted after two years among the Creeks, "he had become so much attached to them and to their manner of life, that it required some persuading to get him from them."⁸² Hannah Hale, a white woman who had been captured as a young girl, was apparently adopted by a Creek clan and eventually took a Creek husband. She chose to remain in Indian territory after the death of her husband, and the Creek council appointed a headman to see to her needs and to protect her family. She raised five mixed-blood children and eventually acquired a black slave.⁸³

In the late 1780s and early 1790s Creek-American relations were marred by repeated violence along the Anglo-Creek frontier, particularly along the disputed boundary with Georgia and in the Cumberland region of Tennessee. There, hostile Creek war parties staged raids against illegal white settlements, during which they captured substantial numbers of black slaves, stole horses, and killed livestock. Trouble also flared up around the Tensaw District, north of Mobile, and along the Florida border.⁸⁴ During these raids, Creek warriors sometimes killed white settlers and, in customary fashion, took others prisoner, usually women and children. One woman, Mrs. Brown, whose husband was killed by Creek warriors, was taken prisoner along with her children during the late 1780s. Alexander McGillivray ransomed her, and she lived at his residence near the Little Tallassee for a year.⁸⁵ In March 1792 Okchai warriors attacked the Thompson home, approximately seven miles from Nashville, killed and scalped Mr. Thompson and several other family members, and took two white women and one two-year-old child prisoner. These women were retained by their captors for "upwards of two years." While in Creek hands, one of the women was ordered to perform horticultural and household tasks and was subjected to dry scratching with gar teeth when she failed to perform the tasks her masters assigned. Both women were eventually ransomed from the

⁸² Stephen B. Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History* (rpt. ed., New York, 1968), 119–20 (quotation on p. 120).

⁸³ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 305.

⁸⁴ Accounts of these raids are found scattered throughout the *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, Vol. I. Some raids garnered few captives; at other times in excess of two dozen slaves were carried off. See for instance *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 30, 37.

⁸⁵ She and McGillivray renewed their acquaintance at Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina, where the Creek delegation to Washington stopped for the night on their journey to visit President Washington in 1790. According to a witness, the reunion was "truly affecting." William M. Willett, ed., *A Narrative of the Military Actions of Colonel Marinus Willett, Taken Chiefly from His Own Manuscript* (rpt. ed., New York, 1969), 111.

Creeks, but white captives taken in other raids and the young child captured in the Thompson raid were held for longer periods of time and were also treated as slaves.⁸⁶

Most of the war captives, like the stolen horses, were sold by their Creek owners. In many ways the capture and sale of slaves and horses helped offset the decline in the deerskin trade and provided profit and war honors for Creek warriors.⁸⁷ Captive whites, women in particular, fetched a commanding price. Miss Thompson, one of the two women captured near Nashville in 1792, was bought by a deerskin trader for eight hundred pounds of dressed deer leather, equal to \$266.66.⁸⁸

Aside from these instances of profit from the sale of both black and white captives, the influx of slaves and captives had little impact on the Creek economy. Daniel Littlefield, who has conducted extensive research on slavery among the Creeks and Seminoles, notes that "agriculture based on slave labor among the Creeks in the early years was more nearly like the Creeks' than the white man's system of agriculture."⁸⁹ Put simply, in the absence of commercial agriculture, Creek slave owners simply allowed their slaves to participate in the communal subsistence-level horticulture that was practiced in the Creek towns. And black men, at least early on, were not required to do fieldwork, traditionally viewed as a female task.⁹⁰ Instead, male slaves cleared fields, tended cattle, hunted, and erected houses and other buildings. Women cultivated and harvested crops, foraged for food, and performed other subsistence activities. Some Creeks retained slaves as personal cooks and servants. One thing is certain—black slaves among the Creeks were allowed more freedom and were subjected to less abuse than among white slave owners in the period before 1815.⁹¹ There were no Creek slave codes during this era.

⁸⁶ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 269, 634 (quotation). If slaves failed to perform as expected or if they refused to labor, they were punished by being "dry" scratched with gar teeth on the thighs and back. This was essentially the same treatment meted out to unruly Creek children. For information on the practice of dry scratching see Swanton, *Social Organization*, 363–64; and Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 232–33, 415–17.

⁸⁷ See McLoughlin, "Cherokee Anomie, 1794–1810: New Roles for Red Men, Red Women, and Black Slaves," in *Cherokee Ghost Dance*, 3–37, especially 30–37, for discussion of horse theft and Indian manhood.

⁸⁸ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 634.

⁸⁹ Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 44.

⁹⁰ Swan, "Position and State of Manners and Arts," 272; and Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 42. David George planted corn, presumably at the behest of Blue Salt, when he was a Creek slave. This was an acceptable task for Creek males. Women harvested the corn crop. This division of labor evidently carried over to new crops. When Hawkins surveyed the Creek towns in 1796, he noted that Robert Grierson, who had planted two acres of cotton, hired Indian women to pick it, although he had forty slaves. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 14–15. See Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 259–316, for a discussion of subsistence roles of Indian men and women.

⁹¹ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 28. Also see George W. Featherstonhaugh, *Excursions through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to*

Black slaves were not housed in separate villages or communities but lived in close contact with their Creek owners. They raised their own food, and some slaves were able to acquire considerable personal property, such as clothing, household goods, and tools.⁹² Thomas Woodward, himself a mixed-blood slaveholder, recorded that blacks were “raised to man or womanhood with their owners; and in many instances they are better raised [than among white owners]—always on an equality . . .” Such proximity caused the blacks to be bilingual: “not one in fifty but speaks the English as well as the Indian language. Nearly all of them, at some time or other, are used as interpreters, which affords them an opportunity to gather information that many of their owners never have, as they speak but the one language.”⁹³

Scholars have noted that blacks—either slave or free—brought valuable skills and knowledge to the Cherokee nation, such as how to make butter, spin cloth, repair guns, shoe horses, and build better homes, fences, and wagons. It has also been set forth that as a rule blacks possessed keener horticultural skills than native southerners. While some or all of these assertions might be true for other tribes, there is scant documentation that the same was true where the Creeks were concerned. Rather, there is strong evidence that it was not blacks but traders and later Benjamin Hawkins who introduced many new techniques and tools. In any case, many of these “improved” methods were hardly relevant in light of Creek horticultural and social practices. There is clear evidence that the majority of Creeks maintained traditional housing styles, eschewed fences, and rejected the new measures espoused by advocates of commercial agriculture. Those who did adapt and utilize such techniques were by and large white Indian countrymen and their offspring—the chief slaveholders among the Creeks.⁹⁴

the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices (London, 1844; rpt. ed., New York, 1968), 151. The author observed two Indian women whose black slave was fixing their breakfast. He found both the Indians and their slave filthy and disgusting. With regard to the physical punishment of slaves, dry scratching hardly compares to the whippings meted out by some white owners. For example, see David George’s description of corporal punishment by his white Virginia master in Rippon, ed., “Account of the Life of Mr. David George,” 473.

⁹² Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 44–45.

⁹³ Woodward’s *Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians*, 94.

⁹⁴ The daughters of Indian trader Richard Bailey learned to weave from white women settlers at Tensaw. It is also likely that his Creek wife learned to make butter and other non-Indian dishes from the white women there. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 28. The improved agricultural ideas were primarily related to commercial cotton production and the introduction of other new crops produced in tilled furrows rather than traditional subsistence crops produced in hills. The ultimate result of these improvements was erosion and soil depletion. Also, there were no wagon roads through the Creek domain until just prior to the Creek War. See Henry DeLeon Southerland, Jr., and Jerry Elijah Brown, *The Federal Road through Georgia, the Creek Nation, and Alabama, 1806–1836* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., and London, 1989). Many traders who ultimately settled among the Creeks were skilled craftsmen. For example, Richard Bailey, born in England, worked as a carpenter and joiner at Savannah before entering the Indian trade. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 22. William G. McLoughlin,

While slavery as practiced by the Creeks may have been more benign than that which developed outside the Indian country, it was still slavery. And no matter their color, slaves were at the mercy of their masters. The odyssey of Polly Perryman, or Chehaw Micco Polly, as related by her last master, Thomas Woodward, is illustrative. Born in Africa, Polly grew to womanhood in Nassau on the plantation of an English family. She was taken to Mobile, apparently during the Seven Years' War. Later she was sold to a Pensacola businessman, who sold her to Theophilus Perryman, a deerskin trader. She claimed to have been owned by Lachlan McGillivray and to have been present when his son Alexander was born. She survived Alexander only to be sold by William Panton to Jim Perryman, the mixed-blood son of her earlier master Theophilus. Jim Perryman later sold her to another Indian, Chehaw Micco. When the Creeks were forced from Alabama in 1836, Polly was left behind with Woodward, who later took her with him when he moved to Arkansas. During her long life, she had many masters—white, mixed-blood, and Indian—and few choices.⁹⁵

When William Bartram visited the residence of the prosperous Bosten, headman at Apalachicola, in the early 1770s, he was told that those who married Indians “enjoyed equal privileges with them; but they are slaves till they marry, when they become Indians or free citizens.”⁹⁶ Surviving evidence indicates that black slaves of the 1790s were not awarded this opportunity. There is evidence to indicate that many slaveholders tended to buy, sell, or trade black families as a unit. Robert Grierson, one of the largest slaveholders among the Creeks, certainly conducted business in this manner. This undoubtedly reduced the need for slaves to escape in order to rejoin their families, contributed to stable family relations among slaves, and allowed black families to maintain a cultural identity separate from that of the Creeks. In legal documents that list slave families, the unit tended to consist of husband, wife, and children or future issue. Black families among the Creeks reckoned

“Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism: Interracial Tensions Among Slaveholding Indians,” in *Cherokee Ghost Dance*, 263, comments on various skills generally attributed to blacks.

⁹⁵ Woodward's *Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians*, 93. Though Woodward is unreliable concerning many facts, most of his biographical sketches can be taken as generally correct. Woodward relates that Polly arrived in Mobile “a short time after the French evacuated Fort Du Quesne, or Pittsburg.” This occurred in 1758. It is most likely that Polly arrived in West Florida after the transfer of that colony from France to Great Britain following the Seven Years' War. Woodward states that she was living with the McGillivrays when “Sophia and Alexander” were born. Alexander McGillivray was born in 1750. Thus Polly either arrived in the Creek country much earlier than the 1760s or else the children she remembered were those of Alexander McGillivray rather than Alexander himself. Woodward said she claimed to have been 115 years old when she died in 1846, although Woodward himself believed she was a “little short of that.” Thus it is possible that she was among the Creeks by 1750. Polly's son, according to Woodward, was “the celebrated Siro” who was killed during the Creek War of 1836–1837. It is conceivable that Woodward had the wrong war: perhaps “Siro” was the Cyrus who commanded the forces at the Negro Fort at Prospect Bluff in 1816.

⁹⁶ Bartram, “Observations,” 38.

descent paternally, rather than maternally, as did the Creeks.⁹⁷

By the 1790s there were an estimated three hundred whites living in the Creek country. While there are no contemporary estimates of the number of blacks, it would seem fair to conclude that there were at least the same number held in bondage and likely many more who moved through the Creek country, either freely or as captives. Despite the growing numbers of blacks, the overwhelming majority of the Creek population during this period were neither slaveholders nor slave catchers. Based on available population estimates, it is clear that less than 1 percent of the population was non-Indian, that is, either black or white.⁹⁸ Yet proportionally these white and mixed-blood slave owners, and their slaves, were becoming increasingly important. By this time, there were three clearly discernable types of slaveholders among the Creeks. The first type consisted of Indian countrymen or their mixed-blood children who saw slaves as property, obtained legal title for them in Georgia or Spanish Florida, set them aside in established slave quarters, directed their labor, and took the profits from it.⁹⁹ Other Creek slaveholders, including McGillivray's sisters Sophia Durant and Mrs. Charles Weatherford, had established what appears to be a client/patron relationship with their slaves. Mrs. Durant's slaves did not produce a profit for her unless she sold them. They seem to have had considerable freedom, and Benjamin Hawkins remarked that her slaves were "idle" and "consume every thing in common with their mistress, who is a stranger to economy." Such relationships required that slaves contribute to their own upkeep and donate part of their produce to their patron. Such a system was not calculated to make the slaveholder wealthy, at least by white standards. However, since slaves were considered property, their presence generated prestige for their patron.¹⁰⁰ Some Creeks were more accurately considered slave catchers or slave traders

⁹⁷ Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 36–37. George Galphin's will distributed his slaves to his various heirs in family units that usually consisted of a husband, wife, and children or future issue, such as "Petersisom and his wife Nanncy their Children and future Issue, Cato his wife Bess their children and future Issue . . ." Holcomb, *Ninety Six District*, 41.

⁹⁸ Major Caleb Swan related that each town had at least one white trader and that each trader employed one or two other whites in the business. In addition, he noted that almost every town had one family of Loyalist exiles who were not engaged in the deerskin trade. Swan estimated the total Indian population for the Creeks at 25,000 to 26,000. Swan, "Position and State of Manners and Arts," 263. Jack Kinnard, a mixed-blood in the Lower Towns, had 40 blacks. *Ibid.*, 261. McGillivray's sisters had at least 80, while Grierson and Bailey had nearly 50 between them. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 15, 22, 24. This is merely a sample of the largest slaveholders, and there were many Creeks who owned smaller numbers. In various letters and particularly in his "Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1798 and 1799," Hawkins mentioned the slaves he encountered among the Creeks. *Ibid.*, 285–327.

⁹⁹ Examples of Creek mixed-bloods procuring or discussing proper legal title to slaves can be found in Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 159, 212–13; Peter A. Brannon, "Grierson Records in Montgomery County Court House," *Arrow Points*, XIII (January 10, 1929), 72–74; and Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 47–49.

¹⁰⁰ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 24 (quotations); II, 410.

rather than slaveholders. Like the acculturated mixed-bloods, they too viewed slaves as property, though they were not as particular about obtaining legal title. In the absence of private landownership, horses, slaves, and other personal property constituted the only source of wealth. The sale of captured or stolen slaves had clear precedents in Creek history, and as deer grew scarce, horse theft and slave catching became their logical replacement. Black slaves were viewed in much the same light as horses—property to be disposed of as the owner saw fit. In effect, they became trade goods. Reportedly, until Alexander McGillivray stopped the practice, many Creek slaves, like horses and cattle, were put to death when their owners died.¹⁰¹

The increase in the black and white population in the Creek country coincided with the development of successful cotton ginning techniques and the opening of markets for the staple. This occurrence had a profound effect on the institution of slavery as practiced by some Creeks and Indian countrymen and set in motion a rush for suitable cotton land that eventually swept the Creeks and other southeastern tribes from their rich agricultural homelands.¹⁰²

These economic forces were duly noted and well understood by Benjamin Hawkins, who in 1796 was appointed by the federal government as the principal American agent to the southeastern tribes.¹⁰³ Hawkins, as well as other leading Americans, including his bosses Secretary of War Henry Knox and President George Washington and later, Thomas Jefferson, were determined to convert the Creeks and other American Indians from—in the white view—rustic savages who roamed idle acres to productive members of American society by reducing them to sedentary farmers.¹⁰⁴ Hawkins, who has been styled

¹⁰¹ McGillivray's obituary notice, 1793, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, quoted in Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 362. McLoughlin, "Cherokee Anomie, 1794–1810," 31–37, discusses the wider implications of horse theft and slave stealing.

¹⁰² See Usner, "American Indians on the Cotton Frontier," for an examination of the impact of commercial cotton production on native southerners.

¹⁰³ See Henri, *Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins*, for the details of Hawkins's career among the Indians.

¹⁰⁴ Incorporation, by its very nature, meant the destruction of the Indians' cultural identity. Most leading lights behind the so-called civilization program were not only ethnocentric but also hobbled by sloppy thinking. Their greatest failure was their inability to comprehend, in even a limited way, the intricacies of Indian culture and human nature. Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill, 1973), examines the philosophical basis for the belief that the Indian could be fully incorporated into American society and concludes that the motives of the Jeffersonians were basically humanitarian, if ultimately deadly. One can hardly fault the altruistic motives of Quakers, Moravians, and even naturalist William Bartram, who corresponded with Knox about the Creeks. But politicians are seldom noble, and philosophy notwithstanding, the Jeffersonians had more earthy motives. At Thomas Jefferson's behest, the government began actively encouraging the Indians to run up trade debts. The tribes were then encouraged to sign away their land to the American government as payment for their trade debts (pp. 167–72). Such predatory benevolence belies a strictly humanitarian intent, particularly among government officials—notably Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin

the first modern agricultural extension agent by one scholar, took upon himself the formidable task of transforming the Creeks from commercial hunters to self-sufficient commercial farmers.¹⁰⁵ Hawkins, like most white policymakers, realized that the deerskin trade was doomed: markets were glutted and deer had been harvested almost to extinction in some areas. For Hawkins and other proponents of the so-called civilization program, commercial production of cotton and other staples seemed the only solution to a number of worrisome Indian problems. Creek men had to be stopped from roaming the forest in futile efforts to procure enough deerskins to clothe their families. Communal cornfields would be abandoned for more profitable private cotton and wheat fields. As he traveled through the Creek towns surveying his new domain in 1796, Hawkins duly noted the most prosperous farms and took a rough count of the slaves available for agricultural pursuits.

Unfortunately, at least from Hawkins's perspective, only the old deerskin traders, particularly those with slaves, seemed to welcome the plan.¹⁰⁶ Robert Grierson, one of the most successful of the Augusta deerskin traders, retired to the Creek country following the Revolution. By 1796 he had accumulated forty black slaves, three hundred cattle, and thirty horses. He and his brood of mixed-blood (mustee) children were engaged in a variety of new commercial pursuits.¹⁰⁷ To Hawkins's delight, Grierson had put his family, but apparently not his slaves, to work "ginning and picking cotton." Hawkins "was much pleased to see it." The agent noted that the Griersons had "made a considerable quantity" and that it was to be sent to markets in Tennessee, where they expected thirty-four cents per pound for their crop. The agent was also happy to make recommendations on improving the cotton yield and pointed out the correct way to assemble a gin. Hawkins did not specifically state how Grierson employed his labor force, but evidently his slaves tended the livestock.¹⁰⁸ Another trader, Richard Bailey, was, according to Hawkins, "a good farmer . . . with his lands fenced, stable, garden, lots for his stock, some thriving trees, and a small nursery to

Hawkins in the case of the Creeks. McLoughlin, "Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism," 267–68, also questions the benevolence of the civilization program.

¹⁰⁵ Jack D. L. Holmes, "Benjamin Hawkins and United States Attempts to Teach Farming to Southeastern Indians," *Agricultural History*, LX (Spring 1986), 231.

¹⁰⁶ Hawkins himself attempted to provide a good example to the Creeks concerning the proper use of slaves. His establishment at the Creek agency was one of the largest concentrations of slaves west of the Georgia line. He was assisted in his efforts by both the Quakers, who sent plows on occasion, and the Moravians, who sent missionaries. See Henri, *Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins*, for his tenure among the Creeks. Carl Mauelshagen and Gerald H. Davis, trans. and eds., *Partners in the Lord's Work: The Diary of Two Moravian Missionaries in the Creek Indian Country, 1807–1813* (Atlanta, 1969), details the day-to-day routine at the agency.

¹⁰⁷ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 15. See also page 18 for more information on the Grierson family.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 (quotations), 14. He did use slaves to spin and weave cloth. These were probably women. *Ibid.*, 301.

plant out." Bailey was also attempting to domesticate bees for the commercial production of honey and proudly showed the new agent his twenty beehives. His family too was acquainted with cotton production, and his mixed-blood daughters were spinning cotton cloth. He also had large numbers of horses, cattle, and hogs—and seven black slaves.¹⁰⁹

Hawkins noted with chagrin that retired deerskin traders did not make the best farmers. The agent reported that trader Timothy Barnard, who owned cattle, sheep, goats, hogs, and horses, was "not much acquainted with farming and receives light on this subject slowly as is the case with all the Indian countrymen, without exception."¹¹⁰ What Hawkins meant was that Barnard and others were not very successful commercial farmers—and for good reason. Following the collapse of the deerskin market, raising livestock had proved the most lucrative economic endeavor. Cattle and hogs could easily be driven to ready buyers in both Florida and Georgia.¹¹¹ Hawkins failed to recognize this, but Major Caleb Swan, sent by the American government to observe the Creeks following the 1790 Anglo-Creek Treaty of New York, had not. He duly noted in his journal the prosperity attained by the mixed-blood Jack Kinnard, an abusive drunk who had first made his fortune by plunder and "freebooting" during the revolutionary war. By 1790 Kinnard had forty black slaves and between 1,200 and 1,500 head of cattle and horses. Rumor had it that he "commonly [kept] from 5000 to 6000 Spanish dollars in his house, which are the produce of cattle he sells." The Lower Creeks tolerated, even welcomed, his presence on the lower Chattahoochee because he kept a trading store, too.¹¹²

And many Creek slaveholders, in Hawkins's opinion, did not obtain the maximum potential from their work force. Hawkins censured the sisters of the late Alexander McGillivray who had slaves but did not use them properly. One sister, "in possession of near eighty slaves, near 40 of them capable of doing work in or out doors," allowed them to remain idle. Hawkins noted with disgust that "they are a heavy burthen to her and to themselves"¹¹³ The largest concentration of blacks in the

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹¹¹ It is not surprising that the mixed-blood brother-in-law of David George, who lived as an Indian, sought to help George and his half-sister during the Revolution by providing them with a steer to sell. When the money he received from the sale of the steer was stolen, George then obtained some hogs and sold them for money to pay his passage to Charleston. Rippon, ed., "Account of the Life of Mr. David George," 477.

¹¹² Swan, "Position and State of Manners and Arts," 260–61 (quotations on p. 261). Kinnard, Swan related, "is a despot, shoots his negroes when he pleases, and has cut off the ears of one of his favorite wives, with his own hands, in a drunken fit of suspicion" (p. 261). Ear cropping was the standard punishment for adultery, although it was usually done by the women of the offended husband's clan. See Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 149–53.

¹¹³ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 24. Within the space of a few years the number of working slaves owned by Mrs. Durant, the sister in question, had dropped to fourteen, but Hawkins failed to note whether these losses were due to death, sale, or

Creek towns lived around the Wind clan households of the McGillivray women. Yet Hawkins reported that they were an economic burden and generally were "an expense to their owners They do nothing the whole winter but get a little wood, and in the summer they cultivate a scanty crop of corn barely sufficient for bread."¹¹⁴ What Hawkins failed to understand was the patron/client relationship that had developed. Slaves, responsible for their own upkeep, were also required to provide their patron with a portion of their crop. Efau Haujo of Tuckabatchee provided Hawkins with an excellent example of poor farm management. The elderly Great Medal Chief "owned" five slaves, yet according to his son-in-law, Alexander Cornells, "the old man had no corn and his negros were under no government, that he had five able to work and the whole of them the last year put only forty baskets (about 20 bushels) of corn in the old man's crib" Despite his stock of cattle, he had no milk. Instead, he turned to his exasperated and prosperous son-in-law for subsistence. Cornells, agitated by the demands put on him, complained that he was responsible not only for Efau Haujo but also for "all the idlers of his house."¹¹⁵

Others received Hawkins's approbation. Hawkins observed with satisfaction the industry of two of Timothy Barnard's mixed-blood sons who were using their father's slaves to help clear fields and hew logs for their new houses.¹¹⁶ Like her white male counterparts who had married among the Creeks, former captive Hannah Hale favored commercial agriculture, and by the time agent Hawkins surveyed her establishment in 1798, she had sixty cattle, hogs, a horse, and one slave. She had set her household to raising cotton and quickly acquired a loom and spinning wheel from Hawkins.¹¹⁷ The agent also believed that the "King's gifts" had improved agriculture at the village of Oketeyoconne. Hawkins reported in his famous "Sketch of the Creek country in the Years 1798 and 1799" that the Indians at the Oketeyoconne town were more prosperous because of their black slaves. These Creeks were raising corn and rice and had accumulated cattle, horses, and hogs. Hawkins remarked: "Several of the Indians have negros taken during the revolution war, and where they live, there is more industry and better farms. These negroes were given many of them, by the agents of Great Britain to the Indians in payment for their services and they generally

absenteeism (p. 298).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 410. In contrast to his wife's father, Alexander Cornells, a mixed-blood, had fenced his farm, put his acreage under the plow, and, presumably, had his nine slaves engaged in productive pursuits, perhaps building fences, tending his peach orchard or his rye, cotton, and oats. *Ibid.*, I, 292–93. It is of interest that Cornells considered himself responsible for his wife's father.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 49. Another son, Timpogee, was with his Cusseta wife clearing land "with a small black boy."

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 305.

call themselves 'King's gifts.' The negroes are all of them, attentive and friendly to white people, particularly so to those in authority."¹¹⁸ It is difficult to account for Hawkins's differing perspectives on the value of slaves to their Creek owners. It could be that there were real differences in their ability and output. It might also be that those, both Creek and black, who showed more interest in his programs and were more diffident were viewed in a more favorable light.

Most Creeks were quite content with the old ways and even looked on Hawkins's new ideas with fear and loathing. In addition to pushing Creeks to abandon their communal cornfields for private landholdings, which the agent believed would be more productive and, hence, profitable, he passed out new seed varieties, exhorted the Indians to acquire livestock and better farming implements, and urged women to sit in front of spinning wheels. Creek men were averse to plowing; and most Creeks, even if they had been able, would not have been inclined to accumulate the slaves and farm implements necessary for the production of marketable agricultural produce. And while a number of Creek women were willing to learn the art of weaving cotton fibers into cloth, they were in the minority. Hawkins failed to understand that the underlying social fabric was based on communal landholding and the accepted division of labor between men and women. For the Creeks, agribusiness and cloth production were alien and an affront to ancestral ways.¹¹⁹

Slowly, a slaveholding elite devoted to the acquisition of material goods and private landholdings did emerge. Perhaps the largest number lived south of the Upper Creek Towns along the lower reaches of the Alabama River. The land there was productive and suitable for cotton and cattle, and the rivers provided ready water transportation to markets at Mobile. Others mingled with Americans who had settled to the west of the Creek towns, along the Tombigbee River. Some were located along the boundary with Georgia, and still others were scattered throughout the Creek domain. These slaveholders were of mixed blood and had, at least partially, adopted the economic and social values of their white parents, including patrilineal descent and the notion of private ownership of land. They were also willing to abandon traditional settlement patterns, ancient beliefs and ceremonies, and the established gender-based division of labor. After a decade of effort, Hawkins proudly and optimistically boasted that one-half of the Indians had

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 209, 353. Agent Hawkins must have been mortified by the report of the weaving instructor that he hired to teach Creek women: she noted that old women with handsome granddaughters cared little for teaching them how to spin yarn. Instead, "they think of no support but prostituting their granddaughters or daughters, on this they confidently rely for cloths and food and spoke of it as a cheap and easy way of acquiring both." *Ibid.*, II, 412.

adopted, to some degree, the "plan of civilization."¹²⁰ Acculturation, of necessity, meant the adoption of white attitudes towards blacks and slavery. For the Creeks to be successful, they would have to think of slaves as chattel, not potential members of the family. And they would have to produce more than enough simply to feed themselves. Male slaves would have to work.

By the outbreak of the Creek War of 1813, the descendants of Alexander McGillivray's slaves were working on the prosperous Tensaw plantation of his sister's son, David Tate. While Tate had taken possession of his uncle's property according to the custom of Creek matrilineal inheritance, he made nontraditional use of them and became one of the most prominent planters along the Alabama River. There were scores of others like Tate who developed large plantations and who utilized black slave labor. Tate and the other highly acculturated mixed-bloods who owned slaves and sought to become gentlemen-planters were concerned with controlling their slaves and assuring that other Creeks showed a proper respect for their authority and their private property. Those whose new plantations brought wealth and power rapidly accepted the white view of black inferiority and perpetual bondage. Those more inclined to honor traditional viewpoints were also more likely to regard runaways as potential equals, eligible for adoption into a clan. But Tate and other mixed-bloods did not intend their slaves to marry into freedom.¹²¹

Economic distress, a spiritual awakening, and political upheaval caused civil war among the Creeks in 1813. In many ways the Creek War was a reaction to the new materialism of the mixed-blood elite by nonslaveholding traditionalists who hoped to oppose American expansion by revitalizing Indian culture and driving out those who practiced commercial agriculture and supported the new system of government instituted by Hawkins and his supporters. The traditionalists, commonly known as the Red Sticks, were inspired by Tecumseh and hoped to

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 520. No doubt he was exaggerating, but, nonetheless, the plan had met with some success. It is ironic that in practically the same breath that Hawkins proclaimed his work a success he also acknowledged that corn was in such short supply that many Creeks had been reduced to killing their livestock and foraging in the woods for food. "It is emphatically named the *hungry year*" (p. 521). See Theda Perdue, "Southern Indians and the Cult of True Womanhood," in Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family and Education* (Athens, Ga., 1985), 35–51, for a discussion of the impact of the civilization program on Indian women.

¹²¹ David Tate was the son of David Taitt, the British agent, by one of Alexander McGillivray's sisters. He was educated in Philadelphia by the Quakers and later schooled in Scotland at the expense of Pantton, Leslie and Company. William Weatherford was Tate's half-brother. Tate fought with the Americans during the Creek War, and his descendants were later prominent in antebellum Alabama history. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 299. See "Tom Tate Tunstall of Tensas: A Sketch," *Arrow Points*, IX (July 5, 1924), 3–4; and Tom Tate Tunstall of Tensaw, "Tom Tate Tunstall Defends the Name of Weatherford," *ibid.*, 6–9.

reinstitute the old hunting and trading economy. American troops quickly came to the aid of the besieged "progressive" Creeks and white settlers in the region. Many slaves were caught in the middle as the war progressed. By August 1813 nearly three hundred whites, mixed-bloods, and their black slaves had gathered at Fort Mims for protection against possible attack. When Red Stick warriors attacked the fort in late August, some blacks inside the fort fought against the hostile Red Stick forces; others urged on the Red Sticks; some, dazed and helpless, were taken captive; and twenty were killed.¹²² One mixed-blood reported years later that some slaves defected to the Red Stick ranks during the war, "to assist in exterminating the white people and be free—."¹²³ Many other slaves were carried off as captives by the Red Stick forces, including large numbers of Robert Grierson's slaves.¹²⁴ One of the leading Red Stick prophets, Jim Boy or High Head Jim, was reported to be of Creek-black descent.¹²⁵

Red Stick Creeks did not kill the blacks whom they captured but kept them enslaved. For Creek traditionalists, the capture and sale of slaves was a logical action. Taking noncombatants as prisoners was a common practice among Creek warriors, and unarmed slaves were viewed in the same light as women and children.¹²⁶ Slaves could be easily traded for guns and ammunition. Perhaps of equal importance, captured slaves provided the Red Sticks with valuable information, such as where their mixed-blood masters had hidden horses and valuable household furnishings.¹²⁷

Blacks fought alongside Red Stick warriors at the Battle of the Holy Ground when American troops attacked the town in late December 1813. The Red Sticks suffered thirty-three casualties, among whom were twelve former slaves. Holy Ground was the only battle in which

¹²² Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, II, 667. See Frank L. Owsley, Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812–1815* (Gainesville, Fla., 1981) for details on the Creek War. Theron A. Nunez, Jr., "Creek Nativism and the Creek War of 1813–1814, Part 2 (Stiggins Narrative, continued)," *Ethnohistory*, V (Spring 1958), 165; Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 57–83, provides the best discussion of black participation in the war.

¹²³ Nunez, "Creek Nativism and the Creek War of 1813–1814," pp. 160 (quotation), 165.

¹²⁴ Albert James Pickett, *History of Alabama and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi, From the Earliest Period* (Charleston, 1851; rpt. ed., Birmingham, 1962), 520.

¹²⁵ "From the notebook of Michael Johnstone Kenan," n.d., typescript in the John R. Swanton Collection, National Anthropological Archives (Smithsonian Institution, Washington). H. S. Halbert and T. H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814*, edited by Frank L. Owsley, Jr. (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1968), does not mention Jim Boy's black ancestry. His portrait appears in James D. Horan, *The McKenney-Hall Portrait Gallery of American Indians* (New York, 1986), 134–35. Jim Boy's Creek title was Tustennuggee Emathla. Thomas M. Owen, "Alabama Indian Chiefs," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XIII, 12–15.

¹²⁶ It should be noted that Creek warriors did kill many slaves as well as women and children during the conflict. Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, 208; and Littlefield, *Africans and Creeks*, 63–83.

¹²⁷ Nunez, "Creek Nativism and the Creek War of 1813–1814," p. 169.

blacks "bore arms in behalf of their red owners." The conventional view held that the Indians had forced captured slaves to "help bear the brunt of battle."¹²⁸ Yet that was clearly not the case. The combatants were runaway slaves, now living among the Red Sticks as free men, who welcomed the opportunity to do battle. George Stiggins, a Creek of mixed blood who wrote a history of the war, reported that the Red Sticks were continually supplied with information concerning American troop movements by runaway slaves. He further related that these ex-slaves "were all determined men" who remained to fight the advancing Americans long after Josiah Francis and some of the other Indians had fled the field of battle. These runaways, according to Stiggins, "joined the Indians with the expectation of being free, when they and the Indians should conquer and destroy the white people according to the say of the prophets"¹²⁹

Kinnie Hadjo, a Creek who had fought at the Holy Ground, later chastised his fellow Creeks for using black men in battle. According to historians Henry S. Halbert and Timothy H. Ball, who wrote an early history of the war, Kinnie Hadjo "said that the proud and warlike Muscogeas on this occasion had compromised the dignity of their nation in stooping so low as to call to their aid the services of such a servile and degraded race as negroes to assist them in fighting the battles of their country; that this act, too, was especially exasperating to the whites and tended to increase the bitterness of their prejudices against the Creeks."¹³⁰ Kinnie Hadjo's testimony undoubtedly bears the wisdom of hindsight—and displays a new penchant among some Creeks for sharing white people's racist attitudes towards the Negro.¹³¹

The Creek War of 1813–1814 led to the most important development regarding Creeks, blacks, and slavery. Following the harsh treaty of Fort Jackson in August 1814, Red Stick refugees, defeated and dispossessed, sought refuge in Florida among their Seminole brethren. Once in Florida, the Americans considered them to be Seminoles. Runaway slaves also joined the Seminoles. Many of these refugees, both Indian and black, settled in Seminole villages. In other cases Red Stick and black refugees were awarded the right to make their own settlements, just as in earlier years when the Creeks had permitted displaced

¹²⁸ Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, 259 (first quotation), 258 (second quotation). The authors relate the Choctaws allied to the Americans refused to take the scalps of the dead blacks.

¹²⁹ Nunez, "Creek Nativism and the Creek War of 1813–1814," pp. 170, 171 (first quotation), 172 (second quotation), 174.

¹³⁰ Halbert and Ball, *Creek War*, 259.

¹³¹ A variety of myths and stories have survived into the twentieth century by which Creeks and Seminoles have attempted to explain the origin of the three races. Most of these portray the black race as the lowest members of human society, fit only to labor for whites or Indians. These myths most certainly had their origin in the period after 1815. See Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 78–79, for information concerning racial discrimination among the Creeks.

Natchez, Chickasaw, and other Indians to settle among them. By the end of the conflict, there were also several settlements of blacks in the Florida territory claimed by the Creek towns. The autonomous black towns, known as maroon communities, were usually associated with a Seminole or a Red Stick town. Perhaps the largest was located just north of the Seminole town of Miccosukee, near modern Tallahassee.¹³² Another famous settlement was Bowlegs Town on the Suwannee River. In these refugee towns blacks adapted to the local environment, utilizing native horticultural and construction techniques. Social organization within these communities and political relationships with nearby Indian villages remain a mystery because of the absence of reliable reports concerning life there.¹³³

With the passage of time, these settlements grew and became more numerous—and spread further south along the Florida peninsula. Sensing a way to recoup their numbers, hostile Red Stick Creeks and Seminoles welcomed blacks among them as potential warriors. Cyrus, a literate escapee from Pensacola, commanded the garrison at the Negro Fort, on the Apalachicola River at Prospect Bluff, the best-known of the maroon settlements. By the autumn of 1815 Cyrus commanded eighty armed blacks. Well supplied by the British forces who had lately evacuated the region, the fort boasted “11 24 pounders, 4 six pounders, 1 5-inch Howitzer . . . [and had] 12 rounds of cannon balls, plenty of grape shot and musket balls, 2,500 stand small arms and ammunition in an abundance.”¹³⁴ When hostile Cussita warriors regrouped in Florida,

¹³² *Ibid.*, 87. The Seminoles, together with the Upper and Lower Towns, constituted the three divisions of the Creek Confederacy. By the end of the eighteenth century there were seven Seminole towns peopled primarily by Creeks from the Lower Towns. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, I, 289. See James W. Covington, “Migration of the Seminoles into Florida, 1700–1820,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLVI (April 1968), 340–57; and William C. Sturtevant, “Creek into Seminole,” in Eleanor B. Leacock and Nancy O. Lurie, eds., *North American Indians in Historical Perspective* (New York, 1971), 92–128.

¹³³ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 80, 202–6; and Charles H. Fairbanks, “The Ethno-Archeology of the Florida Seminole,” in Jerald T. Milanich and Samuel Proctor, eds., *Tacachale: Essays on the Indians of Florida and Southeastern Georgia during the Historic Period* (Gainesville, Fla., 1978), 177–83. Some historians have speculated that the blacks raised food for the Indians since they were supposedly better horticulturalists. But southeastern Indians were excellent farmers and cultivated a variety of native and imported crops. If indeed the black villages were supplying the Indians with food by the later stages of the First Seminole War, it could well reflect the loss of Indian women and children to the slave catchers who accompanied the American armies. Since women were responsible for the cultivation of food, it is possible that Indian warriors may have relied for a time on blacks. Even more likely, hostiles of all races were forced to live off the land, since the troops and Creek slavers burned cornfields and village granaries at every opportunity. During the American Revolution, slaves forced to forage for food in the alien Florida environment starved. Wright, “Blacks in British East Florida,” 432. Unacclimated blacks would have been dependent upon the Indians for knowledge of edible wild plants, insects, and hunting techniques.

¹³⁴ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, II, 748 (quotation). Other sources list Garçon or Garcia as the black leader in charge of the fort. Perhaps Garcia was the name given to Cyrus by the Spanish, there might have been two leaders, or Hawkins could have been wrong. See Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 183, 199.

they issued invitations to slaves along the Georgia frontier and in the Creek country to “go to the Seminoles to be free.” By February 1816 American officials believed as many as three hundred and fifty blacks were established at the Negro Fort.¹³⁵ Slaves from Georgia, the Mississippi Territory, and Spanish Florida joined them and established other maroon communities allied to the towns of refugee Creeks. These Creeks, now known as Seminoles, adhered to traditional cultural practices. As the late J. Leitch Wright, Jr., wrote, “It was appropriate that Maroon and Seminole were essentially the same words, both being derived from the Spanish word *cimarron*.”¹³⁶ It is also ironic that these runaways—both black and red—sought refuge in the lands that were vacant because their original inhabitants had been captured by Creek slavers in the early eighteenth century. Bartram’s observation that the Creeks were “remnants of conquered nations, united” was as true in 1816 as it had been in the 1770s.¹³⁷

Benjamin Hawkins, like every other white along the frontier, was outraged and horrified by the armed blacks ensconced in Florida. He urged the Creeks who remained in the Upper and Lower Creek Towns to force the Seminoles to give up the blacks and even increased the reward for the return of runaway slaves. He enjoined the Creeks to “get rid of the negroes without delay or their masters will be after them and involve you in difficulties. If they come, you will loose [*sic*] more land.”¹³⁸ Hawkins was not blessed with prophetic gifts, just common sense. Unfortunately, as those Creeks who joined in the destruction of the Negro Fort eventually discovered, killing Seminoles was no guarantee that the United States would respect Creek territory. But even the terrific loss of life and total destruction of the fort at Prospect Bluff did not deter the hostiles. By the end of 1817 military reports recorded Red Stick and Seminole numbers at two thousand, in addition to “near four hundred” blacks, whose numbers were still growing as a result of the flow of runaways from Georgia.¹³⁹ The Creek War had now become the First Seminole War. For many Creeks the war became a lucrative way to repay the Red Sticks for earlier losses, for in addition to capturing runaway slaves, Creek warriors captured Seminole women and children and marched them northward toward burgeoning cotton plantations.¹⁴⁰

While some Creeks cooperated with American demands, returned escaped slaves, and even fought with the Americans against their exiled

¹³⁵ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, II, 773–74 (quotation on p. 773).

¹³⁶ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 86.

¹³⁷ Bartram, “Observations,” 12.

¹³⁸ Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, II, 784–85 (quotation on p. 785).

¹³⁹ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, II, 160.

¹⁴⁰ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 185–214, provides a good summary of this aspect of the war.

countrymen, others, like William Weatherford, took another course. During the Creek War of 1813–1814, Weatherford had been better known as Red Eagle, a leader of the Red Stick faction. A descendant of McGillivray and a member of the Wind clan, Weatherford attempted to distance himself from his heritage in later life. He was successful, and leading white Alabamians could point to old Weatherford as an example of a “reconstructed rebel” in the years that followed the Creek War. After his death, Weatherford’s descendants faced each other in Mobile, Alabama, in 1851 to haggle over the disposition of Weatherford’s slaves. The confusing case has much to say about Creek history—as well as Alabama history. For by 1851 most Creeks—and their slaves—were in the Indian Territory after having been forcibly removed by the federal government. Others had become Seminoles, eking out a rough existence in the Florida peninsula and carrying on the fight against American aggression in the First and Second Seminole wars. Weatherford, determined to live as a white man with his mixed-blood Christian wife, stayed behind in Alabama. It is impossible to prove but most likely true that many of the slaves listed in the lawsuit were of Creek-black descent. This perhaps more than any other observation points to the significance of Creek-black interaction during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To be successful in the Old South, an Indian had to become a white person; those who refused to do so were either removed, exterminated, or enslaved.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ *William Weatherford, Complainant v. Weatherford, Howell et al.*, Southwest Division, No. 1299. In Chancery, Mobile, Alabama. A.D. 1851 (Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery). The Poarch Band Creeks, near Atmore, Alabama, avoided forced removal but in the process lost much of their cultural history. For a discussion of these Indians see J. Anthony Paredes, “The Folk Culture of the Eastern Creek Indians: Synthesis and Change,” in John K. Mahon, ed., *Indians of the Lower South: Past and Present* (Pensacola, Fla., 1975), 93–111.