

GUNPOWDER AND THE CREEK-BRITISH STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN THE
SOUTHEAST, 1763 – 1776

by

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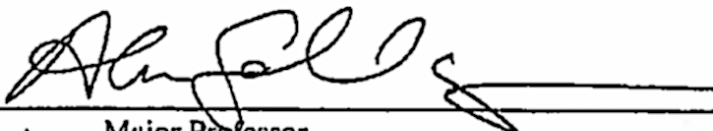
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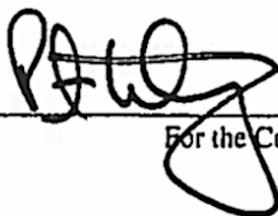
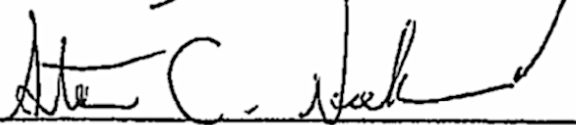
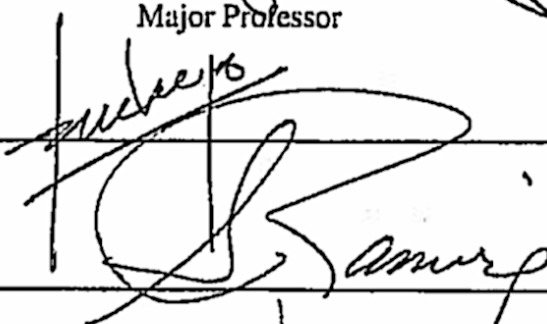
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Dissertation approved:



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For the College of Liberal Arts

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Introduction

*Once, the Creeks had obtained every item they needed for a plentiful and wholesome existence with tools made by their own hands. Now, Creek producers depended on outsiders for guns and ammunition – their means of production and the basis of their power.*¹

In the mid-1730s, a Frenchman in the Louisiana territory encountered a group of Indians living at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, just north of what would soon become the settlement of St. Louis. The trader, whose actions were recounted by the French explorer Jean Bernard Bossu, gave these natives gunpowder and firearms in exchange for dressed animal pelts and beaver furs. According to Bossu, he was the first European to introduce guns and ammunition to the region's native peoples, whom he called the Missouri. His actions encouraged more traders to enter the area in the years that followed, bringing these goods with them. By the mid-1740s, these Indians had become curious about gunpowder's origins. They specifically asked why gunpowder, which they called *grain*, could only be produced in France. As competition grew, one deceitful broker informed the natives that gunpowder was a crop, planted and harvested in Europe just as indigo or corn was grown in North America. Believing this explanation, a number of Indians sowed their remaining gunpowder and bought more from the trader. They stood guard over their fields day and night, waiting for the plants to grow. Soon, however, these natives realized the Frenchman's trick. While he claimed the failed harvest was because "the soil of the Missouri was not fit for producing gunpowder," the Indians ensured they would not be duped twice. They attacked the trader

¹ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo America, 1685 - 1815* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 137-138.

and ransacked the French storehouse in their town square, sending the embarrassed man back to New Orleans “much lighter than he came.”²

Bossu’s narrative illuminates that the Missouri desired gunpowder, not guns or firearms, from their French traders. Though this need for ammunition was widespread among Indian communities, historians have traditionally focused on the importance of guns in eighteenth-century native North America. Contact with Europeans, and the networks of exchange that developed as a result, rapidly introduced this technology to indigenous societies. Native Americans quickly became skilled gunmen, stockpiling these tools and learning how to repair damaged weapons, allowing many to become less dependent on new supplies over time. Gunpowder, in contrast, had to be constantly imported from Europe as neither Indians nor colonists could manufacture it in substantial quantities in North America. Consisting of carbon (for combustion), sulfur (for instantaneous ignition), and saltpeter (which provided the oxygen needed to facilitate an explosion), gunpowder was difficult to produce. By the mid-eighteenth century, gunpowder manufacture had evolved significantly from the Chinese method of grinding each ingredient separately and mixing them together. Using wind, water, or steam power, a large stone wheel now milled the components into a fine powder, similar to a grain mill. A small amount of water was added to the powder, creating a paste that could be passed through a filter and dried into small pellets. Gunpowder, therefore, was heavily subject to the skill of the manufacturer and the quality and availability of the ingredients needed to produce it; the final product “was only as good as the material from

² Jean Bernard Bossu, *Travels Through that Part of North America Formerly Called Louisiana: Volume I* (London, England: T. Davies, 1771), 146-148, <https://archive.org/details/travelsthroughth00bossu/page/n146>.

which it was made.”³ Of the major ingredients, carbon, or charcoal, was the easiest to obtain, with sulfur, extracted from iron mines or mineral springs, a close second. Saltpeter, which provided the potassium nitrate, proved the rarest of the three, posing a significant problem, as it was also the chief component of gunpowder.⁴

Saltpeter is found naturally in crystallized form on the walls of caves and damp cellars. But saltpeter can also emerge as a side effect of the bacterial break down of animal dung or guano.⁵ European governments began studying saltpeter as early as the sixteenth century, with the hopes of synthetically reproducing it. English and French governments also passed measures that allowed hired contractors or Crown agents to legally search for, and seize, any saltpeter found on private property. As saltpeter usually developed underneath houses and buildings or in the dung heaps on barn floors, private citizens could do little to prevent the state from digging up their homes or barns. While the East India Company bought saltpeter in Asia and shipped it back to London, this was expensive and subjected the valuable mineral to spoilage, spillage, and piracy.⁶

Crown officials initially believed their territories in North America and the Caribbean would serve as a valuable source of saltpeter within England’s mercantilist empire.⁷ During the seventeenth century, governors from Massachusetts to Jamaica

³ David Cressy, *Saltpeter: The Mother of Gunpowder* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 10.

⁴ High quality gunpowder in the eighteenth century consisted of 75% saltpeter, 15% charcoal, and 10% sulfur. This mix provided the best explosive effect.

⁵ Guano is excrement from bats, sea birds, and seals. Bird guano, which contains the highest nitrogen levels of the three, can be found largely in South America, particularly in coastal Peru. During the colonial period, as well as today, South American guano was used primarily for fertilizer. While bat guano can be found in caves throughout North America, its use in large-scale gunpowder manufacture did not emerge until the mid-eighteenth century, becoming particularly useful for Confederate soldiers during the Civil War.

⁶ Cressy, *Saltpeter*, xii.

⁷ This mercantilist system guaranteed that the English retained as much control over trade as possible, while simultaneously ensuring that the nation remained focused on exports, rather than imports. England sought to develop an empire of commerce, envisioning a flow of wealth and raw materials from the margins of their respective colonial worlds to the mother country for production. Manufactured goods

expressed confidence that their colonies contained saltpeter “as good and as plentifully as any place in the world.”⁸ While Jamaica and Antigua had saltpeter deposits, and some islands off the coast of New England contained guano, none were abundant enough to allow for export. This lack of North American saltpeter benefitted long-term imperial goals, however, restricting opportunities for large-scale manufacture within the colonies to ensure both settler and native dependence on the mother country.

Though and guns and gunpowder quickly became an integral component of indigenous life, British officials came to realize that securing native dependence would be more complicated than previously thought. This was particularly true for the numerous Indian groups of the Southeast, many of which were in the process of joining together to form a large, loosely banded association that European observers would eventually call the Creek Confederacy. Described as the most formidable and well-armed native society in the region, the Creek Indians were a confederation of native peoples who coalesced in the early eighteenth century as a response to the pressures and threats that resulted from European contact.⁹ Guns had allowed members of the Creek Confederacy to become the most successful Indian slavers in the region, facilitating their rise to power. After the decline of the Indian slave trade in the 1720s, gunpowder guaranteed that the Creeks could maintain this position of authority by hunting deer,

would subsequently return to England’s colonies for sale or trade, confirming that the empire retained all profits from the economic enterprise. Thus, in order to increase production and consumption, it was imperative during this period that England settle as many colonies as possible; this promised the empire both a steady supply of raw materials as well as a continuous increase in the number of guaranteed consumers for England’s manufactured goods. Please see Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

⁸ Cressy, *Saltpeter*, 153.

⁹ Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1928), 184; Stephen A. Kowalewski, "Coalescent Societies," in *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians*, ed. Charles M. Hudson, Robbie Ethridge, and Thomas J. Pluckhahn (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006).

which they exchanged for foreign necessities. Gunpowder and ammunition also proved invaluable for protection against external threats, both European and Indian. Without the resources or technology to produce gunpowder on their own, however, Creeks and their neighbors grew increasingly concerned about ensuring steady and reliable supplies.¹⁰

From the British perspective, gunpowder and ammunition held the potential to secure Native American dependence. The centrality of these goods to native life, along with the Indians' inability to make them, lead colonial officials to view these commodities as tools through which they could attempt to control Southeastern indigenous populations and force them to adhere to British governmental interests. But for the majority of the eighteenth century this plan proved difficult to implement, due to ongoing competition from the French and Spanish in the region. Understanding imperial rivalries, the Creeks established a diplomatic policy of neutrality following the Yamasee War, allowing them to play these Europeans off of one another to ensure access to numerous sources of trade goods and maintain positions of authority in relations with outsiders. Neutrality encouraged Creek *micos*, or town headmen, to act according to individual needs and community-level interests, guaranteeing that the Confederacy did not wholly align with one European power. In remaining neutral, Creek leaders could dictate the terms of diplomacy with the British, French, and Spanish, safeguarding their

¹⁰ Scholars often refer to the Creek as the Upper Creek and Lower Creek, though these geographic distinctions are misnomers. Comprised of approximately fifty-nine towns, totaling somewhere around thirty five hundred gunmen, the Upper Creek villages were scattered along the Tallapoosa-Coosa-Alabama river system in what is today western Alabama. The twenty-or-so Lower Creek towns were positioned along the Chattahoochee, Flint and Ocmulgee Rivers, east of the Upper Creeks on the modern-day Alabama-Georgia border. While this general, bilateral division can be problematic for historians because it overlooks the nuances and complexities of Creek society, this dissertation will employ them in course with the existing historiography.

autonomy and political authority in the region.¹¹ The geopolitical shifts that followed the Seven Years' War, however, threatened Creek neutrality. The removal of the French and Spanish from the Southeast allowed the British Empire to gain new territory in North America, establishing the new colonies of East and West Florida. Now, colonial officials were in a position to use gunpowder and ammunition to control the Creeks. Fearing British encirclement and lacking alternate sources of trade, Creeks looked within the Confederacy for ways to adjust to these challenges, adapting their play-off strategy of earlier decades to preserve their authority and influence in cross-cultural diplomacy.

This dissertation uses gunpowder as a lens to explore the ways in which Creeks, predominantly Creek men, adjusted to the changes brought by the end of the Seven Years' War. It marks 1763 as a significant moment in Creek history, one that ushered in a number of social, political, cultural, and economic transformations for native peoples throughout eastern North America. Though they had previously used the play-off strategy to ease societal stresses, Creeks now found themselves forced to navigate new difficulties as a result of Britain's expanded presence in the Southeast. Consequently, this research seeks to better understand how gunpowder allowed members of the Creek Confederacy to challenge threats to both their individual and societal autonomy to maintain their independence in the era before the American Revolution.

Gunpowder, particularly the ability to access it, shaped the ways in which male Creeks navigated the changes that the end of the Seven Years' War brought to their families and communities. By the second half of the eighteenth century, European goods had significantly altered the Creek world, with guns and gunpowder specifically

¹¹ Neutrality is explored in depth in chapter 1 of this dissertation. For a comprehensive study of eighteenth-century Creek neutrality, please see Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1783* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

impacting the areas of hunting and warfare. But the importance of these commodities to Creek daily life also reshaped how Creek men gained authority and legitimacy. Centering on the themes of power, exchange, diplomacy, and gender, this dissertation argues that gunpowder acted as a new source of power for male Creeks after 1763. Because the local, community-level nature of Creek sociopolitical life makes it difficult to establish a universal definition of Creek power, this dissertation posits that gunpowder can be used to explore the various ways in which Creek men secured legitimacy and authority while adapting to the geopolitical shifts of 1763. It considers gunpowder as a gendered commodity, access to which allowed male Creeks of various ages, sociopolitical backgrounds, and family or clan affiliations to combat the expanding British presence in the Southeast in a variety of subjective ways. In so doing, Creek men forged individual paths toward legitimacy, authority, and power that served to protect the Confederacy's collective power and independence.

The fields of ethnohistory, colonial United States history, and Native American history are rich with scholarship that examine the effects of cross-cultural trade on North America's native populations. This research has definitively established that outside commodities transformed native life during the post-European contact era. But few studies have explored how *specific* goods forced such drastic social and cultural changes, particularly in the areas of indigenous power and authority. While a number of studies have addressed the impact of guns on Native Americans, no study has focused solely on gunpowder as a unique commodity with profound sociopolitical and cultural significance for Indians. Separating gunpowder from the existing firearms narrative is important, as the process of acquiring and maintaining steady supplies of ammunition was of far

greater concern to natives than obtaining firearms by the mid-eighteenth century. Gunpowder, in addition, was one of very few products imported to the colonies that both Indians and Europeans found essential. Thus, while British officials wisely understood that providing gunpowder was necessary to establish peaceful relations with the Creeks and their neighbors, they also had to ensure a reliable supply for their own settlers. By concentrating on gunpowder, this study deconstructs the established historical narrative of Indians and guns to illuminate how access to ammunition allowed members of the Creek Confederacy to actively shape their own history, as well as the history of the late eighteenth-century Southeast, in the era between the end of the Seven Years' War and the beginning of the American Revolution. Consequently, this dissertation joins recent scholarship in moving away from dependency theory to reimagine colonial United States history from a perspective that places Native Americans at the center and Europeans on the periphery.¹² Such views, according to historian Daniel K. Richter in his work, *Facing East From Indian Country*, ensures that students and scholars no longer view indigenous peoples as passive victims in a European-dominated society, particularly as they adapted to, and benefitted from, economic relationships with them.¹³

Early studies of the Creek Indians do not give much attention to guns or gunpowder and their impact on native life. Anthropologist and linguist John R. Swanton, a pioneer in the field of ethnohistory, focused much of his scholarship on the Southeastern Indians, writing *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors* in 1922. This research broadly explores the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic origins of the

¹² Dependency theory is the idea that raw materials are extracted from peripheral, or “underdeveloped” societies for manufacture in a wealthier, “elite” state. This process, according to scholars, enriches the core society while impoverishing members of the peripheral society.

¹³ Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 68.

Confederacy, detailing Creek history from coalescence through the end of the colonial era. Swanton's work, however, does not significantly investigate the influence of guns or gunpowder on Southeastern native communities.¹⁴ Verner Crane's 1928 book, *The Southern Frontier*, considers the introduction of guns to Southeastern native peoples in exchange for Indian slaves and deerskins, placing this analysis within a larger discussion of Carolina's early trade with their indigenous neighbors.¹⁵ It was three decades later when historian Carl P. Russell published his manuscript, *Guns on the Early Frontiers*, in which he argued that firearms altered Native American life more than any other European commodity brought to the Americas.¹⁶ Russell's work, which spans the history of North America from the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries, focuses more on the history of firearms, however, than on the indigenous peoples who used them. David Corkran seeks to correct this in his 1967 work, *The Creek Frontier*. In one of the earliest attempts to present the history of the colonial Southeast from a Native American point of view, Corkran's book provides a sweeping history of the Creek Indians and their ancestors from 1540 to 1783. Much of this research focuses on the social and political organization of the Confederacy during the colonial era, particularly Creek leadership structures. Corkran details the mico system and the lives of individual headmen, while illuminating the influence of these leaders on decision making in colonial Georgia. Though Corkran, like others, explores the themes of exchange and diplomacy, his work

¹⁴ John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 73 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1922).

¹⁵ Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1928).

¹⁶ Carl P. Russell, *Guns on the Early Frontiers: A History of Firearms from Colonial Times Through the Years of the Western Fur Trade*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1957).

does not devote a significant amount of attention to the impact of guns or gunpowder on Creek communities.¹⁷

Following Corkran's lead, a number of scholars sought to better understand the native experience in the colonial South. In a 1973 essay, historian Robert Berkhofer urged historians and anthropologists to modify the state of the field by producing research that viewed indigenous peoples as historical actors, rather than as contributors to a Eurocentric history of the Americas.¹⁸ James Axtell's monograph, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*, answers this call by arguing in favor of ethnohistory, a discipline he asserts is "essentially the use of historical and ethnological methods and materials to gain knowledge of the nature and causes of change in a culture defined by ethnological concepts and categories."¹⁹ Anthropologist Charles Hudson's 1976 social history, *The Southeastern Indians*, seeks to illuminate the complexities of indigenous culture, focusing on the sociopolitical practices, ceremonial activities, and spiritual belief systems of the region's major Native American societies. Hudson's detailed ethnographic exploration of the Southeastern Indians' relationship to the supernatural serves as his major contribution to the field. This exploration distinguished Hudson's research from others during an era where most scholarship on native societies centered upon demographic revisionist history, a trend driven by the work of ethnohistorian Henry F. Dobyns in the late 1960s.²⁰ J. Leitch Wright Jr.

¹⁷ David H. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540 – 1783*. (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1967).

¹⁸ Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. "Native Americans and United States History," *The Reinterpretation of American History and Culture*. Ed. William H. Cartwright and Richard L. Watson Jr. (Washington DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1973).

¹⁹ James Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1982), 5.

²⁰ Henry F. Dobyns, "An Appraisal of Techniques with a New Hemispheric Estimate (Estimating Aboriginal American Population)," *Current Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (September 1966).

similarly illuminated indigenous perspectives in his monograph, *The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of the American Indians in the Old South*. Working, like Hudson, to shift the historiography of Native America away from demographically focused research, Wright's book emphasizes culture in its exploration of the interconnected relationships between Indians, European settlers, and African slaves in what he calls "the Old South." Incorporating archaeological and anthropological sources, Wright argues that indigenous peoples were part of a process of large-scale "cultural amalgamation" that resulted in the emergence of completely new peoples, ideologies, and social practices by the early eighteenth century. Wright's work also explores Indian slavery, arguing that the long-term impact of Indian slave labor in the Southeast is most evident in the cultural history of the region. In recognizing the movements of native peoples, both free and enslaved, between the North American Southeast, the Caribbean, and Latin America, Wright's work expands the geographic and analytical scope of the region known as "the Native South," inviting indigenous scholars to incorporate more Atlantic and global perspectives in their research.²¹

While *The Only Land They Knew* inspired further study on native culture from notable scholars like James H. Merrill (*The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal*), the theme of Indian dependence, particularly upon guns and European technology, is evident throughout Wright's work. It is also a central theme in Richard White's 1983 study, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos*. Answering the call for more indigenous-centered scholarship,

²¹ J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of the American Indians in the Old South* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1981).

White's work explores the complicated effects of European contact on native life and culture. He argues that foreign goods disrupted the balance between human and environment that had allowed for native subsistence before the encounter, limiting Indian societies' political and economic autonomy and ultimately changing the society in which they lived. Using the Choctaw as an example in the eighteenth-century Southeast, White details how the removal of the French from the region after 1763, and the elimination of gift-giving that came with it, drew these Indians into the global economy. The market now rendered those who sought European goods 'dependent people,' forcing the Choctaw to deplete their natural resources – namely white tail deer – in order to access the commodities they found necessary for daily life.²²

While *The Roots of Dependency* is groundbreaking and sophisticated in its interdisciplinary methodology and scope, some scholars have come to criticize White's approach, asserting that he at times forces his dependency thesis upon the topic of analysis. White's exploration of the deerskin trade additionally overemphasizes the importance of 1763 in drawing the Choctaws and their neighbors into the global market economy. While the end of the Seven Years' War ushered in new regulations that changed the ways in which the Southeastern Indians consumed and accessed European goods, this dissertation will join scholars such as Alan Gallay and Kathryn E. Holland Braund in arguing that the Southeastern Indians became an integral part of the world economy much earlier in the eighteenth century. This was due in large part to the introduction of guns to native peoples, which enabled the Indian slave trade after the establishment of English Carolina in 1670, as well as the rising importance of the

²² Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 146.

deerskin trade following the Yamasee War in 1718.²³ In *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade With Anglo America, 1685-1815*, Braund argues Creek participation in the deerskin trade deeply changed Creek ways of life, exploring how guns transformed and commercialized indigenous hunting practices. But despite these changes, Braund argues that other aspects of Creek social and cultural life successfully endured, allowing the Confederacy to meet market demands without undermining “the established rhythm of their subsistence economy.”²⁴ Braund’s analysis illuminates how guns and firearms did not necessarily trigger declension, but rather provided Creeks with opportunities for cultural growth.

Braund’s ethnohistorical analysis skillfully explores the themes of continuity and change in the eighteenth-century Creek world, making *Deerskins and Duffels* a key addition to the expanding field of Southeastern indigenous history at the time of its publication in 1993. Its emphasis on Creek women also reflects a historiographical shift toward an exploration of gender in the Native South, which would grow to include notable works such as *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change*, by Theda Perdue, and *Brothers Born of One Mother: British-Native American Relations in the Colonial Southeast*, by Michelle LeMaster.²⁵ But Braund’s work marks a new phase in ethnohistory, one in which scholars began to consider not just the causes of culture change, but how indigenous peoples both collectively and individually interpreted and shaped the world around them as they adapted to the sociopolitical, cultural, and

²³ Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

²⁴ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 62.

²⁵ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Michelle LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother: British-Native American Relations in the Colonial Southeast* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

economic changes brought by the arrival of Europeans. Claudio Saunt's *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733 – 1816*, explores ideas of social and cultural change in Creek society following the establishment of Georgia in 1733. Saunt focuses on the offspring of British fathers and indigenous mothers to demonstrate how these Creeks introduced European ideas of private property and centralized authority to a society that had long valued communal ownership and decision-making processes, as well as consensus-based power and authority.²⁶ Greg O'Brien's *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750 – 1830*, explores similar social and cultural changes among the Choctaw, particularly as prolonged contact with Europeans and Americans forced an evolution in traditional notions of power and authority.²⁷

Steven C. Hahn's *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670 – 1763*, enriches the culturally focused field of ethnohistory with a political history of the Creek Indians. Hahn seeks to better understand the Creek polity and the ways in which Creek political culture changed through the mid-eighteenth century. This task is made difficult by the local, decentralized nature of the Creek world, which has led scholars to question and debate the idea of a "Creek Confederacy." Choosing to instead explore the origins of a "Creek Nation," Hahn traces the evolution of the Creeks' neutrality policy, from its formalization as the Coweta Resolution in 1718 through the end of the Seven Years' War. Hahn argues that as the century progressed, neutrality became a defining Creek cultural and political trait that shaped the emergence of a new, nation-like political entity, defined by "the drawing of territorial boundaries, the creation of institutions of national

²⁶ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁷ Greg O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

leadership, and the invention of ideologies that legitimize the existence thereof.”²⁸ This Creek Nation materialized as a result of continued British, French, and Spanish influence upon native peoples, particularly as European goals, which were largely economic and territorial, forced the Creeks to defend their political sovereignty by embracing similar notions of nationhood and identity. Robbie Ethridge’s *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and their World* also explores the political and territorial formation of “Creek Country” in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Ethridge investigates how kinship ties, town loyalties, and, most significantly, Creek connections to the land, gave rise to a sociopolitical structure that became synonymous with the Creek Confederacy.²⁹ Joshua Piker’s *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial North America* contributes to this discussion by illuminating the importance of the town, or *talwa*, the basic sociopolitical decision making-unit, in understanding Creek political and diplomatic history.³⁰ Though Saunt, O’Brien, Hahn, Ethridge, and Piker do not highlight guns or gunpowder as central subjects in their research, their deep analysis of certain themes, specifically power, authority, politics, and diplomacy, have been instrumental in shaping this dissertation.

Together, these works are representative of a substantial rise in scholarship focused on both the Creek Indians and interactions between Southeastern native peoples and Euro-Americans in the region. Recent works by historian John T. Juricek, which build from the Georgia and Florida volumes of his edited primary source collection, *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws*, further enhance this field. In

²⁸ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 8.

²⁹ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

³⁰ Joshua Aaron Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Colonial Georgia and the Creeks: Anglo Indian Diplomacy on the Southern Frontier, 1733 – 1763, Juricek explores Creek-Georgia relations largely through the lens of land, which he argues was the most pressing diplomatic issue in the colonial era. His work rests on the idea that colonists and Indians understood territory and territorial sovereignty in different ways. Juricek convincingly argues that both sides negotiated with one another on relatively equal footing during this period, as Creeks strategically gifted land to Georgia officials to establish favorable diplomatic relations and ensure gifts in return.³¹ Juricek's subsequent book, *Endgame for Empire: British-Creek Relations in Georgia and Vicinity, 1763 – 1776*, carries this discussion into the post-Seven Years' War era. Juricek investigates British Indian reform during the 1760s, a decade plagued by Creek-Anglo violence spurred largely by settler encroachment onto Indian lands. He details the ways in which colonial officials sought to improve trade and diplomacy with the Creeks while simultaneously imposing greater control over them. Their efforts, along with the actions of unscrupulous traders and hostility of backcountry colonists, resulted in a deep Creek mistrust of the British that held profound implications for the Loyalists during the American Revolution.³²

Endgame for Empire and the *Georgia and Florida Treaties* volume of Juricek's *Early American Indian Documents* have proven invaluable for this dissertation. But *Endgame*, like the other works overviewed here, does not focus on Creek relationships to guns or gunpowder. Though Jessica Yirush Stern's recent monograph *The Lives in Objects: Native Americans, British Colonists, and Cultures of Exchange in the Southeast*,

³¹ John T. Juricek, *Colonial Georgia and the Creeks: Anglo-Indian Diplomacy on the Southern Frontier, 1733 – 1763* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010).

³² John T. Juricek, *Endgame for Empire: British-Creek Relations in Georgia and Vicinity, 1763 – 1776* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2015).

explores the cultural patterns of eighteenth-century native-European exchange, it also does not analyze guns or gunpowder in depth.³³ Only recently has a study devoted to exploring the historical relationship between native societies and guns emerged. In a sweeping overview of North American Indian history from first contact through the nineteenth century, David J. Silverman's *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* details how indigenous peoples became fully aware of the potential of firearms to provide them with military and political power over other indigenous groups. Silverman argues that following the introduction of guns to Native peoples, Indian "arms races" spread across the continent, escalating intertribal warfare and solidifying the significance of European technology in the Native American world.³⁴

While Silverman's broad approach complicates the existing historiography of "Indians and guns," his work includes little discussion of gunpowder. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap. Because Europeans and Indians both needed access to ammunition, this research posits that gunpowder created an environment of mutual dependence in the eighteenth-century Southeast. Placing the theory of "advantageous interdependence" introduced by Kathleen DuVal in her work *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* within the context of the Creek gunpowder trade allows us to complicate existing historical narratives concerning native-British diplomacy in the late eighteenth-century Southeast. Consequently, this research contributes to the growing body of ethnohistorical scholarship that focuses on Indians as diplomatic agents and policymakers. As the lens of gunpowder reveals, Creeks regularly dictated the terms of

³³ Jessica Yirush Stern, *The Lives in Objects: Native Americans, British Colonists, and Cultures of Labor and Exchange in the Southeast*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

³⁴ David J. Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

interaction and diplomatic negotiation with their British neighbors to access power and maintain autonomy in the Revolutionary Era.

Chapter One focuses on ideas of power and authority among members of the Creek Confederacy. It seeks to better understand how the Creeks and their neighbors responded to the geopolitical shifts of 1763, marking this year as one of deep significance for North America's native peoples. It details the spiritual, cultural, and sociopolitical aspects of the eighteenth-century Creek world to explore how the removal of the French and Spanish from the Southeast impacted everyday life within the Confederacy. Chapter Two uses gunpowder to explore shifting power dynamics within the Creek Confederacy following the Seven Years' War. It views gunpowder as a gendered commodity, which proved fundamentally important to Creek masculinity and male identity by the late eighteenth-century. Access to gunpowder provided Creek men with opportunities to secure power and authority, as recognized in both the native and European worlds. In investigating the connections between gunpowder and power, this chapter illuminates how access to gunpowder influenced the evolution of indigenous male culture, shaping the ways in which Creek men reconsidered existing notions of masculinity and mature manhood and causing deep generational divisions within the Creek world.

Chapter Three considers gunpowder and ammunition as tools through which British officials attempted to restructure Indian policy, shape diplomacy, and assert control over Creek men during the Revolutionary Era. It uses gunpowder as a lens to analyze different viewpoints concerning British-Creek relations to gain a better understanding of both Creek and colonial perspectives on British Indian policy. Chapter Four focuses on Lower Creek travels to Spanish Cuba during the 1760s and 1770s to

explore how these connections impacted both Creek-British diplomacy and political leadership within the Confederacy. It investigates the social, cultural, and political significance of Creek passages to Cuba, understanding them as part of a larger strategy of Creek adaptation to the geopolitical shifts of 1763. This chapter argues that continued relations with the Spanish both provided Creeks with an alternate source of European goods and allowed them to challenge the British Empire's efforts to cement economic and political authority in the Southeast. Finally, Chapter Five investigates how members of the Creek Confederacy revised their neutrality policy of earlier decades to play Loyalists and Rebels off of one another during the American Revolution. It posits that continued Upper and Lower Creek factionalism allowed the Confederacy to maintain its collective autonomy and independence during the first years of the conflict, creating space for individual Creeks to manipulate both sides in order to access gunpowder and other valuable European goods.

This research illuminates the ways in which access to gunpowder provided members of the Creek Confederacy with new opportunities to gain and maintain power between the end of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution. Placing gunpowder at the center of this narrative allows for the development of new interpretations that challenge many preconceived notions of cultural and diplomatic interactions between Creeks, Europeans, and Americans during a period of intense adjustment for native peoples. It asks questions about who held authority in the late eighteenth-century Creek Confederacy and why, exploring how connections between gunpowder and power lead Creek men to reconsider established ideas of manhood and masculinity. Consequently, this dissertation offers a deeper exploration of local-level

Creek sociopolitical history, while contributing to the fields of gender history, the history of colonial and Revolutionary America, and ethnohistory. It illuminates the Creeks as policymakers and active participants in shaping their own history, as well as the history of the Southeast, the emerging United States, and the larger Atlantic World.

Chapter 1: Creek Power and Authority in the Eighteenth-Century Southeast

In June 1766 Governor George Johnstone of British West Florida sent a talk to the Upper Creek headman The Mortar. The Mortar had long been a source of aggravation to British officials, due to his allegiance to the French during the Seven Years' War. His pro-French proclivities lead many to assume he had instigated aggressive anti-British behavior among the Upper Creeks, including an attack in May 1760 that resulted in the murder of eleven traders. In the year that followed, Creek violence - and The Mortar's skepticism of British intentions - continued.¹ Johnstone expressed his disappointment that this "man of sense" provoked indignation among his people by entertaining "idle talks" about the British following their occupation of former French land claims. A frustrated Johnstone asserted that The Mortar was not considering the comfort and security that the British could provide the Upper Creeks in exchange for peace. Rather, The Mortar chose to "consult his own power, which depends on confusion among his people from whence all kinds of disorders has spread through his country."²

The Mortar's actions posed a challenge to Britain's imperial goals as a result of their victory in the Seven Years' War. The "confusion" which Johnstone described was factionalism, a foundational sociopolitical and cultural element of eighteenth-century coalescent societies. Factionalism had long secured collective power and independence for the Creek Confederacy, encouraging towns and local leaders to pursue their own

¹ According to Johnstone, in the years following the conflict, some Upper and Lower Creeks had killed at least nineteen British settlers, harbored countless runaway slaves, stolen cattle and horses on a daily basis, and even "fired at the Crew of a Spanish Vessel heaving down on the other Side of [Pensacola] Bay...still calling out for more Presents." Dunbar Rowland, ed., *English Dominion*, vol. 1, *Mississippi Provincial Archives* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 511, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovo00offigoog/page/n511>

² *Ibid.*, 523-526.

interests in relations with Europeans.³ Individual town headmen (micos) lived in competition with one another for authority. They sustained relationships and exchanges with the British, French, and Spanish based on community concerns and personal needs, and “otherwise controlled what happened within Indian country.” These divisions enabled Creeks to develop a diplomatic policy of neutrality earlier in the century, which allowed them to play the region’s Europeans off one another to ensure a balance of power while offering access to multiple sources of foreign goods, favorable terms of alliance, and political autonomy.⁴ The decentralized nature of Creek society amplified the Confederacy’s independence and ensured that internal and external alliances remained both adaptable and ephemeral.⁵

Though Johnstone recognized that a significant share of The Mortar’s power stemmed from preserving the natural tensions and divisions that existed within the Creek world, he did not fully understand the intricacies of Creek neutrality or how factionalism translated to power for indigenous male leaders. Johnstone, like other British officials, was more familiar with European governmental structures, designed to command and control the empire’s peoples through coercion. This type of sociopolitical organization established a firm “social contract between ruler and ruled.”⁶ But Creek headmen could not fathom using force to create social and political order. Rather, leaders relied on persuasion and negotiation to gain the support of their clans and townspeople, “with the

³ For a comprehensive overview of factionalism please see Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, and White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 69.

⁴ For a detailed exploration of neutrality as a diplomatic policy, see Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*.

⁵ Andrew K. Frank, "Taking the State Out: Seminoles and Creeks in Late Eighteenth-Century Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (Summer 2005): 11-12.

⁶ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 90.

assumption that they had the community's best interests in mind."⁷ This culture of consensus politics made power authoritative for men who sought leadership positions within the larger Creek Confederacy. Authority "was power rendered legitimate and efficacious," demonstrating that one had not only gained the support of their community despite competition from others also vying for leadership, but that they had successfully mediated conflict among towns and clans with differing interests in order to achieve agreement. Creek power, in this context, was the ability to act or speak on behalf of others, or, more specifically, the "possession of controlling influence over others."⁸ Creek headmen most often gained consensus by securing foreign goods and presents through diplomatic relations with Europeans and redistributing these commodities in their community, as well as across various towns and groups, in exchange for support. Gifts and presents "helped to promote peace and workable alliances between peoples who would otherwise remain strangers and potential enemies."⁹ In this sphere of consensus politics, control over valuable commodities was essential if male Creeks hoped to gain recognizable power and authority from a variety of groups. From this perspective, Governor Johnstone was correct. Creek "confusion" allowed The Mortar ample opportunities to sustain his position of power while simultaneously challenging British efforts to consolidate the Confederacy in order to better control them.

This chapter explores ideas of power and authority in the eighteenth-century Creek world to better understand how Southeastern indigenous peoples responded to the geopolitical shifts that followed the Seven Years' War. It establishes the year 1763 as a

⁷ Bryan C. Rindfleisch, "Creek Nation," The Digital Encyclopedia of George Washington, <http://mountvernon.org>.

⁸ O'Brien, *Choctaws*, xxi.

⁹ Steven J. Peach, "Creek Indian Globetrotter: Tomochichi's Trans-Atlantic Quest for Traditional Power in the Colonial Southeast," *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (October 2013): 608.

key moment in time for the Creeks and their neighbors, marked by the removal of the French and Spanish from the region and the expansion of British influence into Florida. As this chapter and the larger dissertation show, these imperial changes dramatically altered existing social and political structures within the Creek Confederacy. By providing an overview of eighteenth-century Creek life that draws from spiritual, cultural, and sociopolitical perspectives, this chapter seeks to illuminate how these global changes impacted Creeks at the local, community level, particularly how they reshaped existing relationships between different generations of Creek men.

Scholars have posited that regular exchange with Europeans aided both the development and everyday processes of consensus-based governments in the post-European contact Native South. The centrality of redistribution to consensus politics made these societies “better suited to uniting different ethnicities in confronting the challenges posed by European contact” than the centralized, authoritarian style chiefdoms of the Mississippian period.¹⁰ But in a sociopolitical sphere deeply intertwined with access to European goods, not all commodities carried equal weight. For the majority of the eighteenth century, Creek men desired gunpowder more than any other foreign manufacture, including guns. Though the use of firearms necessitated skill and required frequent maintenance, native men quickly adapted, learning the art of gunsmithing as well as how to cast bullets and make gunflints. Gunpowder manufacture, however, was an extremely difficult and complex process, requiring technological expertise, considerable financial backing, and high concentrations of saltpeter, charcoal, and sulphur. Colonial governments found gunpowder nearly impossible to produce in North America. While weapons could be repaired and reused, gunpowder “was an expendable

¹⁰ Stern, *The Lives in Objects*, 13.

and perishable commodity, which only Europeans could supply.”¹¹ The ebb and flow of ammunition supplies could induce a crisis or create resolution in Indian country.

This chapter explores the history of the eighteenth-century Creeks, focusing on the Confederacy’s coalescent origins, consensus-based sociopolitical structure, spiritual belief systems, and awareness of tension and balance, to better understand how a single commodity, such as gunpowder, could influence the ways in which males secured legitimacy and gained authoritative power. For the Creek Confederacy, a society comprised of culturally and linguistically diverse political entities where “membership was not fixed, institutions were not regularized, power was not centralized, and procedures were not codified,” the maintenance of authority, “the raw calculus of power,” was constantly in-progress.¹² The processes of determining and recognizing authority were grounded in legitimacy, a local-level method of validation. Authority was subjective and fluid, varying based on town interests, community needs, the accessibility of important commodities, and the actions of individuals.

Local level nuances make it difficult for historians to identify communal ideas of legitimacy, authority, and power among Creek males. Because of gunpowder’s role as both a highly gendered commodity and integral component of daily life and ritual, this chapter posits that gunpowder can be used to identify and explore commonalities in how Creek men secured legitimacy and authority. Societies that sought to preserve their autonomy and independence found themselves faced with new challenges, marked not only by the arrival of Europeans, but the new technology these settlers brought with

¹¹ Armstrong Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare 1675 – 1815* (New York, NY: Routledge Press), 23.

¹² Peach, “Tomochichi,” 9.

them. By the last decade of the seventeenth century, members of the emerging Creek Confederacy had come to rely on gunpowder for success in warfare, as well as for everyday protection from both European and indigenous enemies. Faced with new vulnerabilities, gunpowder provided Creeks with a new kind of physical power that allowed men to increase annual hunting yields. But gunpowder, and its ability to provide greater access to the Atlantic marketplace, also transformed male relationships with the spiritual world and with one another. Guns and gunpowder provided greater opportunities for men to prove their mastery over supernatural forces, improving one's chances of manipulating otherworldly power for the benefit of the people and marking them as persons of authority and influence.

In using gunpowder as a lens to examine Creek ideas of power and authority, this chapter introduces a number of themes. These include gunpowder's role in facilitating deep social and ideological divisions among various generations of Creek men, its centrality in Creek-British negotiations, and its expanding significance beyond the arenas of hunting and warfare after the Seven Years' War. From 1763 through the outbreak of the American Revolution, both Creek leaders and British officials used discussions of gunpowder in diplomatic meetings to identify their antagonists' weaknesses and manipulate these shortcomings to their advantage. The British often tried to withhold gunpowder supplies to force the Creeks to cede lands or adhere to specific governmental interests, a scheme that they tried, unsuccessfully, to employ through the early years of the Revolution.¹³

¹³ As late as 1773 Indian Agent Charles Stuart stated that the best way to control the Creek Confederacy, and assert dominance over the region, would be to "deprive them of ammunition, by which means they will become easy prey." Charles Stuart, "Deprive them of Ammunition," March 17, 1773, American Series Vol. 118, The Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, MI.

Creeks responded to these threats by rethinking neutrality. Neutrality had always been an active policy, but the geopolitical shifts of 1763 forced Creeks to find new ways to keep the British from overpowering them. In emphasizing existing tribal factionalism, Creek society encouraged men to act according to individual and local-level interests, maintaining collective autonomy. In meetings with British officials, Creek leaders protected factionalism by alleging that they had no authority to regulate the actions of their increasingly aggressive young men. Headmen often employed this excuse when faced with pressure from the British to punish members of the Confederacy for inflicting violence upon white settlers, a neutrality tactic favored by Creek warriors during this period. Other new ways of remaining neutral included sending large delegations to colonial towns to demand presents (inconveniencing government officials in the process), and traveling to Havana to maintain diplomatic and trade connections with the Spanish, circumventing British efforts to monopolize the gunpowder trade. These actions placed the British in a defensive position, forcing them to react to Creek behavior at a time when they expected to easily establish dominance in the region. Gunpowder, either its physical use or efforts to acquire and distribute it, proved central to the success of Creek adjustment strategies. As divisions among colonial settlers devolved into Revolution, Creeks found opportunity to officially declare political neutrality once again. Discussions of ammunition dominated almost every political negotiation between Creeks, Loyalists, and Rebels during the early years of the conflict, as the latter parties scrambled to supply the former to secure their support. But while gunpowder had the ability to sway Creek allegiance temporarily, it could never guarantee a formal, lasting commitment to either side. In drawing from established sociopolitical structures and

adapting their strengths to meet new diplomatic challenges, Creeks adjusted old traditions and forged new ways to maintain their autonomy.

Because power is a “multiplex concept,” appearing in many forms throughout the Native American world, it is difficult to define or explain.¹⁴ To analyze indigenous power, grounded in authority and legitimacy, it is necessary to evaluate the historical context in which these concepts developed. Creek factionalism, sustained internally by a consensus-based political structure and externally by a policy of diplomatic neutrality, was possible because of Confederacy’s origins as a coalescent society. Indigenous coalescence was a deliberate response to “severe pressure and threat” that brought “groups and individuals together in new formations” to combat the effects of drastic social and cultural change.¹⁵ The arrival of Europeans introduced war, disease, and new technology to North America, devastating indigenous populations and profoundly altering native life. But, according to anthropologist Robbie Ethridge, these changes did not completely reshape the Native American world. Rather, it was the introduction of a capitalist economic system to North America, “ushered in by a commercial trade in Indian slaves and skins” that forced native peoples to “revamp their social, political, and economic orders.”¹⁶ To Europeans, the American colonies were just a few of many strategic posts around the globe from which they could bolster their wealth through the extraction of raw resources.¹⁷ Because they were purely economic ventures, European

¹⁴ O’Brien, *Choctaws*, xxi.

¹⁵ Stephen A. Kowalewski, "Coalescent Societies," in *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians*, ed. Charles M. Hudson, Robbie Ethridge, and Thomas J. Pluckhahn (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), 96.

¹⁶ Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Choctaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 89.

¹⁷ Ethridge, *Chicaza to Choctaw*, 90.

settlements, particularly in the Southeast, remained small through the first century of colonization, existing on the peripheries of an Indian country where native peoples far outnumbered settler populations. Consequently, the actions and decisions of colonial governments did not completely transform the Mississippian South. Rather, these towns and settlements “acted as channels through which larger European economic systems and goals reached native populations,” forever changing indigenous life.¹⁸

The introduction of guns and firearms to North American Indians best elucidates how Europe’s global economic vision transformed the Mississippian world. Guns became easily accessible to native peoples after 1630 when Dutch traders from New York introduced the flintlock musket to the Iroquois. The Iroquois used these weapons to displace nearby Indian rivals, such as the Erie. Though the Erie shared linguistic traits with the Iroquois, most of the latter’s member nations, specifically the Seneca, viewed the Erie as enemies for having assisted the Huron in the Beaver Wars of the seventeenth century. The Seneca and their allies, who had access to firearms and gunpowder, subsequently used this technology to wage war on the Erie and other rivals, killing or capturing those who had not yet obtained comparable means of defense. This violence prompted the remaining Eries to migrate south from the Great Lakes region. They arrived in Virginia in 1656 where English settlers chose to trade them guns and gunpowder for Native slaves.¹⁹ Within a year they began moving toward Spanish

¹⁸ Ethridge, *Chicaza to Choctaw*, 90.

¹⁹ There has been significant debate over the origins of the Westo Indians in Southeastern Indian historiography. Anthropologist and pioneering ethnohistorian John R. Swanton argued in a number of articles published in the *American Anthropologist* throughout 1918 and 1919 that the Westo Indians were a division of the larger Yuchi tribe (also Euchee or Uchee), who were a group of Mississippian mound building peoples that existed in the Southeast until the mid-seventeenth-century. He continued to advance this argument in his 1922 work *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors*, though historian Verner Crane had recently challenged his Yuchi-Westo thesis by asserting that the Westos were a displaced band of Eries. The Crane thesis has come to be accepted by scholars of Southeastern Native peoples over

Florida, using their firearms to attack and enslave Indigenous peoples in the region now known as Carolina. Upon their arrival, the Eries encountered thousands of Muskogean speaking peoples who began to call them “Westos,” or enemies.²⁰ Stephen Bull, deputy to Anthony Ashley Cooper, one of Carolina’s early Proprietors, described the Westos as “another sort of Indians that live backwards in an entire body and war against all Indians . . . [They] strike a great fear in these Indians, having guns and powder and shot, and do come upon these Indians here in the time of their crop and destroy all by killing, carrying away their corn and children and eat[ing] them . . .”²¹ By the mid-1670s many Southeastern Indians, “afraid of the very foot step of a Westo,” began to refer to them as “the man eaters.”²² Carolina’s first settlers recounted meeting large groups of hospitable natives during their first years at Charles Town, who had traveled from the interior seeking any means of defense against this new kind of Indian warfare.

The Indian slave trade completely reshaped the social structures, traditional ritual practices, and existing spiritual belief systems of indigenous societies.²³ Some ethnohistorians use the framework of the “Mississippian shatter zone” to study the

the Swanton thesis. See Verner W. Crane, “An Historical Note on the Westo Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, 2 (1918): 331-37; Verner W. Crane, “Westo and Chisca,” *American Anthropologist*, 21 (1919): 463-65; John R. Swanton, “Identity of the Westo Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, 21 (1919): 213-16; John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 73 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1922.) Two recent sources that address the debate and excellently detail the history of the Westo are Eric E. Bowne, *The Westo Indians: Slave Traders of the Early Colonial South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); David J. Silverman, *Thundersticks, Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 59-60. The Westo were also known as the Rickahockans for a short period of time during their tenure in Virginia. Silverman states the name “Westo” originated because of the Eries’/Rickahockans’ presence at a plantation on the James River named “Westover.”

²⁰ Joseph M. Hall, Jr., *Zamumo's Gifts: Indian-European Exchange in the Southeast* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 75, n3.

²¹ Stephen Bull, "Stephen Bull to Lord Ashley, September 12, 1670," in *The Shaftesbury Papers: South Carolina Historical Society*, ed. Langdon Cheves, 192-196. (Charleston, SC: Home House Press, 2010), 194; Matthew Jennings, "Cutting One Another's Throats: British, Native, and African Violence in Early Carolina," in *Creating and Contesting Carolina: Proprietary Era Histories*, ed. Michelle LeMaster and Bradford J. Wood (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 114.

²² Bull, “Bull to Ashley,” *Shaftesbury Papers*, 194; Silverman, *Thundersticks*, 62.

²³ For a comprehensive study of Indian slavery, please see Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*.

instability of the late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century Native South.²⁴

The shatter zone concept describes the collapse and fragmentation of late prehistoric Mississippian era chiefdoms, tracing how members of these communities subsequently migrated, coalesced, and reorganized into new, structurally different, societies following European contact. This lens illuminates the complex interactions of peoples from the North American Southeast and the Atlantic World, revealing relationships of cross-cultural interdependence.²⁵ In addition to providing a more accurate depiction of life in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century Southeast, the Mississippian shatter zone allows scholars to better understand the process of coalescence and its sociopolitical impact on the region through the Revolutionary Era. Writing about the Southeastern Indians in 1775, historian James Adair, who spent forty years in the area as a deerskin trader, remarked on the Creek Confederacy's origins and observed the visible impact of coalescence on Creek society over one hundred years later:

The nation consists of a mixture of several broken tribes, whom the Muskohge artfully decoyed to incorporate with them, in order to strengthen themselves against hostile attempts. . . . [they] usually conversed with each other in their own different dialects, though they understood the Muskohge language; but being naturalized, they were bound to observe the laws and customs of the

²⁴ Ethridge defines the Mississippian shatter zone as “A large region of instability in Eastern North America that existed from the late sixteenth through the early eighteenth centuries and was created by the combined conditions of the structural inability of the Mississippian world and the inability of Native polities to withstand the full force of colonialism; the introduction of old world pathogens and the subsequent serial disease episodes and loss of life; the inauguration of a nascent capitalist economic system by Europeans through a commercial trade in animal skins and especially in Indian slaves whom other Indians procured and sold to European buyers; and the intensification and spread of violence and warfare through the Indian slave trade and particularly through the emergence of militaristic Native slaving societies who held control of the European trade.” Robbie Ethridge ed., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 2.

²⁵ In recent years, scholars have focused on this interdependence. See DuVal, *Independence Lost* and Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill, NC: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 1992). For a thorough exploration of this concept, please see Ethridge ed., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, 2.

main original body. These reduced, broken tribes . . . have helped to multiply the Muskohge to a dangerous degree . . .²⁶

Adair's description illuminates the complexities of understanding the history of coalescent societies. The challenge for historians is to recognize not only how the Creeks adopted new groups, but also how they thrived for so long despite their structural fluidity.²⁷ While internal factions provided obvious challenges for both the Creeks and outsiders, they also proved to be a valuable asset in maintaining indigenous autonomy. With the town, or talwa, as the principle decision-making unit, the Creek Confederacy functioned as a series of separate diplomatic entities. Towns were free to make choices based on local needs, independent of the larger society.²⁸ This structure favored consensus, helping to promote peace among peoples who might otherwise remain enemies, while also maintaining the societal tensions that secured Creek autonomy.²⁹ But the process of coalescence and the emergence of the Creek Confederacy as a social entity also pose challenges to scholarly understandings of "Creek" spiritual belief systems, specifically traditional mythology and cosmology, which were not apparent to European observers in the post-contact Southeast. Personal connections to the supernatural world, however, were a crucial part of native life, particularly in the arenas of power and authority, and must be considered within the framework of coalescence.

The fluid nature of Native American cosmology and mythology makes these concepts difficult to understand and explain. Belief systems within any culture are

²⁶ James Adair, *The History of the American Indians, Particularly Those Nations Adjoining to the Mississippi, East and West Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Virginia* (London: E. and C. Dilly, 1775), 257; Kevin T. Harrell, "The Terrain of Factionalism: How Upper Creek Communities Negotiated the Recourse of Gulf Coast Trade, 1763-1780," *The Alabama Historical Review* 68, no. 1 (January 2015): 79.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 20.

²⁹ Ibid.

subjective, naturally changing over time; consequently, “any description of a belief system is necessarily temporally bound.”³⁰ One consequence of coalescence is that European accounts of the peoples who became known as the Creeks only describe them as “Creeks,” with “little or no regard for their [diverse] cultural heritage.” Applied to spiritual belief systems, “this assumption of a single heritage has led to many descriptions of the Creeks that are actually only collections of mismatched bits and pieces of information.” While some aspects of Creek spiritual belief systems could be thousands of years old, others emerged as the direct result of coalescence.³¹ For example, the annual Busk ceremony described in many European accounts of eighteenth-century Creek life has origins in multiple Mississippian cultures, including Yuchi, Tuskegee, Tuckabatchee, and Muskogee. The nature and ritual practices of the Busk underwent their own transformation as these, and other Busk-celebrating groups, joined together to form the Creek Confederacy.

Southeastern native peoples generally organized their societies by differentiating between an “outside world” and an “inside world.” The inside world, according to anthropologist Mary Helms, was the “immediate, here and now, or everyday.” Those who existed within this world easily understood it, and for that reason it was “ordinary, mundane, and common” as well as “morally and politically controlled or ordered.” Conversely, the outside world was both physically and ideologically distant. Because it was “farther away in time and space, and less known to average peoples,” the outside world was an “extraordinary, exotic, uncontrolled, [and] unordered” place. These two worlds, though they opposed and balanced one another, were closely interconnected.

³⁰ Bill Grantham, *Creation Myths and Legends of the Creek Indians* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Native Americans generally considered the outside world to be “the source of the basic raw materials, intangible energies, original knowledge, and original ancestral creators” that allowed for the formation and survival of human life and sustained the existence of the inside world.³² Other scholars posit that many of the groups that formed the Creek Confederacy understood the supernatural sphere, and their place within it, through the prism of an “upper world,” a “lower world,” and a “middle world.” According to anthropologist Bill Grantham:

The Upper World, the world beyond the sky, was the realm of powerful beings and departed souls. It was permeated with powers of perfection, order, permanence, clarity and periodicity. The Lower World, the world below the earth and the waters, was also perceived as the habitat of many powerful spiritual beings. It was the realm of powers exactly contrary to those of the upper world: reversals, madness, creativity, fertility, and chaos . . . the Middle World, the world inhabited by humans . . . existed in a ‘precarious balance’ between those powers that structure nature and human life and those that rupture order and empower freedom. Powers of both Upper and Lower Worlds could be called upon by humans, but only without allowing the two to come into contact with each other.³³

Creeks and their ancestors trusted that their very being depended on relationships with the spiritual, believing all that existed in the physical world “existed as a manifestation of sacred power.”³⁴ This ideology preserved the balance that was so crucial for the function of indigenous societies. This emphasis on balance “stressed that humans play off the forces of the [spiritual and physical] worlds to secure peace and plenty.” Creeks attributed unfavorable circumstances, such as the death of people or animals from disease, to society’s failure to recognize the importance of these relationships.³⁵ Power

³² Mary W. Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade, and Power* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993), 6.

³³ Grantham, *Creation Myths*, 21.

³⁴ Peach, “Tomochichi,” 608.

³⁵ Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1991), 20.

gained from the spiritual world was not viewed as a means to control others and was not absolute, making it constantly subject to change. For power to be accepted as legitimate, native leaders needed to ensure that they could translate their power into authority. Authority indicated that the larger community accepted one's connection to the sacred domain and recognized that one effectively used the power gained from these connections in the physical world. The effective use of power could be demonstrated in a number of ways, including success in war and the restoration of peace through vengeance, achievement in the hunt, the ability to form advantageous alliances with outsiders, the establishment of extended kinship networks, the observance of ritual obligations, and, as applied to native women, the capacity to bring forth life.

The Creeks' incorporation of European technology into their daily life supported these balances and oppositions. From a western perspective, it would appear that the Creeks' increased use of guns and gunpowder would result in their dependence, making it "impossible [for them] to resist European manipulation and conquest."³⁶ The reality, however, is more complex. In 1691 these peoples began a mass relocation to what is today central Georgia, settling along the Ocmulgee, Oconee, Ogechee, and Savannah rivers to be closer to the English market at Charles Town and the Spanish at St. Augustine.³⁷ From this position, the Creeks could easily raid Spanish missions to capture and enslave Christian Indians, while also gaining more reliable access to English traders, from which they could easily acquire firearms and gunpowder. While this migration sparked a "consumer revolution" in Creek country, allowing "an entire generation of

³⁶ White, *Roots of Dependency*, 64

³⁷ Steven C. Hahn, "The Mother of Necessity: Carolina, the Creek Indians, and the Making of a New Order in the American Southeast, 1670-1763," in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, ed. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 95, 99.

Creek children to be raised to adulthood without knowing what life was like without a reliable supply of English trade goods,” it signaled Creek adaptation to the rapidly changing world in which they lived, more so than increased dependence.³⁸ This relocation serves as an example of how contact with Europeans, and increased familiarity with European goods, forced members of the Creek Confederacy to rethink traditional sources of power.

Post-contact change within indigenous societies is often illustrated through the framework of declension. According to historian Theda Perdue, if Indians are depicted as changing, they are routinely “shown in a state of decline, wherein their ‘traditional ways’ were interrupted and corrupted by Western cultural domination.”³⁹ In the arena of post-contact power and authority, the lens of gunpowder reveals how foreign manufactures could preserve the natural tensions and balances central to Creek life, and provide new opportunities for Creek men to draw from the energies of the spiritual and physical worlds “to secure peace and plenty” for the benefit of the larger Confederacy.⁴⁰ Gunpowder proved a useful tool for Creek men as prolonged and intimate contact with Europeans influenced the ways in which they considered, or reconsidered, their societal obligations. Gunpowder allowed them to maintain the natural tensions that lent strength to their society through the activities of hunting and warfare, balancing the female obligations of childbirth and agriculture, though the lines marking gendered duties sometimes blurred. It was not uncommon for men to assist their female counterparts in planting or harvesting crops, and, through hunting, men sustained their communities by providing them with meat. Women at times participated in warfare, most often torturing

³⁸ Hahn, “Mother,” 95-96.

³⁹ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 252 n6. Ethridge cites Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 3-11.

⁴⁰ White, *Roots of Dependency*, 64.

captured enemies or accompanying male war parties as singers.⁴¹ They also frequently attended diplomatic proceedings, influencing the decisions and demands made by Creek headmen. The attendance of women and children at foreign congresses symbolized that party's intentions of peace and goodwill.⁴²

In this highly gendered world, Creeks considered life in its purest form to be female. Creeks believed that infants did not have bones, and remained an appendage of the mother until weaned from her breast. Creek infants, regardless of sexual characteristics at birth, were considered female until transformed into men.⁴³ At puberty, boys became men through warfare rituals intended to "separate them physically and existentially from their mothers." In both the Mississippian era and the decades after coalescence, indigenous boys sought, and were expected, to live the life of an esteemed warrior. To earn this rank, young men between the ages of fifteen and seventeen participated in a deprivation ritual lasting up to twelve months.⁴⁴ For the first few days, older Creek men taught boys "to bear with patience cold, heat, hunger and to despise all fatigue, to live without fire or any other food except a little parched Indian corn."⁴⁵ For the remainder of the initiation, boys abstained "from eating bucks, except old ones, and from turkey cocks, fowls, peas, and salt." Once a month, usually at the beginning of each

⁴¹ O'Brien, *Choctaws*, 30; For discussions of singing women, please see Gallay, *Indian Slave Trade*, 169.

⁴² Though the historical record rarely discusses the influence of women at diplomatic meetings with Europeans, many historians have detailed the power women had in influencing the decisions and demands of male Creeks. Please see Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century." *American Indian Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1990); Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*; Michelle LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother*; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*; Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

⁴³ Amelia Rector Bell, "Separate People: Speaking of Creek Men and Women," *American Anthropologist* 92, no. 2 (June 1990): 336.

⁴⁴ This fast is called *puskita*, sometimes spelled *poskita*. Benjamin Hawkins, *A Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1798 and 1799* (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Co., 1974), 78. <http://hathitrust.org>.

⁴⁵ Thomas Campbell, "Thomas Campbell to Lord Deane Gordon: An Account of the Creek Indian Nation, 1764," *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (January 1930): 161.

new moon, young men spent four days drinking an herb called possau, or “button snakeroot.” The possau induced vomiting and purified the boys in preparation for the next three weeks of the ritual process.⁴⁶

Throughout their initiation period, boys subsisted on a diet of boiled grits, cooked exclusively by “a little girl, a virgin.”⁴⁷ This condition suggests that these young men did not eat grits, but rather consumed the traditional, corn-based Creek dish of sófki. The preparation of sófki represented the transition to womanhood for young girls. Girls started to cook sófki once they reached marriageable age, and when a young woman agreed to prepare this dish for a man, it symbolized the beginning of a relationship. Until their participation in the warrior rituals, young men only ate their mother’s sófki.⁴⁸ A young man marked the end of his initiation by collecting corncobs, burning them, and rubbing the ashes over his entire body before participating in a sweat ritual and cleansing himself in cold water.⁴⁹ Completion signified entrance into manhood and demonstration of one’s ability to show strength in battle.

Together, the acts of eating a young woman’s sófki and rubbing corn ashes over one’s body symbolically severed boys from their mothers. Creeks and other Southeastern Indians equated women with corn, illustrated in a number of myths surrounding a figure known as the Corn Mother. Though the details of the Corn Mother myths can vary, general themes create a common narrative that describes a woman who produces corn from her body to feed her children. One day, the Corn Mother’s sons became curious as to where the corn that they ate came from. They spy on her, only to see Corn Mother

⁴⁶ Hawkins, *Sketch*, 78.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bell, “Separate People,” 335.

⁴⁹ Hawkins, *Sketch*, 78.

“secretly scraping corn from her legs.” Disturbed by this discovery, the boys kill her and escape into the woods where they live the rest of their lives as warriors, forced to hunt animals to survive. With Corn Mother’s death “women and male children are separated, boys become warriors, and corn grows henceforth apart from the body of the mother.”⁵⁰

The Corn Mother myth illuminates the importance of male-female obligations in the daily functions of native life, and clarifies how and why eighteenth-century Creeks understood gender as an organizing principle of their world. In feeding her children with corn produced by her own body, the Corn Mother visibly represents the ubiquitous “germ of life” within her. Her reproductive capacities pose a threat to her male children, who, upon learning that their mother’s body sustains them, find it necessary to “separate from her, become warriors and take wives, whose sófki they may safely eat.”⁵¹ This myth demonstrates the innate power of Creek women, who maintained an intrinsic connection to the spiritual realm through their ability to bring new life into the Creek world.⁵² Creeks regarded newborns as “unknowns,” and in some circumstances, infants could be viewed as a threat to the established order. Thus, in giving birth, a Creek woman theoretically held the power to bring negativity into her family or clan. A Cherokee myth corroborated this belief, propagating that wild children could potentially emerge from their mothers’ blood, upsetting the fragile balance that existed between the spiritual and physical worlds. Because Southeastern Indians viewed menstrual blood as a child who

⁵⁰ Bell, “Separate People,” 335; For a selection of various corn mother myths, please see Grantham, *Creation Myths*, 235.

⁵¹ Bell, “Separate People,” 335-336

⁵² O’Brien *Choctaws*; Grantham, *Creation Myths*, 65.

had not been born, menstruation “had the power to bring about change, and change of any kind was regarded with apprehension because it could be . . . for worse.”⁵³

Definitions of “male” and “female” emerged largely as a result of gendered encounters with blood. Creeks viewed women as the most spiritually powerful and dangerous members of their society due to their recurring relationship with blood. Menstruation and childbirth and hunting and warfare were viewed as “the times when women were most female and men were most male,” establishing polarized gendered categories and limiting periods for male and female interaction.⁵⁴ Women were separated from men during menstruation and childbirth, and men were forbidden from engaging in sexual activity with women before setting out for war for fear of pollution.⁵⁵ Violating this separation during menstruation or before warfare could result in severe punishment for women, particularly if disease or illness affected her people as a result.⁵⁶ Upon returning from war, men secluded themselves for a number of days to ensure purity upon returning to the community. Actions of giving life and taking life in Creek society required strict ritual practice and rules of behavior because they involved blood and the act of bleeding.⁵⁷ James Adair asserted that the Creeks, like most southern Indian societies, claimed blood to be the most dangerous of all bodily fluids, believing that it “contains the life, the spirit of the beast.”⁵⁸ Because it belonged inside of the body, blood,

⁵³ Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 35.

⁵⁴ Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 36; Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 128, 320-321.

⁵⁵ Adair recounts many of these rituals and taboos for the Creeks in *The History of the American Indians*. For an anthropological account of ritual and taboo among the Cherokee (many of which are similar to the Creek) please see Frans M. Olbrechts, "Cherokee Belief and Practice with Regard to Childbirth," *Anthropos* Bd. 26, nos. H. 1./2. (January - April 1931). Most Southeastern Indians believed that disease emanated from a woman's menstrual blood, and that this disease could attack men.

⁵⁶ Bell, “Separate People,” 333.

⁵⁷ Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 35.

⁵⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 134.

like other emissions such as breath, held enormous power when it escaped into the physical world. It is no surprise that eighteenth-century British observers believed the “Master of Breath” to be the Creeks’ most supreme spiritual being.⁵⁹

Indigenous men traditionally viewed hunting as a sacred act, regarding the animal they hunted as “an intelligent, conscious fellow member of the same spiritual kingdom.” They felt that both the hunter and the animal not only had specific roles on earth, but also in the supernatural realm, and contributed to the natural order of things by fulfilling specific obligations in both worlds.⁶⁰ According to a Yuchi belief, men and animals existed in a close, familial relationship with one another following human creation. The hunter “considered his own fate to be linked with that of the animals” who could both exhibit humanlike characteristics and transfuse their qualities into humans.⁶¹ In the pre-contact Native South, indigenous peoples commonly believed that the consumption of certain animals determined one’s personality or influenced their physical capabilities. Many of the tribes that eventually coalesced into the Creek Confederacy considered men who ate deer to be “swifter and more sagacious than the man who lives on the flesh of the clumsy bear, or helpless dunghill fowls, the slow footed tame cattle, or the heavy wallowing swine.”⁶² Hunters regarded sick animals and those that had died from disease as a threat to the natural order.

Through the eighteenth century, it remained taboo for men to kill sick animals, particularly deer, for pelts or meat. Adair questioned this practice during an encounter

⁵⁹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 29; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York, NY: Routledge and Kegan, 1978), 54-59. The Creeks often spoke of the “master of breath” in diplomatic meetings.

⁶⁰ John Witthoft, *The American Indian as Hunter* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1967), 6. <http://archive.org>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Grantham, *Creation Myths*, 6.

with a group of Creek hunters in 1766, shortly after an epidemic had struck the Southeastern deer population. The group's leader informed him that eating or taking skins from the dead or dying animals would pollute the hunters, causing them to suffer physical and spiritual harm. He then explained that although he had recently warned his men about the potential consequences that could come from touching the sick and dead deer, one did not listen. Shortly after bringing the threatening deerskins to camp, the man stepped on a sharp root, severely injuring his foot. The headman explained that the hunter's actions rendered the entire party vulnerable to disfavor from the supernatural beings that determined one's success in the hunt. The rest of the party ostracized the disobedient hunter and sent him away before the "worse ill [that] was still in wait for him" poisoned the entire group.⁶³

Adair's narrative illuminates how certain aspects of ritual could persist within native societies, despite the societal changes that occurred as a result of European contact. Ritual, according to David Grantham, is "the reenactment of myth," a culture's sacred history; it is "simultaneously a repetition of a past divine activity and a new creative action."⁶⁴ Ritual called for southeastern Indian societies to prepare boys for the hunt from an early age, believing the killing of an animal served as a passage into manhood. Hunters "did not kill game animals, consume the meat, or take the skin without carefully considering their actions."⁶⁵ The taking of life was spiritually powerful; in killing something with direct ties to the supernatural, men demonstrated a mastery of

⁶³ Adair's testimony does not specify the cultural origins of this story. However, John R. Swanton in his work "Creek Religion and Medicine" recounts the story. John R. Swanton, *Creek Religion and Medicine*, ed. James T. Carson (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 519-520; Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 38-39; 131-132.

⁶⁴ Grantham, *Creation Myths*, 56.

⁶⁵ Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 19.

otherworldly forces. For this reason, the rituals surrounding the hunt worked to assist the hunters in showing “respect for the boundaries between humans and animals.”⁶⁶ Ritual practices included reciting “prayers” to appeal to the spirit of the animal and singing songs to attract it, making it easier to kill. Creeks and their ancestors believed that successful hunters were those that had gained the approval of powerful spiritual entities. Thus, like warfare, hunting “supplied a major component of masculine identity and status.”⁶⁷ Both activities distinctly separated men from boys, and success in each “proved that a man was virtuous and capable of taking on greater responsibilities” for the larger society.⁶⁸

As contact with Europeans became more frequent and familiar, new motivations and access to European tools and technology altered many of these existing ritual structures. While Indigenous concepts of masculinity had long been shaped by hunting and warfare, by the end of the seventeenth century the Atlantic marketplace placed new economic pressures on indigenous hunters that forced Creek men to reevaluate their societal roles and obligations. Though Southeastern Indians did not neglect their past or completely disregard established traditions, the increasing importance of cross-cultural exchange “brought subtle changes and introduced new elements” to the Native American world that persisted over the course of the following century.⁶⁹ While hunting continued to maintain certain elements of pre-contact ritual, economic motivations increasingly gained importance, eventually coming to drive the practice. Over time, Creek men came to accept and value a new kind of legitimacy, one that correlated authority with one’s

⁶⁶ Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 19.

⁶⁷ LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother*, 137.

⁶⁸ Le Master, *Brothers Born of One Mother*, 67.

⁶⁹ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 25.

ability to produce commodities, mainly deerskins, in order to provide foreign goods to their families, clans, and towns. Eventually, this obligation gained importance over those who called for men to use hunting as a means to regulate the balance of the human and non-human realms, though these spiritual responsibilities continued to carry cultural significance.

Creeks began the eighteenth century by capitalizing on imperial tensions between the English and the Spanish, with the goal of advancing their position as the Southeast's most powerful Indian society.⁷⁰ Their consensus-based sociopolitical structure, with its emphasis on tension and opposition, "sanctioned the playoffs, divisions, and balances which dominated their relations with Europeans."⁷¹ Their new location closer to Charles Town allowed them to invite permanent English traders into their towns, forcing the development of a closer relationship with the British. Over the previous two decades, these traders had become increasingly willing to extend guns and gunpowder on credit, making debt a part of Creek life. To repay these debts, the Creeks fought a number of Indian wars through the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, destabilizing the region. These economic motivations significantly altered the traditional foundations of indigenous life. Though warfare had traditionally functioned as small scale acts of retribution to avenge the death of a relative or clan member, it now "took on the form of raids of distant Indians, sometimes lead by the English or the French," with the purpose of obtaining war captives.⁷²

⁷⁰ In 1700, the last Hapsburg king of Spain, Charles II, died without an heir. Fearing that the Bourbon king Louis XIV of France would install his grandson, and Charles' grandnephew, Phillip, to the Spanish throne, Holland, Austria, and England declared war on France and Spain in the spring of 1702. The resulting War of Spanish Succession, known in North America as Queen Anne's War, spilled into the Southeast where it ignited existing territorial disputes between Carolina and Florida.

⁷¹ White, *Roots of Dependency*, 64.

⁷² Galloway, *Indian Slave Trade*, 353.

Fear of enslavement, along with years of trader abuses, violence against native women, escalating native debts, and European encroachment on protected Indian lands were just a few of the factors that prompted the outbreak of the Yamasee War. In April 1715 the Yamasee Indians, who in recent years had coalesced, much like the Creek, from the remnants of smaller Mississippian societies near the Atlantic coast, attacked and killed ninety British traders and their families in the town of Pocotaligo. Indians throughout the region, including the Creeks, Cherokees, and Choctaws, also became involved, murdering traders in Indian villages throughout the Southeast. The Yamasee War, however, did not evolve into a pan-Indian revolt in the same way other major Indian wars of the colonial period, such as King Phillip's War or Pontiac's War, did. Historian William L. Ramsey asserts that searches for common causes of the revolt are useless because the native groups involved each "faced a complex set of local considerations that defy generalization. Common elements shape their decisions . . . But the nature and value of those elements differed from region to region, and among them stretched a 'thousand threads' that wove them into the local reality."⁷³

Though specific origins varied, native frustrations "were imbedded in the very nature of the trade itself, with the English traders, colonial officials, and Indian groups all struggling to satisfy the huge demand for labor via slaves and deerskins in the colonial plantation and Atlantic economies."⁷⁴ For the Creeks, settler encroachment was not an issue; the Confederacy was too well armed and numerous to fear English aggression. Rather, Creek violence served as "more of a diplomatic message" for the English, and an

⁷³ William L. Ramsey, *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 73; Jon Bernard Marcoux, *Pox, Empire, Shackles, and Hides: The Townsend Site 1670 - 1715* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 37.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

example of their full power and potential when well armed and supplied with gunpowder. While the Creeks had benefitted greatly from their economic relationship with the English during these years, over time they came to feel taken advantage of. Their actions demonstrated that decades of empty trade promises from the English “were no longer acceptable. Alliance was no longer appropriate or possible.”⁷⁵

The Yamasee War spurred large-scale indigenous migrations and “alliance realignments” that permanently changed the geopolitics of the Southeast. Following the conflict, the Creek Confederacy emerged as a “powerhouse of native diplomacy,” practicing neutrality in their dealings with outsiders through the end of the Seven Years’ War.⁷⁶ With their territory bordering French, British, and Spanish land claims, the Creeks found themselves “thrust onto center stage and forced to improvise new political strategies and institutions” to maintain collective autonomy in the advent of this European struggle for empire.⁷⁷ Neutrality quickly became the foundation of Creek foreign policy, allowing them to play the British off of the French and Spanish to guarantee that the Confederacy did not ally with any single European power.⁷⁸

The decentralized, consensus-based political structure of the Creek Confederacy has made it difficult for scholars to determine if neutrality was a deliberate policy, or the fortuitous result of factionalism. This study aligns itself with Hahn, who argues that neutrality was a formally articulated Creek political strategy.⁷⁹ Neutrality provided Creeks with new political opportunities, giving them the ability to act as policymakers in

⁷⁵ Gallay, *Indian Slave Trade*, 335.

⁷⁶ Hahn identifies this this period as “the South’s Imperial Era.” Please see *Invention of the Creek Nation*.

⁷⁷ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 3.

⁷⁸ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 3-4.

⁷⁹ Hahn opts for the former, asserting that the Creeks, “reeling from the effects of the Yamasee War of 1715, first formally articulated this policy of neutrality in 1718 in the Creek town of Coweta. Over time, the ‘Coweta Resolution,’ as I have called it here, became the political wisdom of much of the Creek Nation, acquiring the sanctity of tradition among later generations.” Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 4.

diplomatic negotiations with foreigners. It particularly benefitted the Confederacy in their dealings with the British, due in large part to the fact that the eighteenth-century British Empire “was not the ordered, coherent and centralized polity that “empire” usually connotes.” Founded at different times for a variety of reasons and purposes, Britain’s colonies in the Southeast were characterized more by “autonomy and localized agency than by imperial hegemony and metropolitan mastery.”⁸⁰ Because the empire depended on local-level governance and decision-making processes, and because these fledgling colonies often had little military and financial support from the Crown, Britain’s Southeastern polities had “fewer coercive resources at their disposal” than other colonial centers.⁸¹ For the majority of the eighteenth century, European settlers existed on the peripheries of Indian country, outnumbered by the region’s indigenous populations. As seen in Charles Town, St. Augustine, Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans, colonization occurred only on the coast, with settlements often serving multiple purposes such as port town, trading center, and military outpost. It was not until the 1760s, after the Seven Years’ War, that these peoples began moving inward, and competition for land with Native Americans in the interior truly began.⁸²

Creeks and their neighbors often held the upper hand in dealing with the British Empire during the middle decades of the eighteenth century, as South Carolina and Georgia existed on both the edges of Indian country and on the fringes of a large, global empire. Recognizing their marginal position, British agents often relied on native methods of diplomacy to secure indigenous support. According to historian Joshua Piker, “local ambitions, personal ties, and Native forms frequently undergirded relationships

⁸⁰ Piker, *Okfuskee*, 40.

⁸¹ Piker, *Okfuskee*, 41.

⁸² Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country*, 171.

that appear on the surface to have sprung from imperial plans, political machinations, and British traditions.”⁸³ Through the mid-eighteenth century, consensus and neutrality-based practices significantly shaped how British agents in the Southeast interacted with the region’s indigenous peoples. The fact that the Creek Confederacy was not a hierarchal society significantly hindered British efforts to assert dominance, a struggle that continued even after their victory over the French and Spanish in the Seven Years’ War.

The era between the end of the Seven Years’ War and the beginning of the American Revolution, “should be viewed as a distinct turning point” in Creek history.⁸⁴ During these years, debates over Creek lands “gradually replaced imperial intrigue as the most important element of Creek foreign affairs.” Creeks had long been aware of the need to protect their lands from the British, whose colonial growth had far surpassed that of their Catholic neighbors. Throughout the war, Creeks had worked to remain neutral, fighting “on a diplomatic front rather than a military one.”⁸⁵ The terms of the Treaty of Paris, however, officially designated the British as the “greatest threat to Creek territorial integrity.” These changes illuminated an urgent need for a unified Creek strategy in regards to maintaining territorial and political sovereignty.⁸⁶

The elimination of tripartite competition brought an end to traditional Creek neutrality and lead to increasingly formulaic diplomatic meetings in which British agents focused heavily on gaining indigenous lands in eastern Georgia and the coastal areas of

⁸³ Piker, *Okfuskee*, 42.

⁸⁴ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 272.

⁸⁵ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 230.

⁸⁶ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 258.

the Floridas. Discussions concerning the creation and enforcement of the Proclamation Line, a consequence of the Treaty of Paris, also dominated Creek-British conferences. The Crown feared that settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains would lead to a growth in commercial agriculture, encouraging economic independence among its settlers and undermining the empire's mercantile socioeconomic system. British officials believed a boundary would prevent the colonies "from growing to the point that they became ungovernable" and hoped the line would encourage settlement in the struggling provinces of Quebec, East Florida, and West Florida. This would spur economic growth and keep settlers within Britain's economic and political sphere of influence, while also limiting governmental expenses and allowing for easier regulation of the trade.⁸⁷

British concerns surrounding the Proclamation Line illuminate the empire's weaknesses in the wake of the Seven Years' War. The British had received an "unstable frontier" from the French, due largely to the fact that wartime violence had "eroded the middle grounds" that native peoples and French traders spent decades working to establish.⁸⁸ Aside from striving to keep colonials under the mother country's thumb, officials hoped the Proclamation Line would curb Creek fears about their growing presence in the region, and limit Indian-Anglo violence in the backcountry. Creek killings of white settlers had escalated in recent years, and British administrators expressed concern that news of British victory would trigger more native aggression. Indeed, word of the war's end had provoked irritation among the Creeks. In May 1763, The Mortar, acting as the primary spokesman for the Confederacy, sent a talk Georgia's governor, James Wright, voicing his frustration over the issue. The Mortar expressed his

⁸⁷ Colin Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 101; Harrell, "Terrain of Factionalism," 83.

⁸⁸ Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 92.

disbelief at “how white people... think [the Creeks] have no lands belonging to them, as he hears we are going to take all the lands which they lent the French and Spaniards, and [the Creeks] are surprized how People can give away Land that does not belong to them.” He further stated “he thinks the White People intend to stop all their Breaths by their settling all round them.”⁸⁹ Wright subsequently described the Creeks as Georgia’s “greatest and most active enemy,” expressing fear that the Confederacy’s 3,000-plus gunmen, in an effort to protect their territory, could easily decimate his exposed colony.⁹⁰

Wright’s fears were not unjustified. Both Upper and Lower Creeks felt threatened by British maneuverings and many resorted to violence as a way to reduce their own vulnerabilities. During this period, young Creek men chose to physically defend their lands. They retaliated against Anglo settlers who crossed into their territory with cattle and horses, which disturbed the deer population and interfered with hunting. Through the 1760s and 1770s, agitated Creek hunters regularly killed cattle found wandering beyond the boundary. They also stole settlers’ horses, which they then sold to buyers in West Florida for European goods. More concerning, however, were the escalating number of murders of white settlers, which reached their highest level during the 1760s. In December 1763, Creeks murdered fourteen colonists near Long Canes, a settlement in western South Carolina. This attack occurred just after the Augusta Congress, Britain’s first major meeting with the Indians following the war. Officials described the results of this conference as beneficial for the Crown; both sides settled grievances with one another and agreed to a new western border for Georgia, while most

⁸⁹ "The Mortar and Gun Merchant to Governor Wright," 1763, in *Georgia Treaties*, ed. John T. Juricek, vol. XI, *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 2002), 352.

⁹⁰ Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 102; 105-106.

of the headmen appeared satisfied with British promises for new trade routes from Mobile and Pensacola.⁹¹ Many Creeks, however, perceived the congress as “little more than a thinly veiled attempt to divest them of territory they had claimed since the beginning of the century.”⁹² The Augusta Congress also established a “preventive mechanism” for Indian-white violence. Until this point, punishment for a Creek who murdered a British subject consisted of surrendering the accused to Georgia authorities, who would decide if they wanted to try them “by the English Laws or by the laws of [the] [Creek] Nation.” This law, however, was little more than an empty formality; Creeks generally refused to obey it and the British had difficulty with enforcement. The new arrangement drew from indigenous practices of retaliatory punishment, described by John T. Juricek as “eye-for-eye justice, but with a difference.” Individuals accused of a committing a crime against outsiders would be judged by members of their own communities, and if found guilty, their people would decide and implement the punishment. If the crime was a murder, “those who took lives on the other side must forfeit their own.” The murderers would then be publicly executed in the presence of at least two members of the other side.⁹³

The Long Canes murders shed light on the complex relationship between the British government, white settlers, and the Creeks. But the incident and its aftermath also illuminate the divisions that existed within Creek society during this time, particularly between the Confederacy’s Upper and Lower towns, as well as along generational lines. Following the massacre, a number of Upper Creek headmen formally placed responsibility on a group of young, Lower Creek warriors. While these accusations held

⁹¹ Harrell, “Terrain of Factionalism,” 84.

⁹² Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 267.

⁹³ Juricek, *Endgame*, 62.

merit -- the murderers were, in fact, young men from some of the Lower towns -- older, established leaders publicly blamed these men to advance other agendas. They believed that preserving competition was necessary for maintaining their individual authority as well as the Confederacy's political independence, and throughout the 1760s "sought to replicate the past conditions of imperial rivalry whenever the opportunity presented itself."⁹⁴ While some Lower Creek headmen journeyed to Havana to maintain communication and with the Spanish, others worked to parlay close relationships with important colonials like Jonathan Bryan and George Galphin into opportunities to obtain European goods and keep Creek lands out of British hands.⁹⁵ During this time, many Creek towns often went months, if not years, without conducting official meetings with British representatives. Lower Creeks, in addition, claimed responsibility for much of the violence of this era. This was due in large part to the fact that their location along the Chattahoochee, Flint, and Ocmulgee rivers situated their towns and villages closer to the British in Georgia and East Florida at a time when the latter's population tripled in size. As a result, the Lower Creeks experienced far more settler encroachment than their Upper Creek counterparts.⁹⁶ While there is no doubt that the Upper towns also exhibited aggressive behavior throughout this period, particularly before The Mortar's death in 1774, their relative isolation from British settlements allowed them to balance out the assertive actions of the Lower Creek by approaching their exchanges with British officials from a more conservative, cautious standpoint.

⁹⁴ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 272.

⁹⁵ For an overview of the Creeks' relationship with Jonathan Bryan, please see Alan Gally, "The Search for an Alternate Source of Trade: The Creek Indians and Jonathan Bryan," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (Summer 1989).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

This divisiveness, much of which occurred naturally, lent strength to the Confederacy, allowing Creeks to maintain important aspects of their consensus-based political structure while simultaneously encouraging the preservation of neutrality despite the absence of multilateral imperial competition. Through the 1760s and 1770s, older generations of Creek men worked to preserve the Confederacy's traditional factionalism by exaggerating the Upper and Lower divisions, as well as local-level interests, when it was possible and advantageous to do so. Older men employed these tactics to defend their ancestral territories as land issues became central to Creek-British diplomatic meetings. For example, one of the most surprising results of the November 1763 congress at Augusta was the Creeks' agreement to cede almost two and a half million acres of land to the British for the expansion of Georgia. The Upper Creeks, however, were largely underrepresented at Augusta; The Mortar, along with two other leading headmen, The Gun Merchant and Handsome Fellow, did not journey to the conference, nor did the chief Escotchaby from the prominent Lower Creek town of Coweta. These leaders instead sent subordinate emissaries in their place. Many Upper Creek, likely recognizing that the Lower Creek had more reason to be agitated with the terms of the Treaty of Paris, abstained from the meeting on the grounds that representatives from these towns "sought to dominate the talks." Regardless of whether or not the sparse presence of prominent Creek leaders was a deliberate strategy to fragment the Confederacy, or simply the convenient consequence of extenuating circumstances, their absence directly affected the legitimacy of the land cessions. A Chickasaw representative revealed the harsh truth as the meeting came to a close, informing John Stuart "Nothing done here will be confirmed by the absent [Creek] leaders in comparison of whom the

present chiefs are inconsiderable.”⁹⁷ For the time being, the persistence of Creek factionalism had stalled colonial expansion.

The differing Creek adaptations and approaches to preserving autonomy and maintaining authority in the years following the Seven Years’ War illuminate the generational shifts that occurred over the previous quarter of the eighteenth century. The natural tensions that existed between older and younger Creek hunters and warriors had traditionally guided the ritual practices surrounding these activities, bonding men together in a relationships built upon ritual, reverence, and respect. From elder men, boys had learned to navigate and fulfill their spiritual and societal obligations, ensuring order in everyday life. Now, Creeks found themselves in the midst of a transition, from an age where independence and authority were determined through diplomacy, negotiation, and ritual practices aimed at protecting the balance of the physical and supernatural worlds, to an era where tribal autonomy and individual influence were increasingly dependent on the protection of Creek lands. While the Creeks had always “exhibited territorial tendencies,” they traditionally used kinship and familial connections to identify as members of the Confederacy, a consequence of their coalescent origins. The decade of the 1760s, however, brought land to the forefront of diplomatic proceedings, leading Creeks to start defining themselves in relation to their territory. This shifted the Creeks away from self-identifying as a Confederacy and toward recognition of themselves as

⁹⁷ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 271. Hahn states the Gun Merchant abstained from the meeting because he could not find anyone to take care of his livestock while he was gone; The Mortar declined because he worried about the British murdering him in retaliation for the instigating the “French Conspiracy.” James Wright, "Report of Sir James Wright on the Condition of the Province of Georgia, on 20th September 1773," 1773, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* vol. III (Savannah, GA: Savannah: Printed at the Morning News Office, 1873), 160. <http://hathitrust.org>. The Creeks eventually did cede lands to abolish debts at the end of the decade; Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 104.

members of a Nation.⁹⁸ Moving forward, consensus-based social and political structures, along with kinship, tradition, and ritual practices, became less significant as they related to Creek authority, autonomy, and identity.

Creek men approached this transition from a number of different perspectives, based on factors such as age, clan or family affiliation, and community status. These nuances make it difficult to outline or identify any one specific male experience as Creeks adapted to the removal of the French and Spanish. Despite these social, geopolitical, and cultural changes, the reality remained that no Creek town or individual could survive without European tools and resources. Creek efforts to acclimate to their new world while maintaining autonomy could be, and often were, influenced by access to outside goods. The chapters that follow explore how gunpowder shaped the ways in which Creek men adjusted to the changes brought about by the 1763 Peace of Paris. They trace how gunpowder could both provide men with access to new opportunities while simultaneously exposing the challenges and vulnerabilities of being Creek in an era of languishing imperial competition. These oppositions proved beneficial through the remainder of the eighteenth-century, as the consensus-based actions of older Creek men stabilized the violence exhibited by young warriors. These contradictory approaches to preserving neutrality, power, and independence reflected the balances that were so central to Creek life earlier in the century. By adjusting traditional views and practices to persist through the intense changes of the 1760s, Creeks eventually found opportunity to once revise their neutrality policy during the early years of the Revolution. In so doing, they found ways to replicate the conditions of imperial rivalry that had long served as a

⁹⁸ Nation is defined as people united by common descent, inhabiting a particular territory. This notion is discussed in Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation of the Creek Nation*, epilogue.

fundamental piece of their indigenous identity, remaining autonomous despite new threats posed by Americans in the years closely following their independence.

Chapter 2: “My Son’s Behavior, Has Covered Me With Shame”: Generational Difference and Changing Notions of Masculinity in the Creek Confederacy, 1763-1768

In September 1765, a group of young Creek men lead by Limpiki, a warrior from the Lower Creek town of Coweta, killed three white hunters who had journeyed beyond the boundary line. The murders of William and George Payne, brothers, and their companion James Hogg are representative of the frontier violence that plagued Creek-British relations in the era following the Seven Years’ War. Since the 1750s, young Creeks, incensed by increased Anglo settlement and aggression in their territory, had been committing “disorders” upon white settlers, mostly robberies, thefts, and murders. Limpiki had proved the instigator in many significant Creek attacks during this period, becoming the leader of a “bandit band” of Indians from various indigenous societies throughout the Southeast. The British designated him one of “the most aggressive and most offensive” to their efforts in the region, and pressured Creek leaders to put a stop to his combative behavior.¹

Limpiki’s actions are characteristic of his generation of Creek warriors, who sought to create new paths toward power, prestige, and authority in the years before the American Revolution. By moving to the backcountry and embracing aggressive tactics in relations with colonials, these young men sought to distinguish and differentiate themselves from the leadership style of earlier generations and escape the influence of traditional, established Creek headmen. The persistent violence of Limpiki and other young Creeks in the years following the Payne-Hogg murders forced John Stuart, Britain’s Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern District, to call for a separate

¹ “Introduction,” in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763 - 1776*, V12; 3.

discussion with Creek leaders following the November 1768 Augusta congress. After Stuart voiced his desire that Creek headmen find a way to control their young men, Sempoyaffee, a well respected Lower Creek medal chief came forward with a request to speak. Sempoyaffe explained that though he was “now an old man,” he had always viewed the British as the “best friends” of the Creek. He described how Malatchi, a prominent headman and warrior from Coweta, provided strong guidance to his people and acted “as a friend to all white men” to successfully maintain Creek neutrality. Sempoyaffee asserted that just before Malatchi’s death in 1756, he had advised his fellow headmen to “hold the English fast, as their truest friends, and most capable to serve them.” Though Malatchi’s authority passed to his son, Tugulki, the new, young leader chose to distance himself from his father’s methods of diplomacy. Tugulki chose instead to employ violence in his relations with white settlers and other outsiders, and in so doing “resembles a Snake in his Coil, Spreading the Poison of his Breath all around him.” According to Sempoyaffee, “It is he who makes the young people mad.”²

For Sempoyaffee, the consequences of Tugulki’s actions were deeply personal. Sempoyaffee’s son was Limpiki, the Creek warrior accused of instigating the Payne-Hogg murders three years earlier. He alleged that Tugulki had spread lies about the British to lure Limpiki, along with other young Creek men, into a life of violence, giving Limpiki a reputation among the British as one of the most hostile Lower Creeks. Now, Limpiki faced execution at British hands to fulfill the Creeks’ obligation within the agreed-upon system of retributive justice for the Payne-Hogg murders. Begging for Limpiki’s life, Sempoyaffee appealed to Stuart through their shared experience of

² "Congress with the Lower Creeks at Augusta: Proceedings Following the Treaty," 1768, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 72.

fatherhood, and promised to control his son's actions in the future. "Grieved that my Blood should be capable of hurting our friends," Sempoyaffee removed his medal and surrendered his commission to the Superintendent. "My Son's behavior," he declared, "has covered me with Shame."³

The tangled narrative of Tugulki, Limpiki, and their fathers is representative of the major divisions that emerged between older and younger Creek men in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War.⁴ This period brought significant changes to the Creek world, particularly in the areas of power and authority. Consequently, new questions about manhood and masculinity emerged, leading many to reconsider their meanings. Understanding how Creek men adjusted to the increased British presence in the region, and reevaluated their understandings of manhood in the process, is a difficult task, complicated by the nuances of one's individual experiences, family or clan affiliation, and the local-level nature of Creek social and political life. These differences make it challenging to establish a single narrative sketching a universal, or even age-associated, indigenous male experience in adapting to the imperial adjustments of 1763. One way to piece together the ways in which Creek men challenged the threats these changes posed to both their individual and tribal autonomy is through the examination of European commodities, namely, gender-specific commodities, like gunpowder, which can illuminate common patterns and shared male experiences in the Creek world.

Consequently, this chapter explores the ways in which access to gunpowder influenced male attitudes and behaviors, resulting in new notions of manhood and masculinity for young Creek warriors following the Seven Years' War. It considers the

³ Ibid.; Juricek, *Endgame*, 136.

⁴ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*.

ways in which gunpowder shaped male Creek culture in the Revolutionary Era. Because culture is public and stems from the values that individuals give to certain actions and behaviors, this chapter works to better illuminate how access to gunpowder facilitated relationship shifts among Creek men after 1763, while simultaneously examining how members of the Creek Confederacy observed, interpreted, and understood these adjustments and their sociopolitical ramifications within their communities. As this chapter argues, the deep generational tensions that emerged among native men over the course of the 1760s resulted in part from changing ideas about what it meant to act as a competent and capable man within Creek society.

The demonstration of mature manhood had long been a critical component of indigenous political leadership, as recognized in both Indian and European cultures.⁵ By the end of the Seven Years' War, however, the ways in which Creek men of different ages chose to exhibit this manhood began to diverge. Established leaders worked to adjust political neutrality and traditional, consensus-based methods of external diplomacy and internal governance in ways that allowed for the continued demonstration of mature manhood through the preservation of factionalism and the redistribution of prestige goods. Young Creek men, in contrast, began to associate mature manhood with physical aggression, or boldness. Indigenous peoples had always considered conscientious, yet shrewd diplomacy, along with a success as a warrior, to be important expressions of masculinity. In a society where natural tensions were crucial for ensuring order in everyday life, these contrasting characteristics traditionally balanced one another, legitimizing one as a man and determining societal status. Creeks viewed these oppositions as natural, reflected in the functions and symbolic meaning of red and white

⁵ LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother*, 74.

colors within Creek cosmology and culture. While red represented war, action, aggression, and broken political relationships, and was a color often ascribed to younger warriors, white signified peace, openness to diplomatic negotiation, and was usually associated with a select number of older, esteemed leaders and headmen.⁶ Creeks believed that all men, through coming-of-age hunting and warfare rituals, had a place “in the red world of courage, violence, death, war, and all the emotions which go with them.” Only some, however, were able to find a place in the white world, an achievement which required that men “develop the internal self-control which moves them, as individuals . . . into a realm in which the characteristics are calmness, harmony, thought, clear reason, [and] order.”⁷

Gunpowder is a useful tool for a larger exploration of gendered culture change within indigenous societies because it is a distinctly male commodity and, unlike a gun, was a non-renewable resource that could only be produced in Europe.⁸ Southeastern Native Americans could only access gunpowder through diplomacy and exchange with the region’s European, and later American, groups. At the end of the eighteenth century, steady and reliable access to gunpowder was a necessity for any man who hoped to become a successful hunter or warrior. By the 1760s, gunpowder also proved vital for Creek men who sought to protect their communities and families from Anglo-American

⁶ Bryan C. Rindfleisch, "The 'Owner of the Town Ground, Who Overrules All When On the Spot': Escotchaby of Coweta and the Politics of Networking in Creek Country, 1740-1780," *Native South* 9 (2016): 61 n 21; See also Joshua Aaron Piker, " 'White & Clean' & Contested: Creek Towns and Trading Paths in the Aftermath the Seven Years' War," *Ethnohistory* 50, no. 2 (Spring 2003); O'Brien, *Choctaws*.

⁷ George E. Lankford, "Red and White: Some Reflections on a Southeastern Metaphor," *Southern Folklore* 50 (1993): 56.

⁸ The significance of gunpowder, specifically why discussions of gunpowder should be separate from conversations surrounding the impact of guns on Native societies is discussed in detail in the first chapter of this dissertation. Though Anglo-Americans attempted to manufacture gunpowder throughout the eighteenth century, particularly during the American Revolution, colonial settlers were unable to produce large quantities of this product until the nineteenth century. Native peoples were also unable to produce gunpowder due to the large quantities of sulfur, charcoal, and saltpeter (potassium nitrate) required to make it.

encroachment and the activities of unscrupulous traders. For younger Creek men, like Tugulki and Limpiki, gunpowder was a daily necessity following the Seven Years' War, as young Creek warriors increasingly used violence to preserve collective independence and gain individual legitimacy and authority. In attempting to gain power through action and force, as opposed to traditional methods of persuasion, access to gunpowder was essential for the development of new definitions of masculinity and mature manhood for rising Creek warriors and headmen.

This chapter creates a “thick description” of gunpowder, exploring the Creeks’ relationship to this commodity from an ethnographic perspective.⁹ As gunpowder allowed young Creeks to assert power through force, it reshaped the ways in which these warriors identified as men and simultaneously altered the actions and gendered obligations of many Creek women. Consequently, these shifts resulted in changes to how members of the Confederacy recognized legitimacy and authority in indigenous societies, as well as how Creeks understood their place both within their own communities and the rapidly changing world in which they lived. As this chapter reveals, gunpowder significantly influenced certain gendered actions, expressions, habits, and skills, reshaping male identity, and Creek culture as a whole, following the Seven Years’ War.

The end of the Seven Years’ War in 1763 marked the beginning of an era of intense adjustment and change for members of the Creek Confederacy. Forced to adapt to the withdrawal of the French and Spanish from the region while grappling with the reality that their long-standing fear of British encirclement had finally come to fruition,

⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973).

Upper and Lower Creeks spent the decade of the 1760s working to preserve their autonomy and independence. Those in the Lower Creek town of Coweta, however, found themselves balancing these larger geographic and diplomatic shifts with deep sociopolitical changes occurring in their own community. As British officials moved into the colonies of East and West Florida, Cowetas were still grappling with the death of Malatchi, their town's *mico*, or leading headman, which had occurred seven years earlier. Malatchi's premature illness and subsequent passing in 1756 had exposed weakness in Coweta's leadership structure, creating a political vacuum in the community.¹⁰

Malatchi was the third in a line of strong Coweta leaders that included his uncle Chigelly, and the Lower Creek "emperor" Brims. European observers often referred to Malatchi as Brims' son, corroborated in 1749 when the young headman introduced himself to a group of Georgia officials as "Malatchie Opiya Mico; by the paternal line; being the son of the old Emperor Rightfull and natural prince of the upper and Lower Creek Nations."¹¹ This pattern of inheritance would have been unique for a matrilineal society, and the exact relationship between Brims and Malatchi remains unknown. Steven Hahn asserts that the position of *mico* "typically passed from uncle to nephew so as to keep the office within the same matrilineal clan."¹² David Corkran, in contrast, asserts that preserving the male line of descent was important for Creek *micos*, who "tended to hand off the office to their sons . . . whom they trained up to follow in their footsteps."¹³ Understanding European views of inheritance, it is possible that Malatchi claimed a patrilineal association to Brims in order to re-frame this relationship in a way that his

¹⁰ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 140-141.

¹¹ "Lower Creek Recognition of Mary Bosomworth as Princess with Authority to Negotiate Over Lands," 1749, in *Georgia Treaties, 1733-1763*, V11; 179.

¹² Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 192.

¹³ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 15.

British counterparts could recognize. This would have made it easier for Europeans to accept Malatchi's position of authority, heightening his importance as Coweta's leading representative in cross-cultural diplomacy.

A mico was the leading civil headman of a Creek village or town, though British officials often incorrectly translated the title to "king."¹⁴ Most communities had more than one mico, who were "sometimes divided into *mico apotkas*, or vice micos, and *micalgis*, or collective vice micos," though, according to anthropologist Robbie Ethridge, "all men of this rank probably used the appellation of *mico*."¹⁵ These civil micos lead their towns in times of peace. There were also *tustenogy micos*, or great warriors, who lead Creek towns in times of conflict. The *tustenogy micos* served as authority figures in all matters related to war, guiding their town's young warriors, organizing them for battle, and representing their interests in both local-level Creek politics and in diplomacy with Europeans. As historian Kathryn Braund states, both the mico and town council selected the *tustenogy mico*, who "earned his position due to prowess in battle." If he was a particularly skilled orator, "he could become more important than the mico, especially during times of war." Even in times of peace when town leadership fell heavily to the mico and other civil leaders, the *tustenogy mico* remained "a powerful force in Creek political life, since he controlled the fealty of the young warriors of the town."¹⁶ But in 1746 another leadership title emerged when Malatchi began referring to himself as *opiya mico*. *Opiya* means "seeker," or "one who is looking for something" and "connotes both distance and spiritual power." The title *opiya mico* literally translates to "far off king."

¹⁴ Joshua Aaron Piker, *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler: Telling Stories in Colonial America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 92.

¹⁵ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 91.

¹⁶ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 21; Rindfleisch, "The Owner of the Town Ground," 77-78.

The *opiya mico* was both a civil leader and a war priest who possessed “both religious and military responsibilities,” such as interpreting dreams that may predict the outcome of future conflicts and ensuring that young warriors adhered to Creek society’s strict purification rituals before heading to battle.¹⁷ Thus, he earned his position by demonstrating an “ability to engage productively with distant and dangerous forces” for the spiritual and diplomatic benefit of his people.¹⁸

Despite their status as town leaders, the consensus-based nature of Creek society rendered micos “without so much as a shadow of authority only to give advice, which everyone is at liberty to take or leave.” This, paired with the fact that the Creek Confederacy was structured more like “many united republics” than a cohesive political entity, created a competition for power among leading Creek men, each of whom worked to shift the direction of community affairs to cement his position of authority.¹⁹ In 1718, Brims secured his status as mico with the creation of the Coweta Resolution, a “collective foreign policy” that “committed all Creek towns and micos to end internal conflict within the Confederacy and to open trilateral negotiations with the French, English, and Spanish.” This diplomatic strategy forced the region’s European groups into competition for Creek loyalty, allowing individual towns to act according to local-level needs and interests while ensuring that the larger Confederacy remained neutral in their dealings with colonial groups. This approach not only safeguarded the Creeks’ independence, but

¹⁷ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 199.

¹⁸ Piker, *Acorn Whistler*, 92.

¹⁹ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 13-17.

also provided them with greater political influence and trade opportunities in a world where relationships with Europeans were a part of daily life.²⁰

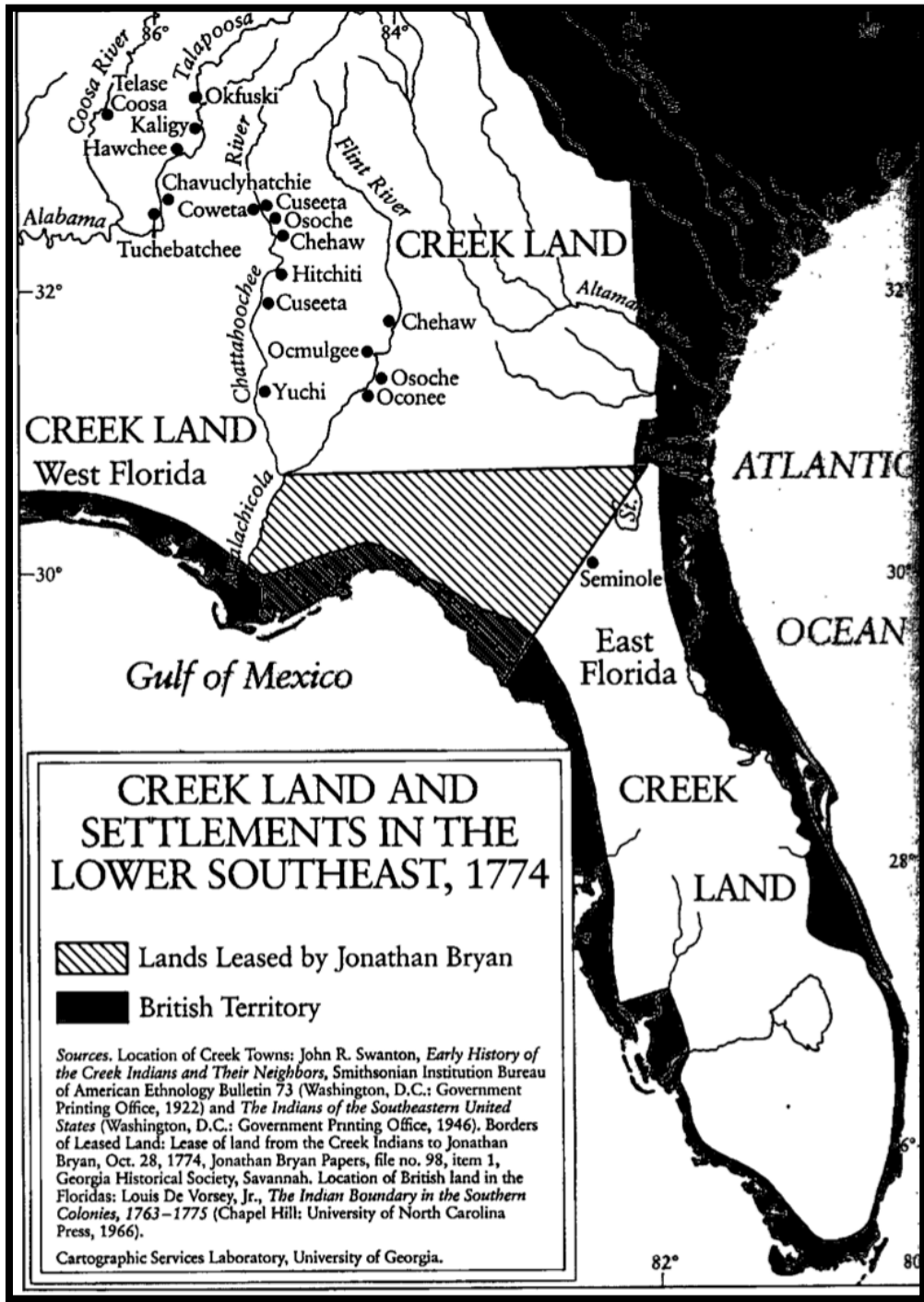
It is no coincidence that Creek neutrality originated in Coweta. For the majority of the eighteenth century, both Creeks and Europeans had considered Coweta the most politically influential Lower Creek town. Situated on the Chattahoochee River, an important waterway for trade and exchange, Coweta “enjoyed a privileged position along what was known as the Lower Path,” connecting Lower Creek communities to Augusta in the east and Upper Creek towns in the west.²¹ Historian Bryan Rindfleisch has described mid-eighteenth-century Coweta as the “arterial linkage for the Creek Indians’ commercial and political relations with the British Empire,” allowing this community to become a central cross-cultural meeting place.²² Adhering to the essential categories of opposition that served to balance Southeastern indigenous life, Creek towns were ritualistically designated as red, tasked with making war, or white, responsible for making peace. Coweta, along with nearby Cussita and the Upper Creek talwa of Okfuskee, were the Confederacy’s principal red towns.²³ As the micos of a red town, Brims, Chigelly, and Malatchi not only represented Coweta in diplomatic affairs, but also served as its head war chiefs. The Coweta Resolution allowed Malatchi and his peers to enjoy a level of autonomy that had not been possible in the decades between the English establishment of Charles Town and the outbreak of the Yamasee War.

²⁰ Bryan C. Rindfleisch, "Creek Nation," The Digital Encyclopedia of George Washington, <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/creek-nation/>.

²¹ Geographically, the terms “Upper” and “Lower” are misnomers in describing the Creeks’ split location. On a modern-day map, the Upper Creek towns would be located in western Alabama, whereas the Lower Creek villages were positioned in the eastern part of the state, overlapping today’s border with Georgia. Please see the map on page 12; Rindfleisch, “The Owner of the Town Ground,” 60.

²² Ibid.

²³ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 5.



“Map of Creek Land and Settlements in the Lower Southeast, 1774.” From Alan Galloway, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 141.

Malatchi, likely born around 1720, belonged to generation of Indians who, unlike their parents, did not know what life was like without access to European goods.²⁴ As early as 1725, Creek micos began to notice the community-level social changes brought by the Coweta Resolution, remarking that “new sources of wealth supplied by French and English traders were increasing the tension between young men and town elders.”²⁵ That same year, British Agent Tobias Fitch criticized Brims’ neutrality policy, chastising him for “Being Desireous of other Trade Then what they had from this Government.”²⁶ Fitch further reprimanded Brims for failing to control the actions of his son, Seepeycoffee, who since the end of the Yamasee War had openly preferred the friendship of the French and Spanish to the British:

I must tell your young men that if it had not been for us, you would not have known how to war nor yet have anything to war with. You have had nothing but boes [bows] and arrows to kill dear; you had no hoes or Axes then what you made of Stone. You wore nothing but skins; but now you have learned the use of firearm’s as well to kill dear and other provisions as to war against your enemies. And yet you set no greater Value on us who have been such good friends unto you then on your greatest enemies this all you that are old men knows to be true. And I would have you make your young men Sensable of it.²⁷

Fitch and his European counterparts failed to recognize that tensions between older and younger males were an established and accepted part of Creek life. In the years following the Coweta Resolution, these generational antagonisms served to enhance the Creeks’ diplomatic policy of neutrality. Natural friction among Creek men persisted following the geopolitical shifts of 1763, but the nature of these tensions changed as they adapted to the increased British presence in the region. While older Creek leaders

²⁴ Hahn, “Mother,” 110.

²⁵ Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 31.

²⁶ Fitch, Tobias Fitch, “Journal of Captain Tobias Fitch’s Mission from Charleston to the Creeks, 1726,” 1726, in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton D. Mereness (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 182, <https://archive.org/details/travelsinamerica00mereuoft/page/n6>.

²⁷ Fitch, “Journal of Captain Tobias Fitch’s Mission,” 181.

focused on adapting neutrality to maintain consensus-based political structures, young men gravitated toward riskier, more assertive activities, and, like many young people, generally went against the interests of their parents.

Expressive actions such as robbing, raiding, and other forms of violence “had a deep history” within the Confederacy and older Creeks had traditionally expected these types of actions from young warriors.²⁸ In fact, “Creek micos were themselves formerly those young upstarts who challenged their elders for authority in their communities.”²⁹ In the era before the Seven Years’ War the assertive actions of young Creek men provided a necessary counterbalance to the micos’ methods of persuasion and negotiation. Micos welcomed these social pressures, viewing them as a natural phenomenon that protected the consensus-based nature of Creek political life. James Oglethorpe, observing Creek governmental processes in the 1730s, stated that Creek leaders had “no coercive power . . . their kings can do no more than persuade. All the power they have is no more than to call their old men and captains and to propound them the measures they think proper.” Male members of the Confederacy had the opportunity to voice their opinions of community matters at these political meetings, after which they debated with one another until the group achieved resolution. “In speaking to their young men,” Oglethorpe added, “they generally address to the passions; in speaking to their old men, they apply to reason only.”³⁰

Youthful “passions” proved central to preserving harmony in the Creek world, emphasizing the importance of the older leaders’ level-headedness and self-control.

²⁸ Joshua S. Haynes, *Patrolling the Border: Theft and Violence on the Creek-Georgia Frontier, 1770-1796* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 30.

²⁹ Bryan C. Rindfleisch, "The Indian Factors: Kinship, Trade, and Authority in the Creek Nation & American South, 1740-1800," *Journal of Early American History* 8 (2018): 7.

³⁰ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 12-13.

“Division of sentiment,” as described by Oglethorpe, was both welcome and unavoidable in a political system where “freedom of speech characterized the councilors and ambition for high office spurred on the younger men.”³¹ In an era where the town or community served as the focus of Creek social and political life, the ability of individual headmen to maintain these balances provided them with significant local-level legitimacy and power. Brims and Chigelly’s success in exercising neutrality and limiting political authority and influence to their familial line undoubtedly helped to bolster their own authority, but it also secured Coweta’s status as the most politically influential Lower Creek town. Through the middle decades of the eighteenth-century, the region’s European groups “heavily courted” Coweta in their efforts to secure Creek alliances. These actions bolstered the influence of Brims and his immediate kin and limited Lower Creek power to only a select number of men.³²

During his last years of life, Brims found himself without a successor. Seepeycoffee, his intended heir, had “drunk himself to death with a keg of rum” following an expedition to Fort San Marcos during the summer of 1726.³³ Consequently, Brims requested a British commission for his brother Chigelly, naming him the head liaison between the Creeks and Carolina. This also recognized Chigelly as the rightful heir to Brims’ title, ensuring that the privileged position remained in Coweta within Brims’ clan.³⁴ The process of assigning commissions not only preserved Brims’ line of succession, but also benefitted British ambitions in the region. Creek power relationships

³¹ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 16.

³² Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 140-141.

³³ The records also refer to Seepeycoffee as Brims’ son, though the exact relationship between the two is unknown. For a reference to the Brims-Seepeycoffee relationship, please see Fitch, “Journal of Captain Tobias Fitch’s Mission.” For mention of Seepeycoffee’s death, please see Hall, Jr., *Zamumo’s Gifts*, 153.

³⁴ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 137.

“were structured as metaphorical kinship relations” which were “tightly bound to external alliances with ethnically related tribes or tribal segments.”³⁵ Europeans wanted to reorganize the region’s Indian groups into hierarchies, unifying the Creeks, Choctaws, and others into single political entities with a recognizable leader that could exhibit more coercive leadership functions. This would make it easier for the British to negotiate with, and, more importantly, control their Indian counterparts. Now, Europeans only had to deal with micos descended from one line as opposed to micos from clans and towns all over the Confederacy. As historian Patricia Galloway asserts in her study of the Choctaw, “a power center had to be created, for one did not exist naturally.”³⁶

The practice of assigning commissions would preserve the Brims line until Malatchi, or his twin brother Essabo, were old enough to inherit their positions. Malatchi’s identity as the younger twin undoubtedly shaped his status in Creek society and cemented his destiny as a mico or leader. Like most Southeastern Indian societies, Creeks “believed that twins possessed special spiritual powers associated with divination and prophecy, particularly second-born twins, who were often credited with protecting and guiding the older twin on the journey from womb to world.” Creeks, therefore, would have treated Malatchi far differently than other newborns. Malatchi’s mother likely isolated him from the community for months following his birth and fed him “corn gruel mixed with several kinds of pulverized roots and tubers” as opposed to nursing him; these practices were “thought to enhance a twin’s powers to prophesy.”³⁷ Because the twins were not yet twenty when Brims died in 1733, the boys were placed under the

³⁵ Patricia Galloway, “So Many Little Republics’: British Negotiations with the Choctaw Confederacy, 1765,” *Ethnohistory* 41, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 516.

³⁶ Galloway, “So Many Little Republics,” 513.

³⁷ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 190.

guardianship of their older kinsmen; Malatchi became the responsibility of Chigelly and Essabo became the charge of “the soon-to-be Coweta mico,” Yahoulakee.³⁸ Chigelly and Yahoulakee were tasked with guiding these young men into adulthood and developing their political education. In the years immediately following Brims’ death, Essabo seemed poised to take on the position of mico. Malatchi, on the other hand, is not very evident in the record during these years; when he is mentioned, he is described as a “drunk fellow.” Essabo’s untimely death in 1735, however, changed the narrative, rendering Malatchi Brims’ heir apparent.³⁹

By 1740, Malatchi appears to have abandoned his penchant for liquor and embraced his role as a mico-in-training. In May of that year, William Stephens, one of Georgia’s founding trustees, reported on a meeting between Malatchi and the colony’s de-facto leader, James Oglethorpe.⁴⁰ Stephens described how in the years since his brother’s death, Malatchi had emerged as one of Coweta’s greatest warriors, behaving so well that his community “now looked upon him as the greatest Man of that, or most other Nations; which makes him highly esteemed among them.” Malatchi was regarded highly enough that his leadership ability, as well as his amiability toward the British, was “not to be questioned.” Stephens also observed Malatchi’s good-natured behavior and physical appearance, noting the young leader was almost six feet tall with pleasing facial features and “perfectly well shaped from Head to Foot.” According to Stephens, Malatchi

³⁸ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 193.

³⁹ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 195.

⁴⁰ Georgia, founded in 1733, was a charter colony, envisioned and implemented by James Oglethorpe. Because of its status as a charter colony, Georgia was governed by a number of trustees. Thus, Oglethorpe was one of many trustees, prohibited from holding office and technically could not emerge as a political leader, though he was clearly recognized by Europeans, colonists, and native leaders as its leader.

appeared as if “he had been bred in some European Court, [rather] than among Barbarians . . . there is something in his aspect which demands Awe . . .”⁴¹

Stephens’ account also detailed existing tensions between Malatchi and Chigelly. According to Stephens, Chigelly had recently “shewn an unusual Coldness towards meddling in the Wars that we are engaged in against Spain; telling some of his People, that they had no business to interpose among the white Mens Quarrels.”⁴² Chigelly, however, was simply putting neutrality into action after recent interactions with Spanish and French emissaries. As many Cowetas appeared eager to support the British, Malatchi “put himself at their Head” and stepped in to discuss the possibility of assisting the British effort in some way. Malatchi declared he would meet with Oglethorpe at Fort Frederica, and if he liked what the general had to say, “he would return and try [to determine] who had the best interest in his country, he or Chigelly.” Malatchi’s potential position as the leader of a pro-British faction in Coweta proved an opportunity for the young leader to establish his own path toward legitimacy in Creek society. Determined to succeed, Malatchi worked to advance relations between the British his people. He stated that while he had never previously intended to challenge Chigelly’s authority, the old mico no longer governed with Coweta’s best intentions in mind. Resolving to put an end to his uncle’s power, Malatchi declared that if Chigelly opposed his support of the British, he would “cut off his head.”⁴³

Over the next fifteen years, Malatchi expanded his local and regional influence to exert authority in both the Creek and European worlds. But it was his death in 1756 that marked a shift in the established order of Coweta’s political leadership. Togulki’s youth

⁴¹ “Stephens' Report on Malatchi's Talk with Oglethorpe,” 1740, in *Georgia Treaties*, V11:101-102.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

and inexperience rendered him unable to inherit his father's position, inviting a crew of younger men, including Malatchi's kinsmen Sempoyaffee and Escotchaby, to compete for authority and influence.⁴⁴ In the years that followed, Superintendent of Indian Affairs Edmund Atkin described Coweta as run by "four vile brothers" who effectively "owned" the town square.⁴⁵ While historians have come to debate whether or not Malatchi's passing truly ushered in a "dispersal of political influence in Coweta," in the decades that followed, the number of different men who interacted with the British as "ambassadors, speakers, and signers of the treaties" greatly increased.⁴⁶ Though specific leaders certainly emerged as more dominant than others during this period, none achieved the status of the late Malatchi or Brims.

Escotchaby worked tirelessly to parlay his responsibility as Togulki's guardian into a position of higher authority in Coweta. While he had agreed to guide Togulki into adulthood so that he could eventually assume his intended role as Malatchi's successor, Escotchaby, his brother Sempoyaffee, and their family "had little intention of ever letting Togulki do so."⁴⁷ According to Bryan Rindfleisch, Escotchaby "made repeated trips back and forth from Coweta to the English colonies, where his entourage loaded up with goods and presents, many of which Escotchaby redistributed to his supporters in Coweta to accentuate his power and authority over Togulki." Furthermore, Escotchaby and Sempoyaffee took advantage of any opportunity to remind both the British and their

⁴⁴ Based on matrilineal cultural norms, it seems likely that Sempoyaffee and Escotchaby would have been Malatchi's brothers-in-law, or the brothers of Malatchi's wife and Togulki's mother, though this is not confirmed; Previous work has argued that none of these men emerged as solely dominant after 1763, and as a result Coweta's once-dynamic and centralized leadership structure weakened significantly; However, Bryan Rindfleisch argues this is not the case, and that in fact, Escotchaby successfully used personal relationships and kinship networks to accumulate personal power. See Rindfleisch, "The Owner of the Town Ground," 65.

⁴⁵ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, 226.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Rindfleisch, "The Owner of the Town Ground," 62.

fellow Creeks of Togulki's youth and inexperience, publicly scolding him on many occasions. In 1759, after Togulki had met with the French at Fort Toulouse, Escotchaby and Sempoyaffee went so far as to tell British officials "their nephew has behaved ill" and was "not worthy a commission." Over the course of the Seven Years' War, Escotchaby continued to ostracize Togulki while simultaneously fostering important personal connections with individuals both inside and outside of Coweta.⁴⁸ By the late 1750s, he had earned the title of *tustenogy mico*, or leading town warrior. This position designated Escotchaby as Coweta's foremost authority in all war-related decisions, representing the interests of both the town and its young warriors to foreign groups. But Escotchaby hoped to simultaneously attain the title of *mico*, Coweta's leading civil authority. Malatchi had held this position before his death and like his uncle, Brims, successfully "negotiated on Coweta's behalf with other Native and European leaders, which included the British to the east, French to the west, and Spanish to the south."⁴⁹ In so doing, Malatchi upheld Brims' political policy of neutrality, allowing the Creek Confederacy to play the region's European powers off of one another without committing to a strict alliance with any.⁵⁰ Now, the brothers hoped to use the *mico*'s death, and Escotchaby's new role as Togulki's guardian, as a way to pull authority and power away from the Malatchi line.

Escotchaby's efforts to shift authority away from Togulki reflect an almost merciless pursuit of power. His complaints regarding the young warrior's behavior were not completely groundless, as Togulki did have a violent streak. But Escotchaby's

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Braund, *Deerskins, and Duffels*, 21; Rindfleisch, "The Owner of the Town Ground," 61.

⁵⁰ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*.

criticisms should be viewed with his specific political ambitions in mind, and must be understood as part of his strategy of adjustment to the larger geographic and political shifts taking place in and around the Creek Confederacy. The social, political, and economic changes brought by the end of the Seven Years' War sparked an "intense, generational contest for political authority, which forever changed the Creek world."⁵¹ This new, more fervent competition emerged largely due to differing Creek methods of adaption in response to the events of 1763, and altered existing political processes, decision-making structures, approaches to diplomacy, gendered obligations, and cultural norms in ways that members of the Creek Confederacy had never experienced before.

But a number of additional factors also contributed to the disruption of traditional Creek social structures and ways of life over the course of the eighteenth century, exacerbating differences between the warriors and their elders and creating "a generation of "restless" young Creek men."⁵² The pressure to produce deerskins expedited the adoption of guns, resulting in the deterioration of skilled craftwork. Consequently, "much high quality interaction time between young men and their elders disappeared as old skills and manufacturing techniques fell into disrepute and were not passed to succeeding generations."⁵³ The centrality of firearms and gunpowder to Creek life in the period after the Seven Years' War "both marked native warriors as men, and signified their dependence on the English." The British had long believed that if Indians were

⁵¹ Rindfleisch, "The Indian Factors," 9.

⁵² Braund, "Guardians of Tradition," 245.

⁵³ Ibid. Braund writes "Conversely, traditional female activities were accentuated by the trade including the preparation of deerskins, the manufacture of clothing, and the continued reliance on native pottery as opposed to imported ceramic ware. The continued importance of subsistence agriculture also reinforced female roles and strengthened the bond between generations of Creek women. Creek females, left to the care of their clanswomen and elder male relatives, noticed less disruption in their lives. The stability of the female role helped offset the ill effects of the trade and white contact on young Creek men and bolstered traditional social institutions."

successful hunters or warriors, it was only due to the tools and technology that they had supplied. From their perspective, a “savage” Indian could only develop into a man if he conducted warfare in the same way Europeans did, using guns. The well-known Indian trader James Adair recalled a 1747 incident in which he gave “the chief part of my ammunition,” to a struggling Choctaw hunter, “so that he might regain what his former pride and folly had occasioned to be lost.”⁵⁴ It is no surprise, then, that after 1763 the British alleged that all Indian views of manhood that combined preexisting beliefs about warriors being confident, assertive, and at times even “having a sense of wildness or uncontrollability” with the use of gunpowder and firearms, were possible “because of the friendship and charity of their British benefactors.”⁵⁵

Between the end of the Seven Years’ War and the beginning of the American Revolution, British officials increasingly emphasized indigenous dependence in their talks with Southeastern Indians, and regularly drew ideological connections between gunpowder and masculinity in order to pressure native men to adhere to British governmental interests. In November 1763, during Britain’s first meeting with the Choctaw at Mobile, Major Robert Farmar stated, “it was the French that made you men by furnishing you punctually with Powder, with Ball, with Hatchets, with Tomahawks, and with Sharp weapons for your defense against your enemies.”⁵⁶ A few years later, following the official French departure from the region, Superintendent Stuart assured the Choctaw and Chickasaw “the English Powder will flourish in the Land and enable you to

⁵⁴ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 330.

⁵⁵ LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother*, 79.

⁵⁶ "Council with the Chactaws, by Major Farmer and Mons. Dabbadie," 1764, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 86. <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n86>.

Supply your Wives and Children with all Necessaries.”⁵⁷ This promise was attached, however, to a firm reminder that these natives were “dependant upon the Generosity and Benevolence of the Great King George, It is by his Permission alone that your wants can be supplied that Traders can go amongst you, That you can have Guns, Powder, Ball, Cloathes, Knives, Hatchets, Hoes & such other Necessaries as you cannot Subsist without and are totally incapable of making.”⁵⁸

Indeed, the “all-consuming need to produce deerskins for the trade” embedded Creeks in a cycle of dependence, placing ever-increasing pressure upon native men to boost their yields to ensure reliable access to gunpowder supplies. These demands encouraged many young men and women to move away from their home communities in order to hunt, leading nuclear families to spend months at a time away from their towns and villages. But the commercial stresses of the hunt also persuaded others to move to semi-permanent settlements on the frontier. In a June 1766 talk to a group of Lower Creek micos, Governor Wright of Georgia voiced concern over a new Indian settlement close to the colonial boundary line, “where there is 20 or 30 families of Indians settled and who have lived and planted there for some time. I don’t know whether they are Upper or Lower Creeks, but think it would be better that you should make them remove into the nation, for such a Town is too near the White People, and may occasion quarrels and mischief.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ “Choctaw Congress,” 1765, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 237, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n237>.

⁵⁸ “Choctaw Congress,” 1765, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 228, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n228>.

⁵⁹ “Wright to Lower Creeks,” in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 25.

Wright was describing *Pucknawheatly*, or Standing Peach Tree, a detached village upon the Ocmulgee River near the Georgia border. Most of the families and individuals who lived there were from the Lower Creek towns of Coweta and Cussita, but Creeks from other villages resided here as well. Standing Peach Tree's location was ideally suited for horse raiding from Georgia farms. Houmahta, a young Creek with a poor reputation among his elders, acted as town leader. There, Creeks could more directly engage with Indian factors, mixed-blood Creeks who utilized their mestizo identity to work as intermediaries between their indigenous and European societies. Native factors had previously connected Creeks to the Atlantic marketplace by transporting deerskins to colonial trading posts, facilitating their exchange for European goods, and then carrying commodities back to their communities for distribution by the micos. Now, these factors set up temporary stores in satellite towns, from which they would negotiate with Anglo-Americans to trade unprocessed deerskins for highly sought after goods, like gunpowder and ammunition, outside of the normal frameworks of exchange. While micos had previously relied on these Indians to serve as their link to the colonial world, providing access to goods that secured their sociopolitical status, this new economic class of factors now presented real threats to traditional authority.⁶⁰ Standing Peach Tree was particularly unique in that it was home to a store belonging to George Galphin, a trader and merchant of high esteem among the Lower Creek Indians, as well as a close friend and brother-in-law to Escotchaby.⁶¹ The White Boy, a well-known mestizo factor, acted as the town storekeeper. Thus, the very traders and factors that encouraged Lower Creek settlement at this outpost by operating in contrast to the desires of Coweta headmen also

⁶⁰ Rindfleisch, "The Indian Factors," 8.

⁶¹ Haynes, *Patrolling the Border*, 72.

worked in conjunction with a man who had deep kin connections to a prominent Coweta mico. By moving closer to colonial populations, young Creeks distanced themselves from the influence of the older generations, destabilizing the ways in which micos gained legitimacy and traditional authority. In turning to Indian factors and new, inexperienced, and often unscrupulous traders for gunpowder and other goods to attack backcountry settlements, young men aggravated existing generational tensions, as unofficial exchanges “rendered [young Creeks] incapable of discharging their Just Debts to the fair Traders residing in their Towns, who were thereby ruined and disabled from bringing [them] a proper supply of goods.”⁶² By disrupting the recognized processes of exchange, Creeks on the frontier began to undermine the power of older headmen, challenging the established order and triggering “an unprecedented generational contest for authority and leadership in Creek society.”⁶³

Recent adjustments to the Indian trade also encouraged these generational divisions. From first contact through the majority of the eighteenth century, Creeks and their neighbors exchanged and negotiated with the region’s various European groups, often at the same time.⁶⁴ Their diplomacy with the French had rested on a foundation of gift giving, allocating presents to recognized headmen who then re-distributed these gifts to their families and supporters to elevate their position of authority within their communities. Such processes of redistribution proved central for Southeastern native peoples, whose sociopolitical structures required that local leaders use persuasion and

⁶² John Stuart, "Letter from Stuart to Gage," July 2, 1768, Document 109, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁶³ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 136; Joshua Aaron Piker, "Colonists and Creeks: Rethinking the Pre-Revolutionary Southern Backcountry," *The Journal of Southern History* 70, no. 3 (August 2004): 27; Rindfleisch, "The Indian Factors," 8.

⁶⁴ Eighteenth-century Creek neutrality is explored in detail in chapter 1 of this dissertation. For a detailed study, please see Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*.

negotiation to achieve consensus.⁶⁵ But while the French traditionally valued trade and gift giving as an extension of diplomacy, the British “largely eschewed the idea of trade as a ritualistic exchange designed to demonstrate the level of esteem with which each side regarded the other.” Rather, British officials viewed these practices as part of a larger economic system “subject to market forces and into which any individual could enter.”⁶⁶

Thus, following the Seven Years’ War, British officials chose to open the Southeastern Indian trade. The British, like the French, had previously limited participation in the Indian trade to a set number of licensed, experienced traders. Now, however, virtually any colonial settler could obtain a license to trade with the region’s native groups. These new traders often ignored governmental efforts to regulate the trade and frequently chose to trade with individual Creeks rather than directly with designated headmen. This lack of oversight created opportunities for young Creeks to establish their own commercial relationships with colonials. As a result, deceitful traders often found ways to take advantage of the youth and inexperience of warriors. They frequently started rumors that Creek enemies were preparing to assault their towns, realizing that “spreading [word of] impending attack was a quick way to increase sales of guns and powder, and many Creeks stocked up at the first hint of menacing activity by Carolinians, Georgians, or Choctaws.”⁶⁷ In one example from April of 1766, William Struthers, a merchant from Pensacola, wrote to Governor Johnstone concerning a trader who had recently brought a large quantity of goods to an Upper Creek community called The Mortar’s Plantation. The trader offered to sell these Creeks a number of goods at very

⁶⁵ Creek power and authority are explored in detail in chapter 1 of this dissertation. See also Saunt, *A New Order of Things*.

⁶⁶ Ethan Schmidt, *Native Americans in the American Revolution: How the War Divided, Devastated, and Transformed the Early American Indian World* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2014), 39.

⁶⁷ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 105.

low prices, telling them that settlers from Pensacola and Mobile “were determined to fall on them this Summer, that some Troops were arrived for that purpose and that more were coming, and that should they be in Want of Ammunition or other necessarys they might depend on it he would have a supply there for them . . .” In December 1770, Emistisiguo informed Charles Stuart that “some People from Pensacola with Packhorses came here and told us that there were 50 Chactaws at Pensacola getting arms and Ammunition to Come to War against us . . .” Though Struthers remarked that many of the Creeks did not believe the trader’s talk, Emistisiguo relayed that this news “Stopt our People from going out a Hunting . . .”⁶⁸ Such rumors contributed to the violent actions of young men and added to their increasingly strained relationships with colonists on the frontier.⁶⁹

George Galphin wrote about the consequences of these reduced trade regulations in a June 1768 letter to Superintendent Stuart. “If anything brings on a War,” he stated, “it will be the Ogeechie settlement, for they and the Indians [at Standing Peach Tree] keep robbing one another.” In one recent incident, he recalled, a group of Creek “Villians” had looted the home of a settler who lived on the colonial side of the border, near the trading path. The young men brought the stolen goods to Coweta, where, to Galphin’s dismay, they falsely told the micos that *he* had orchestrated the attack. To mediate the situation, Galphin “immediately [wrote] up to the Young Lieutenant [Escotchaby] and some other Headmen and to get all the Things and send them down.” Curious as to why the Creeks at Standing Peach Tree targeted this particular settler, Galphin asked the victim, a Mr. Carter, “if he carried on no trade with the Indians.”

⁶⁸ “Upper Creeks to Charles Stuart,” 1770, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 372.

⁶⁹ “William Struthers to Governor Johnstone,” 1766, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 516-517, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n516>.

Carter assured Galphin “it was all Household Furniture They carried off.”⁷⁰ Upon receiving the remaining plunder from Escotchaby a few weeks later, however, Galphin expressed surprise to find that “they were all Trading Goods, Strouds, Duffils, Armplates, Shirts, Handkerchiefs, Calico, etc. etc.” Notably, “the Powder Bullets and Paint were made away with.”⁷¹

The Carter robbery was one of many similar incidents that occurred on the Creek-Georgia border in the years before the American Revolution. For British officials and micos alike, this raid illuminated the negative consequences of relaxed trade regulations, and the lengths to which young Creek men would go to gain access to gunpowder and ammunition. On a deeper level, this event reveals the difficulties Creek micos faced in trying to assert authority over the actions of their young people, particularly when gunpowder supplies were involved. The only reason Escotchaby confiscated the goods, Galphin stated, was because “I wrote so pressing to him and the fellows making use of my Name . . . otherwise he would not [have done so] for it was the Governor and Beloved Man’s [Stuart’s] Talk to take all the Goods they found a people trading with in the Woods between Augusta and the Nation.”⁷² Despite their status, it was traditionally not within a mico’s power to force his own people to surrender trade goods, stolen or otherwise.⁷³ Consequently, Escotchaby’s remark that the gunpowder and bullets had simply been “made away with” should be viewed with skepticism. While it is likely that the warriors from Standing Peach Tree had either already used the gunpowder and

⁷⁰ In the eighteenth-century, furniture, or “household furniture” referred to the provisions or stock of necessary goods one would have for personal use.

⁷¹ “George Galphin to Superintendent Stuart,” 1768, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 46-47.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Please see chapter 1 of this dissertation, which explores Creek power based in persuasion, as opposed to coercion or force.

bullets, or distributed these goods to others before Escotchaby approached them on Galphin's behalf, it is also highly probable that the "young people" simply refused to surrender their gunpowder and ammunition to the Coweta headmen, keeping them for their own personal use. Wanting to ensure that important colonial figures, like Galphin, continued to view him as a person of authority in Coweta and beyond, it is possible that Escotchaby found it more advantageous to say that the stolen gunpowder supplies could not be located, rather than look weak or ineffective to his influential brother-in-law. Such a response could have also relieved Escotchaby from being held accountable for the violent actions of these young men if they went on to use the pilfered gunpowder and bullets to attack or murder frontier settlers.

Despite new, violent challenges from young men, Creek headmen still refused to assert control through force in the era following the Seven Years' War. While the British had long recognized that a Creek mico held "great influence over his people" but "no coercive power to keep them in order," they did not fully understand the consensus-based nature of Creek sociopolitical life.⁷⁴ In January 1766, Governor Grant of East Florida voiced his frustration with the Seminole leader, Cowkeeper, for failing to force his young people to behave favorably toward neighboring settler populations. An irritated Grant could not understand why Cowkeeper did not recognize "his friendship is of consequence, and his help may be wanted, in case his young men should play tricks amongst the inhabitants . . ." Grant's irritation with Cowkeeper only grew as he repeatedly brushed off British anxieties. On more than one occasion, Cowkeeper

⁷⁴ "Grant to Conway," R1; F289-290, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

responded to concerns over Indian aggression against East Florida settlers by plainly stating he “knows nothing of what his young men do.”⁷⁵

These generational rifts were further complicated by growing strains among Upper and Lower Creek leadership, illuminated in a February 1768 raid on the outpost settlement of Buzzard’s Roost. According to Stuart, Buzzard’s Roost existed “for the express purpose of [traders] intercepting the Indians on their return from hunting.” Seventy miles from the nearest village, British officials and Creek micos alike did not consider Buzzard’s Roost an “official” Creek town. Consequently, traders were not approved to do business there. On February 7 “a gang of Indians 27 in Number . . . with the big fellow alias Struther’s friend [Emistisiguo] at the head of them robbed [Galphin’s] Store at the Bussard Roost and carried off everything in it together with the provisions packsaddles and Six valuable horses.”⁷⁶ Stuart expressed little sympathy or understanding for those who were attacked. He contended they “have nobody to blame for their misfortunes but themselves, having had warning from the Indians, and their Trading anywhere Except in Indian towns being against an express instruction.”⁷⁷

Despite the initial disruption, however, Emistisiguo’s efforts were largely unsuccessful. Following the incident, William Frazier, an Indian trader, reported, “several store[s] at the Bussard roost were not in the least molested.”⁷⁸ Rather, the raid proved damaging for sociopolitical relations within the Creek Confederacy. Lower Creek headmen, specifically Sempoyaffee and Escotchaby, heavily criticized Emistisiguo and his actions. As individuals largely from Coweta and Cussita populated Buzzard’s Roost,

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ “Deposition of William Frazier,” 1768, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 42.

⁷⁷ Ibid.; John Stuart, “Letter from Stuart to Gage,” July 2, 1768, Document 109, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁷⁸ “Deposition of William Frazier,” 1768, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, V12; 43.

the robbery violated Lower Creek territorial sovereignty and undermined the authority of Coweta's headmen. But Escotchaby and Sempoyaffee's discontent was further complicated by existing family and clan connections and differing perspectives on Creek-British alliances. Though Emistisiguo identified as an Upper Creek and Sempoyaffee as a Lower Creek, both men were members of the Panther clan, which the British often referred to as "Tyger." This, however, was where their commonalities ended. While Sempoyaffee's status as a prominent Coweta mico was directly tied to his close kin connection to Malatchi, Emistisiguo "owed his rise to power chiefly to his firm alliance with the British."⁷⁹ Emistisiguo's close relationship with Superintendent Stuart further aggravated tensions with Sempoyaffee and Escotchaby. Thanks to Coweta's advantageous position on the lower path, headmen from this town had long been able to regulate the flow of goods from Augusta, the main trading town in Georgia, to interior Creek communities. Following the Seven Years' War, however, the British created a new upper path that ran directly from Pensacola to Emistisiguo's town of Little Tallassee, largely benefitting the Upper Creek. Now, those vying for authority in Coweta, namely Escotchaby and Sempoyaffee, viewed Emistisiguo and the new trading path as "unwelcome competition." Fueling the fire was the fact that Emistisiguo and his men had plundered George Galphin's *licensed* traders at Buzzard's Roost. Thus, the raid both "infringed on Lower Creek interests generally and on the trading interests and kin bonds of Coweta's leaders."⁸⁰

But the raid also exacerbated existing internal strains concerning Creek authority, namely the ability of Creek micos to influence the actions of their young people.

⁷⁹ J. Russell Snapp, "Emistisiguo," 1996, in *Colonial Wars of North America, 1512 - 1763*, ed. Alan Galloway (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 192.

⁸⁰ Haynes, *Patrolling the Border*, 30-31.

According to Frazier, Sempoyaffee, backed by Escotchaby and other like-minded headmen, said the attack “was a very bad Example for their Young men who of themselves were ready enough to rob the White people without any Encouragement.” Sempoyaffee feared the troublesome Creeks at Buzzard’s Roost would see Emistisiguo’s raid as a justification to remain on the frontier, beyond the influence of older leaders, and maintain their aggressive behaviors. This was of particular concern to Sempoyaffe, as one of the main antagonists at Buzzard’s Roost was Togulki. There would be no reason for the young men to hunt and observe the authority of their elders, Sempoyaffee believed, “if they could get goods for nothing.”⁸¹ This had become a major problem throughout the Confederacy following the Seven Years’ War, as young Upper and Lower Creeks began to increasingly steal horses belonging to traders, backcountry settlers, and other native peoples. They would take the stolen horses to East and West Florida, “where there were many eager buyers,” to sell or barter them for European goods.⁸²

These practices reached dangerous levels by the mid-1760s, particularly as Creek men sought greater access to gunpowder and rum. With their husbands and partners focused on obtaining distinctly male goods, Creek women found themselves forced to participate in the theft and sale of horses to access the commodities that they needed, such as needles, scissors, ribbons, and cloth.⁸³ Female involvement in the illegal horse trade after the Seven Years’ War reflects the profound social and cultural changes that the geopolitical shifts of 1763 brought to native women’s lives. Throughout the eighteenth century, Creek women participated in the deerskin trade by dressing and preparing raw skins for market. Eighteenth-century commercial deer hunting “became a joint economic

⁸¹ “Deposition of William Frazier,” 1768, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 43.

⁸² Braund, “Guardians of Tradition,” 246.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

venture for Creek men and women,” where both parties held equal responsibility in the process. “While it is natural to assume Creek men – the hunters – were the primary participants in the deerskin trade,” Creek women “contributed in a very real way to Creek productivity.”⁸⁴ But native women largely assisted male hunters because they depended on them for gender-specific goods, like agricultural tools and heavy woolen textiles. As Creek men felt heightened pressure to obtain access to gunpowder and ammunition after 1763, these partnerships began to change. Many Creek women had to find new ways to access these goods on their own. By May 1765, the stolen horse trade, and Creek women’s involvement in it, deeply concerned British officials, who believed “it is a sign the Evil is grown to a very great head whenever Women and Children are become parties thereto . . .”⁸⁵ As this practice plagued both Upper and Lower Creek communities, Superintendent Stuart hoped an appeal to his friend Emistisiguo would aid British officials in their effort to pressure the micos to put a stop to these practices. Emistisiguo, however, deflected Stuart’s request, until the Superintendent could deliver “the rum and powder he promised us at the late Congress at Augusta, which we have Often Wished for . . .”⁸⁶ Emistisiguo reminded Stuart “that as the Women in My Nation are apt to Steal Horses as well as the Young men, it will be necessary to give them some presents, in hopes to remedy that evil . . . if that does not produce the desired Effect,” he continued, “I am afraid it is incurable.”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Braund, “Guardians of Tradition,” 244.

⁸⁵ “Johnstone and Stuart to Indian Chiefs,” 1765, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 206-207, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n516.207>

⁸⁶ “Stuart and Wedderhorn to Indian Chiefs,” 1765, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 201, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n201>.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Though Emistisiguo maintained that he was powerless to influence the actions of the young people, his statements should not be taken at face value. As the 1760s progressed, similar responses from Creek headmen became commonplace. These replies allowed micos to avoid becoming burdened with European-oriented ideas of what male leadership looked like and ensured that older Creeks would not have to resort to force in order to assert authority over their uncontrollable sons and nephews, a responsibility many “saw as onerous, dangerous or downright impossible.”⁸⁸ As theft, murders, and other forms of frontier violence grew, British officials increasingly pressured micos to take responsibility for the behavior of the younger generations, demanding that older headmen “discipline their “mad” young men.” In East Florida, Governor Grant continually voiced his anger with Cowkeeper for failing to correct his young Seminoles. “In return for my kindness to the red people,” he wrote in January 1766, “they steal their white brothers horses, they kill their cattle, and carry their negro slaves into the woods - don’t tell me that it is your wild young men 'tis your business to keep them in order.”⁸⁹

While these men almost always “replied that they were powerless” to control their warriors, it is important to recognize that these responses were “not necessarily evidence of lost authority,” as “most leaders of coalescent societies probably never had such authority.”⁹⁰ Rather, these retorts should be understood as part of the micos’ larger strategy to maintain traditional avenues toward power without having to employ coercion or force. By voicing their inability to discipline uncontrollable young men, Creek leaders forced the British to provide in-demand European goods to their communities, bolstering

⁸⁸ Juricek, *Endgame*, 6, n11.

⁸⁹ “Grant to Cowkeeper,” R1;F290, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA; James Grant, “Letter from Grant to Gage,” January 13, 1766, Document 54, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁹⁰ Juricek, *Endgame*, 6.

their legitimacy through established, recognizable means. Colonial officials, in contrast, hoped that in sending gunpowder, balls, gunflints, and other commodities to Creek headmen, the micos would in turn feel obliged to actively punish their youth, as evidenced in the exchange between Stuart and Emistisiguo. Though the Superintendent replied that he was “sorry you cannot immediately answer for the Justice of your People . . .” he agreed “in the meantime [to] give a few of such articles as you have asked for, not by way of buying our own again, as we expect restoration thereof from the Justice of your Chiefs.”⁹¹ Stuart, more so than others, remained cautiously optimistic that “the old Men will see the Madness of their young Men and correct them in Time . . .”⁹²

As the decade progressed, tensions within the Confederacy continued. Stuart’s hope that Creek men could resolve these generational issues on their own disintegrated rapidly. By 1768, the Crown chose to return to tighter trade regulations, which included more direct control over the traders, with the goal of restoring order on the frontier. But gunpowder continued to prove central to Creek-British interactions, as it held the potential to provide all Creek men with access to power as they adapted to the rapidly changing world in which they lived. Fed up with Creek aggression and antagonism, as well as frequent Creek visits to Pensacola for “Rum, & Provisions, & Powder, & Ball,” Governor Johnstone called a meeting with Emistisiguo and a number of other Upper Creek leaders in June 1766. Johnstone took this opportunity to chastise the micos’ for

⁹¹ “Johnstone and Stuart to Indian Chiefs,” 1765, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 207, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n516.207>

⁹² “Colonel Tayler’s Talk to the Indians,” 1766, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 518, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n518>

what he perceived to be a lack of effective leadership, stating, “All Kinds of Madness and Disorder seems to have distracted [your] young men.” “If you are for Peace,” Johnstone continued, “say so, we wish to continue, if for War say so and we are prepared. But to receive our presents, eat our provisions, use our Powder and Ball, and cut our Throats, It is neither fit that you should do so, nor that we should permit it.”⁹³ Following the meeting, Johnstone remarked, “They think to extort our goods from us by force, but they will know in the End that *we* are men.”⁹⁴

While generational tensions among men had always existed in Creek life, the strains that emerged in the 1760s altered existing political processes, decision-making structures, and approaches to British diplomacy in ways that members of the Creek Confederacy had never experienced before. The emergence of gunpowder as a source of power created new models of manhood and masculinity for young warriors. Within these new frameworks, young men came to view “redness” -- violence, aggression, a sense of warrior confidence, and a measure of wildness or uncontrollability -- as the defining attributes of a mature man, as opposed to “whiteness”-- self-control, calmness, sound decision-making skills, and the ability to achieve peaceful consensus among different groups of people. These new ideals facilitated a shift in male identity from one rooted in communal and collective experiences, towards an identity that was increasingly individualistic.

⁹³ “Answer of the Indian Chiefs to Governor Johnstone,” 1766, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 526, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n516.526>

⁹⁴ “Governor Johnstone to the Creeks,” 1766, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives. English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 523-524, <https://archive.org/details/mississippiprovi01miss/page/n523>

These changes, and the aggressive actions that accompanied them, ultimately motivated British officials to think differently about the implications of providing gunpowder and ammunition to Creeks and their indigenous neighbors. Johnstone's frustrations lead him to advocate for a plan that would completely cut off the Creek gunpowder trade while simultaneously taking advantage of the existing tensions between the region's native groups to provoke the Creek-Choctaw War. He hoped these actions would weaken the Creeks, which would draw them closer into dependence on the British and allow for expanded settlement into the interior. While Stuart sought to more effectively manage the amount of gunpowder reaching Creek communities, he too hoped that gunpowder regulation could eventually force the Creeks to act more like obedient British subjects. The following chapter explores these strategies to gain a better understanding of what Indian policies that centered upon gunpowder and ammunition looked like, illuminating Creek perspectives to continue exploring gunpowder's relationship to Creek power and authority.

Chapter 3: “Deprive Them of Ammunition, by Which Means They Will Become Easy Prey”: Gunpowder and British Indian Policy, 1763-1776.

In the spring of 1766, Upper Creek headmen Emistisiguo and The Mortar sent talks to Governor Johnstone of West Florida. Suspicious of British intentions, Emistisiguo questioned the extent of Johnstone’s involvement in their current conflicts with the Choctaw. “We are informed” he began, “that the Commander of Mobile gave the Chactaws Incouragement to come to War against us. We beg you will send us Word whether it is so or not. And we shall be particularly obliged . . . to know whether the Chactaws are coming against us at the Desire of the Commander of Mobile or their own Accord.” The Mortar expressed similar concerns. “We are lately informed,” he stated, “that the English sent a parcel of sharp Things to the Chikasaws to induce them to go to War against us in conjunction with the Chactaws. We are likewise told that all the Powder in the Chikasaws is carried to the Chactaws to set them still on us.” “I should be glad to know,” he concluded, “if it is the Great King’s Talk to set Indians against one another.”¹

Johnstone promptly replied, assuring Emistisiguo and the Mortar that the rumors were “groundless and false.” The real reason for Choctaw aggression, he claimed, was a recent murder by a party of Upper Creeks. In an attempt to ease Creek skepticism, Johnstone informed the headmen that the Choctaw had also questioned British actions. “The Chactaws alledge it was us who was the Occasion of the last Murder by setting the Creeks upon them, which is as false as the other Report of our setting the Chactaws

¹ “Upper Creek Reply to Governor Johnstone's Protest to Emistisiguo Over Depredations,” 1766, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 295.

against the Creeks. We have not interfered in this Matter between you and them, neither shall we interfere.”²

The reality, however, was that Johnstone did seek to interfere in matters between the Choctaws and the Creeks. At the very least, he hoped to fuel existing intertribal tensions in ways that would benefit Britain’s imperial goals in the region. Creeks and Choctaws had engaged in regular warfare with one another since the beginning of the eighteenth-century. In the 1760s, however, intense conflicts over hunting lands broke out between the two groups. This period saw a stark decline in Southeastern deer populations, sparking a number of social, cultural, political, and gendered changes within the Creek Confederacy.³ To meet the economic demands of the trade, Creek and Choctaw hunters were forced to expand both the length of their hunting season and the range of their hunts. While large numbers of Lower Creeks migrated to Florida, where deer were still abundant, most were unable to relocate. Thus, thousands of stressed hunters and their families “roamed far and wide over the countryside seeking deer to kill, and increasingly, horses to steal.” While the situation had not yet devolved into a full-scale war, “British officials recognized the opportunity.”⁴ In 1764, General Gage wrote to Stuart:

We are now in that happy situation to the Southward to be courted by all the Nations, from the quarrels they have with one another. Their Education and the whole business of their lives is war and hunting and it is not possible for us to divert that active spirit inherent in them as well as the rest of mankind, to occupations which are more innocent and more industrious. The savage nations, therefore, can never be a longtime at peace and if we have not the

² "Upper Creek Reply," in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 298.

³ Changes to Indian hunting practices are explored in chapter 2.

⁴ Joel W. Martin, "Indians and the English Trade in Skins and Slaves," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, ed. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 319.

dexterity enough to turn this rage for war from ourselves and direct it to other objects. I fear we shall often feel the ill effects of it.⁵

British officials largely welcomed the Creek-Choctaw conflict that followed, as it held the potential to “divert [the Creeks] from their problems with the Europeans.”⁶ While colonial administrators agreed that it would be beneficial to encourage Creek-Choctaw violence, settling on a plan of action proved to be a difficult, if not impossible, undertaking that polarized civil and military leaders. All understood, however, that control over Indian gunpowder supplies would prove central in their efforts to discipline the increasingly violent Creeks. Consequently, British officials began to send large quantities of gunpowder and ammunition to the Choctaws, Cherokees, and other Southeastern native peoples, while restricting the amounts distributed to the Creeks.

Governor Johnstone’s reply did not placate Emistisiguo or The Mortar, particularly in light of reports spreading through the Confederacy that colonial officials were sending large amounts of gunpowder and ammunition to Creek enemies. A few days after their initial talk, The Mortar asked Johnstone to confirm whether or not “a Waggon Load of Ammunition was sent to the Cherokees to go to War against us.” Emistisiguo subsequently voiced concern that his people were severely lacking in powder, ball, and gunflints. He appealed to Johnstone for twelve kegs of gunpowder, citing that his young men would be unable to repay their trade debts without it.⁷ The Mortar concluded the short talk by bluntly asking Johnstone if the British intended to send his people gunpowder or not.⁸ “How can I send Ammunition,” replied Johnstone, “or any Thing else to a People who have robbed the very Messengers sent to me with

⁵ White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 68.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Upper Creek Reply," in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 295.

⁸ Ibid.

their Request, and have further obliged them to ride round 60 Miles to save their lives. Such – Fellows are only fit to kill men behind a Bush, for surely they dare not face their Enemys on open Ground.”⁹

Johnstone’s response allows scholars to better understand how gunpowder’s centrality to Creek life shaped British Indian policy during the 1760s and 1770s. But it also provides a window through which to explore the ways in which European perceptions of indigenous masculinity - which progressively equated mature manhood with action, aggression, and violence - influenced how colonial administrators philosophically thought about supplying gunpowder to Creek men during this period of intense sociopolitical and cultural change. Officials believed that providing natives with gunpowder and ammunition was a privilege. They tirelessly worked to force Creek men to recognize that access to gunpowder symbolized British benevolence and courtesy, as well as their own dependence. The British felt that male Creeks owed their success in the arenas of hunting and warfare to European guns and gunpowder, believing these tools allowed them to leave “savage” or “barbaric” practices behind to act as men in a European sense. Thus, gunpowder also held significance as a gendered commodity, central to the development of new notions of masculinity and manhood in Creek communities following the Seven Years’ War. As young Creek men began to increasingly associate mature manhood with physical violence, access to gunpowder became a valuable source of power for those who sought to gain legitimacy and authority through force. Consequently, in the era following the Seven Years’ War, both civil and military officials increasingly began to voice their opinions on male Creek behavior in order to try to dictate the terms of cross-cultural diplomacy. Evinced in Johnstone’s

⁹ "Upper Creek Reply," in *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, V12; 298.

above reply to The Mortar, these attitudes allowed administrators to justify the restriction of gunpowder supplies when they felt the actions of male Creeks were not meeting European gender expectations.

As the Creek-Choctaw War of the 1760s and 1770s progressed, these views justified a number of proposed plans that would severely curb, if not completely cut off, Creek access to gunpowder and ammunition. These plans could prove detrimental for Creek men, who relied on gunpowder to maintain their independence and ways of life.¹⁰ While the French had earlier provided Creeks with an alternate source of gunpowder and ammunition, the geopolitical shifts of 1763 left them with the British as their only option for trade. Though Creeks regularly distanced themselves from colonies, and often underwent long periods of time without any British interaction during the 1760s, officials understood that they could not afford to completely isolate themselves, as “nothing must come between them and their only suppliers of ammunition.”¹¹ As Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs Charles Stuart expressed in March 1773, if British officials hoped to eliminate disruptions from the Choctaws and Creeks and establish command over the backcountry, the Crown should “deprive them of Ammunition, by which means they will become easy prey.”¹²

While British officials chose to emphasize what they interpreted as uncivilized male behavior to justify proposed schemes that would cut off Creek access to gunpowder, Britain’s weak position in the region rendered colonial officials unable to completely cut

¹⁰ This research has established that gunpowder, unlike other European goods, particularly firearms, was a non-renewable resource, essential to Creek identity and ways of life by the latter half of the eighteenth century.

¹¹ Juricek, *Endgame*, 140.

¹² Charles Stuart, "Letter From Charles Stuart to General Gage," March 17, 1773, Document 150, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

off gunpowder supplies. Existing on the peripheries of both the British Empire and Indian Country, Britain's Southeastern colonies, particularly East Florida and West Florida, did not have the military or financial backing to support the consequences of cutting off the gunpowder trade, which "would certainly produce a general war with all Indians."¹³ "Destitute . . . of both men and money, to make any defence" against native violence, the Southern colonial governments knew they could not risk an expensive and dangerous Creek war.¹⁴ While Stuart and others endeavored to hide this from the region's native groups, indigenous demands for goods, particularly from the Creeks, sometimes forced the British to acknowledge their limitations. "I am in a country where everything is scarce," Stuart told a group of Upper Creek headmen in 1771. "The White sands by the Sea Side do not produce Provisions . . . We will give you a part of whatever we have, but we Cannot provide for a great Many."¹⁵ Thus, Stuart and other administrators often encouraged plans that would embolden existing tensions between the Choctaws and the Creeks, while tightening controls over the flow of gunpowder into Creek communities. Stuart's hope was to illuminate Creek dependence on British goods and force the micos to finally assert more direct authority over their disruptive young men.

Though Stuart and Johnstone's recommended strategies represent two different positions on a deeply complicated issue, their postures provide dynamic, effective examples through which to explore divergent perspectives on Indian policy following the

¹³ Thomas Gage, "Letter From Gage to Tayler," August 14, 1766, Document 66, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

¹⁴ John Stuart, "Letter from Stuart to Gage," April 11, 1764, Document 14, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

¹⁵ "Superintendent Stuart to Upper Creek Chiefs, Replying to Their Talks of May 1 and July 15," 1771, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763 - 1776*, V12: 383-384.

Seven Years' War. It is important to recognize, however, that the space within these extremes left much room for debate, particularly after Johnstone's removal from office in 1767. Because of its fundamental importance to indigenous men and masculinity, this chapter considers gunpowder and ammunition not as objects or commodities, but as tools employed by Johnstone, Stuart, and other colonial leaders as they attempted to restructure Indian policy, shape regional power dynamics, and control or influence the actions of male Creeks during the Revolutionary Era.¹⁶ As gunpowder and ammunition played a crucial role in these plans, this chapter will use it as a lens through which to investigate a variety of different viewpoints concerning British-Creek relations, to gain a better understanding of what various views on British Indian policy during this period may have looked like.

This chapter also illuminates the Creek perspective, exploring how and why certain Creek leaders might have at times encouraged the British to withhold gunpowder and ammunition from their young men. In pressuring the British to restrict Creek access to these goods, this chapter posits that headmen, particularly from the Upper towns, hoped to monitor and potentially influence the behavior of the Lower Creeks, whose violent behavior and differing views on land cessions began to deepen tensions within the Confederacy by the early 1770s. Consequently, Upper Creek micos were able to bolster their individual power and authority, as well as the influence of their towns and communities, by shaping British Indian policy in their favor. The rise of the Upper Creek in the years before the American Revolution marks a significant shift away from decades

¹⁶ This research recognizes that there is an important difference between gunpowder and ammunition, and that the two are not synonymous. As gunpowder refers to the explosive powder itself, ammunition refers to the object fired from a weapon, more specifically the balls or shot described in many documents of this period. Native and colonial leaders, however, often used the two interchangeably when talking about supplies.

of dominant Lower Creek leadership based in Coweta, as the connections forged between Upper Creek Micos and British officials during this period reshaped the course of Creek involvement in the impending struggle.

British apprehensions of a Creek war were not unique to the post-Seven Years' War era. Throughout the eighteenth century, particularly during periods of heightened Anglo-indigenous tension, colonials feared the Creeks might organize a large-scale attack against the British colonies.¹⁷ These anxieties resurfaced in new ways after 1763, due in large part to the outbreak of Pontiac's War. This uprising began in May 1763 when native warriors from the Great Lakes, Ohio Valley, and Illinois regions joined together in a loose confederation, headed by the Ottawa leader Pontiac, to push back against British expansion and the implementation of more restrictive Indian policies. In 1761, General Jeffrey Amherst, Commander of the British forces in North America, set forth "Amherst's Decree," a plan to limit Indian agents' use of large quantities of presents to maximize their influence among native groups. It specifically sought to terminate the longstanding tradition of giving Indians presents at diplomatic meetings. Amherst asserted that this practice reflected "excessive coddling" on the part of the British. "I Cannot See any Reason for Supplying the Indians with Provisions," wrote Amherst, "for I am Convinced that they will never think of providing for their Families by Hunting, if they can Support them by Begging Provisions from Us."¹⁸ Amherst's Decree aimed to stop supplies of gunpowder and ammunition to Indian nations, declaring both the dangers

¹⁷ The British considered the Creek Indians to be the most forbidding and well-armed Southeastern native group. This is explored in chapter 1.

¹⁸ Colin Calloway, *Pen, Ink, and Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American Indian History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22. Calloway cites the Papers of Sir William Johnson.

of this practice and the high financial cost to the British government. But it also represented an effort on the part of colonial leaders to pressure native men to comply with European gender expectations. These policies ushered in a period of increasing Native American distrust towards the British, visible in Pontiac's War and beyond. In the years that followed, Indian agents and colonial officials in the Southeast became deeply concerned that the revolt could possibly spread to include the Creeks and their neighbors. They also feared that these societies might band together to create a Southeastern pan-Indian Confederacy that would emulate the violence of Pontiac and his warriors. Thus, following Stuart's appointment to the office of Superintendent in 1761, he largely refused to enforce Amherst's policies. As Stuart had close familial ties to the Cherokee, he was acutely conscious of the importance of gift giving to native diplomacy, and he continued to support the use of presents to facilitate relations with the Southeastern Indians during his years as Superintendent.

Mounting Creek violence after 1763 also reflected changing relationships between native peoples and British settlers. In 1766, Governor Johnstone remarked the Creeks had killed one hundred and thirty backcountry people since 1731, nineteen in the past two years alone. While Johnstone blamed this behavior on the Creeks' "Contempt for the English Nation," heightened indigenous aggression following the Seven Years' War was likely due to the fact that colonials were acting more belligerently toward them.¹⁹ Desire for Creek lands caused settlers to blatantly disregard the Indian Boundary Line after 1763. This, paired with the opening of the Indian trade in 1764, caused a spike

¹⁹ George Johnstone, "Creek Contempt for the English Nation," June 23, 1766, R4; V583; No.108, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

in colonial-instigated violence. While the Southern governors recognized that settler aggression had intensified in recent years, they could do little to enforce proper behavior in the backcountry. In September 1765, General Gage remarked to Stuart, "The dissolute behavior of the traders and the encroachments of the people on the frontier create endless disputes, and I don't find that the efforts of the governors to restrain them has any great effect. They are a lawless set of ruffians with little regard to government."²⁰

The removal of the French and Spanish from the Southeast following the Seven Years' War led to a large-scale reorganization of how Georgia and Britain's new colonies of East Florida, and West Florida interacted and traded with the region's native peoples. Each colony previously held responsibility for managing its own Indian trade policies, resulting in a competition with one another and with French traders entering native communities from the west for profits. Because they were based in different colonies, these traders acted according to different laws and guidelines that could not be enforced beyond the limits of the colony that established them and did not affect individuals trading from any of the other three provinces. Consequently, a trader from one of the Southern colonies "did not consider himself subject to the regulations made in any of the other three, and was responsible for his actions to that government only from which he had received his license or from which he traded." These policies benefitted the individual colonies, as they gave greater influence to individual governors. A lack of unified directives, however, limited the authority of the empire, a major concern after 1763 as the Crown increasingly sought to control the actions of their colonial populations. Thus, Britain's "Plan of 1764" imposed new trade regulations aimed at

²⁰ Thomas Gage, "Letter from Gage to Stuart," September 14, 1765, Document 51, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

demonstrating the empire's socio-economic and political dominance over all of the region's peoples, not just the Indians. New policies provided the British Board of Trade executive authority to establish universal protocols for commerce with the Indians, giving the superintendents nearly total control over indigenous trade and diplomacy. As a result, colonial governors, who for decades had determined policies between their colonies and nearby native peoples, were now expected to follow the instructions of their regional superintendents. These changes resulted in frequent clashes among British officials, as seen in the conflicts between Johnstone and Stuart that occurred during the mid-1760s.²¹

The "Plan of 1764" also created a space for large numbers of corrupt, illegal traders to cross into Indian territory to conduct unauthorized trade. Lack of oversight from the individual colonies freed traders from adhering to the fixed prices for goods set by the British Board of Trade, leading them to sell commodities at lower prices than their competitors. In February 1768, Indian Commissary Roderick McIntosh wrote to Superintendent Stuart complaining that the Upper Creek towns swarmed with traders, many of whom "are notorious villains, and give me much more trouble that I could expect." McIntosh had agreed to let the traders "take their debts in raw skins, but they have so abused this indulgence, I have already [drove] some of them from the nation and I believe shall soon be obliged to drive others." "I am determined," he concluded, "never to grant them any favor for the future."²² In 1771, Peter Chester, the third governor of West Florida, blamed native discontent on "the too general and unrestricted freedom of trade that has been allowed to be carried on among them from the different colonies

²¹ Clarence E. Carter, "British Policy Toward American Indians in the South," *The English Historical Review* 33, no. 12 (January 1918): 40-41.

²² Roderick McIntosh, "McIntosh to Stuart," February 8, 1768, Document 104, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

which has occasioned great abuses and impositions to be practiced upon the savages by the traders, who are generally of the lowest class of people and are very licentious.”²³

Thus, despite Britain’s efforts to improve relations with the Indians and standardize the existing trade, the activities of unscrupulous traders often resulted in further damage to Creek-Anglo relationships and occasioned increased violence from both sides. This aggression fueled British fears of a formal conflict through the 1760s and 1770s, though many colonial governors, perhaps to distract from their own weaknesses, continually placed blame on the Creeks. As early as January 1764, Governor Thomas Boone of South Carolina declared “the incursions of the Creek Indians [are giving us] room to expect a war with them.”²⁴ In October of that same year, Johnstone remarked:

The Indians are a very watchfull people, sensible of our situation are one moment demanding presents and next moment sending insolent messages and this they know we must bear. I do not mean to say that if we had force sufficient we ought to march against them on every insult; very far from it. I only mean to suggest that if we had force they would not behave in that manner, as our influence would be greater to divide them amongst themselves which seems to me the truest policy in case they should march against us we should probably repel them whereas at present that would be impossible.²⁵

Johnstone frequently complained that West Florida’s strains with the Upper Creek were due to the “unhinged state of all government in this Province.” He also placed blame on “the debilitated state of our troops, [which] have induced the surrounding Creek Indians to commit numerous depredations of late on our infant settlers . . .” Throughout his short tenure as West Florida’s governor, Johnstone became persistent in his effort to secure a

²³ Peter Chester, "Chester on Indian Affairs and Sentiments on the Indian Trade," March 9, 1771, R2; V578; No. 121, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

²⁴ Thomas Boone, "Boone to Gage," January 10, 1764, Document 1, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

²⁵ George Johnstone, "Johnstone Sentiments on Spanish and Indian Trade," October 31, 1764, R1; V574; No. 30, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and History Center, Pensacola, FL.

larger military presence in the colony in preparation for a Creek War. In October 1764, he wrote, "It appears to me that the only circumstances wanting to complete the prosperity of the colony are first a sufficient force to command respect from the Indians . . ." ²⁶ In June 1766, he voiced apprehension that the Creeks and Choctaws might soon come to a resolution and join together to assault West Florida. He blamed the colonies' "timid management" on this impending attack, informing Stuart "It will be absolutely necessary to support us with more troops, and that the different provinces should be brought to Act in Conjunction, otherwise we shall be defeated in detail." ²⁷ In October of that same year, he wrote to Secretary of Trade John Pownall to inform him that a party of Upper Creeks had recently murdered two traders from Pensacola. Johnstone remarked that this incident was one of many, though it was "the very nature of savages" to plunder, rob and murder inhabitants, "none knows where this may stop." West Florida, he concluded, was in need "of some speedy relief hither." ²⁸ Officials in Mobile and Pensacola had long pressured the Board of Trade to send larger quantities of gunpowder to West Florida for the protection of the colony and its inhabitants, particularly as Creek visits in search of their own gunpowder and ammunition increased in frequency. In June 1766 Johnstone vented, "the Indians come here every day for rum, provisions, and powder and ball and presents as they do, the Creeks have had more things from Pensacola

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ George Johnstone, "Johnstone to Stuart," June 3, 1766, Document 62, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

²⁸ George Johnstone, "The Unhinged State of All Government and the Depredations of the Creeks," October 22, 1766, R1; V575; No. 228, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

then they ever had from all the other places and yet nothing will satisfy them . . .”²⁹ Both civil and military officials regularly complained that the French had “spoiled” the region’s Indians by giving them too many gifts in the past. Johnstone was particularly vocal in his criticism, acknowledging that the parties of Upper Creeks who frequently traveled to Pensacola for goods consistently left disconcerted and unsatisfied. He feared that because of this, “it will be difficult to convince them of our superiority and their dependence.”³⁰

Despite Britain’s unstable military and economic position in the Gulf South, Johnstone “sought to persuade the ministry [of Indian Affairs] that it would be necessary to reduce the savages by force,” to weaken the powerful Creeks and illuminate their dependence on the British.³¹ He believed the only way to prevent an Indian war was to cut off Creek access to valuable European goods, such as gunpowder, and encourage hostilities among the indigenous nations. Creek men must be “chastised,” he argued, if the British expected their new territory to grow and prosper; furthermore, if the British hoped “to keep any future consequence with the other Indian nations,” military force was necessary. Thus, he devised a plan that took advantage of the current war between the Creeks and their longstanding enemies, the Choctaws.³² “There never was a time better adapted than the present,” he argued, “when a war is breaking forth between the

²⁹ George Johnstone, “Creeks Extorting Goods from Pensacola,” June 9, 1766, R4; V583; No. 114, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

³⁰ George Johnstone, “Johnstone Stuart Indian Relations in West Florida,” June 12, 1765, R3; V582; No. 175, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

³¹ It is important to recognize that while the colony of Georgia was still sparsely populated compared to Britain’s other North American colonies, the decade of the 1760s was the first in which the population of Georgia surpassed that of neighboring Indian populations. Therefore, Georgia, while still militarily weak, was not as vulnerable to a large-scale Creek conflict as the nascent colonies of East Florida and West Florida were.

³² “Upper Creek Reply,” in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 283; Schmidt, *Native Americans in the American Revolution*, 40.

Choctaws and them. If this breach could be fomented, and the Chicasaws, our ancient friends, [could be] induced to join the Chactaws, and the Cherokees brought likewise to act against the Creeks, while our whole force in these parts should openly and boldly march into their country, I think the Creeks would easily be subdued."³³ Johnstone proposed "the Chactaws, Chicasaws, and Cherokees, should be induced, by large Presents, to act against the Creeks, under the certain Assurance of our assistance." British traders "should be withdrawn, and effectual means used to prevent Supplies thro' third Hands." This would allow "five hundred regulars, and one hundred Chactaws, and two hundred Marines, and fifty Rangers," to attack the Lower Creek settlements, while a similar force assaulted the Upper Creek. "The Chactaw and Chicasaw Nations," he concluded, "should [then] march off their whole force from Tombeckby against the Creeks . . . destroying Men, Women, and Children."³⁴

In his effort to justify a war with the Confederacy, Johnstone and others often illuminated, and exacerbated, negative perceptions of indigenous masculinity. Descriptions of Creek men from the 1760s regularly portrayed Creeks as wild, belligerent, and uncontrollable. These images differed from those made by traders and colonial officials earlier in the century. Recounting a 1747 experience among the Creek, the Indian Trader James Adair observed how the Creeks, like other Southeastern Indians, would "conceal their enmity be it ever so violent, and will converse with smooth kind language, and an obliging easy behavior, while envy is preying on their heart."³⁵

Governor Johnstone, in contrast, wrote in May 1765, "Indians must have a war

³³ George Johnstone, "Creek Contempt for the English Nation," June 23, 1766, R4; V583; No. 108. British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 429.

somewhere, as men cannot dream away time in their hearts.”³⁶ It was “the very nature of savages,” he continued, “[to] lead from one excess to another, if not checked in the beginning.”³⁷ Conflict, he argued, drove male Creeks’ personal and political ambitions and was fundamental to their identity.³⁸ Others echoed these sentiments, often emphasizing what they perceived to be the crude, unrestrained behavior of Creek men. In 1767 Roderick McIntosh, Commissary to the Upper Creeks, complained, “There are some old men among them that would willingly support our Interest if they had it in their power, but their Young men are become so Boisterous and Wanton that without a hearty drubbing such as the Cherokees had, they will never be a Tractable people.”³⁹ A few years later, during a lull in the Creek-Choctaw conflict, West Florida’s Lt. Governor Elias Durnford remarked that recent Creek visits to Pensacola for gunpowder, gunflints, and gun repairs suggested many were looking to “rekindle the flame.” Durnford welcomed hostilities between the Indians, as he was “firmly of Opinion, that if they are not at Variance amongst themselves, we shall not only find them troublesome, but also mischievous.”⁴⁰ In March of 1765, Governor James Wright of Georgia declared the Creek warriors “were so mired in barbarous bad habits that it would take at least a century before they could be dealt with as civilized folk.”⁴¹ Almost ten years later, he

³⁶ George Johnstone, "Johnstone's Transactions with the Indians," May 4, 1765, R1; V574; No, 76, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

³⁷ Johnstone, "The Unhinged State of All Government and the Depredations of the Creeks," October 22, 1766.

³⁸ Johnstone, "Johnstone's Transactions with the Indians," May 4, 1765.

³⁹ McIntosh is referring to the Anglo-Cherokee War of 1760-1761. Roderick McIntosh, "Commissary Roderick McIntosh to Superintendent Stuart, Reporting Upper Creek Victory and Recent Talks," 1767, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 341.

⁴⁰ "Lieutenant Governor Durnford to Hillsborough, Reporting Lower Creek Rejection of Peace with Choctaws Negotiated by Upper Creeks," 1770, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 360.

⁴¹ Juricek, *Endgame*, 94.

reminded Creek men of their dependence, pointing out their inability to provide for their families without British assistance:

Can you make guns, gunpowder, bullets, glasses, paint and clothing etc.? You know you cannot make these things, and where can you get them if you quarrel with the white people and how will your women and children get supplied with clothes, beads, glasses, scissors and all other things they now use and cannot do without?⁴²

Connections between gunpowder, ammunition, and indigenous manhood, like those seen here, became commonplace during the 1760s. British Lieutenant Thomas Campbell described Creek men in a similar manner as he recounted his 1764 journey through the Upper and Lower Creek towns. Campbell described presumptuous, arrogant, and insolent young men, who were “jealous of our growing power from the quick increase of inhabitants on our settlement, and cultivation of their neighbouring lands.” He detailed that the Creeks “have been for several years past laying up stores of powder, Balls and other necessaries, knowing it is impossible they can continue long in peace, for no Indian is looked on as a man ‘til he has killed and scalped.”⁴³ But talks such as Governor Wright’s, which used gunpowder to undermine indigenous manhood and illuminate Creek dependence, also served as opportunities for British officials to portray themselves as “real men” in a European sense; fathers who could provide for their “red children.” Stuart drew upon these themes in an October 1771 talk to Escotchaby, Sempoyaffee, and three other prominent Lower Creek chiefs. He had recently encountered a party of Indians who had “lost their Cloaths, and Came to me very Poor and in want of every thing. I relieved them in their Distress,” he told the headmen, “and

⁴² James Wright to Creek Indians, April 14, 1774 K.G. Davies, ed., *Transcripts 1774*, vol. 8, *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783* (Dublin, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1975), 8; See also Gally, "Alternate Source of Trade," 222.

⁴³ Thomas Campbell, "An Account of the Creek Indian Nation, 1764." Republished in *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (January 1930): 161.

gave them Cloaths and presents like a father because they had behaved well and had not Robbed the inhabitants.”⁴⁴

As the 1760s progressed, a number of civil and military officials, largely from West Florida, began pressuring their superiors to cut off Creek access to gunpowder. In one example, James Germany, a well-respected trader among the Upper Creek, communicated that The Mortar had just told his young warriors “to be very careful of their ammunition and not to spend more than was absolutely necessary for that they would soon have occasion for it.” The Mortar planned to lead a party of Creeks northward to “kill white people” to avenge the loss of three family members during the 1760 Cherokee War, pledging to “bring yellow hair into the nation.” But Germany’s concern escalated upon receiving word that a large Upper Creek party was on its way to Pensacola for gunpowder and ammunition; he promptly sent word to the other traders to ensure “that they may not be supplied with it.”⁴⁵ William Tayler, the military commander at Pensacola, supported this plan, maintaining it was the only way to ensure Creek dependence. In a June 1766 letter to General Gage, Tayler argued:

It would be of the utmost importance to prevent the traders from supplying the Indians with gunpowder . . . After that . . . the Indians must change their methods of war to bows and arrows, or depend entirely upon us for the means of subsisting . . . I venture this crude reflection on the subject, as I know nothing more material, than proper attention to it, and I am convinced that if no interest or

⁴⁴ John Stuart, "Superintendent Stuart to Leading Lower Creek Chiefs," 1771, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763- 1776*, V12: 386; This was in contrast to another group of Lower Creek, which around the same time had arrived in Pensacola looking for “Ammunition Flints and Provisions” to use against the Choctaw. Stuart gave them these goods, however, instead of going to war “they went to the islands of Mobile Bay and killed fourteen Head of Cattle and a number of Sheep and Hoggs . . . They destroyed all the Corn and potatoes which the poor People had to live upon.” Stuart concluded his talk by pressuring the chiefs to “put a stop to such disorders, as you are the Governors of the Lower Creek Nation.”

⁴⁵ James Germany, "Traders Recount Disturbance at Creek Village," R6; V588; No. 24, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

favor should be allowed to interfere, that it is the effectual, and only means, of fixing the dependency of the Indian upon us.⁴⁶

Gage reminded Tayler that similar strategies had not worked in the past. The British had tried to restrict Creek access to gunpowder and ammunition during the Seven Years' War, but "they contrived to get it either from the French or from Indian tribes in alliance, or the rascality of our own traders who will risk anything for profit." The Georgia Council had struck down a similar request from South Carolina's Governor Boone in April 1764. On Christmas Eve 1763, a party of Creek Indians attacked the Long Canes settlement in South Carolina, killing fourteen colonists including women and children. This assault occurred nearly four years after a group of Cherokee murdered twenty-three backcountry settlers at the same location. Deeply concerned by these incidents, and fearing that Long Canes may be attacked a third time, Boone approached the Georgia Council with a proposal to put an emergency stop to the Creek trade. "The measures proposed by Governor Boone of immediately stopping the trade will be highly improper," the Council determined, "as the present defenseless state of this province considered, it will be equally imprudent to take such a stop the Consequences of which may be a War with these Indians . . ."⁴⁷

Gage believed Britain's best option was to "support and cherish the quarrel between [the Creeks and Choctaws], but also spirit up the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Catawbas against them . . . which I Conceive a few Presents will Effect." Gage was not, however, suggesting that the British encourage an Indian war, as that would "infallibly

⁴⁶ William Tayler, "Letter From William Tayler to General Gage," June 1, 1766, Document 58, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁴⁷ John Stuart, "Stuart to Wright on Complaints About the Indian Trade," March 31, 1765, R2; V649; Doc 47, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, Georgia Records, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

destroy this infant colony and be an enormous expense to the government."⁴⁸ Rather, Gage hoped to make it difficult for Creek warriors to get gunpowder from other sources, like the French traders who remained in the area. The goal, Gage stated, was to ensure that "the Creeks must depend on us for supplies . . . and procure their ammunition from us."⁴⁹ Superintendent Stuart supported this position. In 1764, just two years after assuming his post, Stuart wrote that arousing suspicion and distrust between native nations would help avoid the formation of indigenous alliances and benefit the Crown's expansionist goals in the Southeast. He sought to distance the Creeks and the colonists from one another to ensure safety for both sides, while also separating the Creeks from their native neighbors. Stuart hoped these attempts would force the Creeks into closer contact with British officials, slowly influencing them to act like British subjects. To jump-start this plan, Stuart declared:

I shall use every means in my Power to foment the jealousy subsisting between [the Choctaws] and Creeks. I have sent talks to such Cherokee Warriors as I can most confide in wherein I complain of their receiving messengers so frequently from the disaffected Creeks and put them in mind of the insolent and treacherous usage they have so often received from that Nation and that I may the more effectually succeed in frustrating any attempt of the Creeks to seduce them and prevent any growing friendship, or intercourse between them.⁵⁰

Stuart was much more aware of gunpowder's centrality to native life than Johnstone. "Much cherished by the Cherokee," Stuart had been a prominent figure among them since he was sent to build Fort Loudon during the French and Indian War.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Thomas Gage, "Johnstone Entering Into an Indian War," June 29, 1767, R5; V584; No. 202, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

⁴⁹ Thomas Gage, "Letter From Gage to Tayler," August 14, 1766, Document 66, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁵⁰ John Stuart, "Letter from Stuart to Gage," April 11, 1764, Document 14, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁵¹ John R. Alden, *The South in the Revolution, 1763-1789: A History of the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana

Stuart married a Cherokee woman and had children with her, cementing his personal ties. Upon assuming the office of Superintendent, Stuart's kin connections with the Cherokee complicated his relationship with their enemies, the Creeks. Stuart's talks with the Cherokee often included familial rhetoric, emphasizing unity, peace, and friendship. While Stuart's correspondence with the Creek usually included similar expressions of friendship, congresses and meetings were often conducted on far more punitive terms. Likely understanding the dynamics of the region's indigenous groups better than all other colonial leaders, Stuart knew that "an immediate stoppage of the trade might be construed by the Indians as a Declaration of War, and might bring on what is evidently in the Interest of the Southern Provinces to avoid."⁵² Such a plan, he warned, "has a better appearance on paper that it would in execution."⁵³

As the Creek-Choctaw conflict progressed, Stuart found himself balancing British appeals to impede Creek access to gunpowder with similar requests from colonists on the frontier. Many did not agree with what they perceived to be Stuart's lax Indian policies, citing ongoing Creek aggression and violence. In 1768, a backcountry settler named Jacob Somerhall wrote a letter to Stuart, voicing a number of complaints made by his neighbors. The list of grievances included those of a Lawrence Rambo who said Stuart was "Nothing but an old Cherokee Agent, and indeed thinks your Honor ought to be taken and whipped and your goods taken from you, as you are a giving to the damn'd Indians to kill the Back Woods people."⁵⁴ Stuart received similar requests from the

State University Press, 1957).

⁵² John Stuart, "Letter from Stuart to Gage," April 11, 1764, Document 14, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁵³ Thomas Gage, "Letter from Gage to Stuart," August 30, 1766, Document 67, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁵⁴ Jacob Somerhall, "Somerhall Letters on Indians and Settlers," 1768, R5; V70; No 0161, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

Creeks' native enemies. In November 1768, he informed Emistisiguo and The Mortar that the Choctaw chiefs:

. . . applied to me to stop your Supplies of Ammunition which I refused to comply with. I told them that the great King was the great father of all the Red Nations that he was sorry when they quarreled that when they should desire it he had ordered me to use my influence to reconcile them but that he would not tye the hands of one Child that his Brother might beat him. The Chactaws were sensible that what I said was just but desired they might be treated like Children although younger Brother[s] and hoped they might have supplies as well as the Creeks . . . I cannot with any Justice propose to the Governors stopping a Supply of Ammunition to either Nation.⁵⁵

Those in favor of more moderate Indian policies agreed with Stuart. In an August 1766 letter to Governor James Grant of East Florida, Secretary of State Henry Conway criticized Johnstone for being "of opinion that a Creek war is unavoidable, which would hurt the southern provinces of America in general, would ruin Georgia, and put a total stop to the settlement of the infant colonys . . . In short, every plan which I have formed for two years past for the Settlement of this country is at an end if this war takes place."⁵⁶ In a 1773 report, David Taitt, Stuart's Deputy Superintendent, claimed that a lack of gunpowder was a main cause of surging Creek violence. "If once they have received the Ammunition allowed for them," Taitt asserted, "I believe that they will be very quiet."⁵⁷

Johnstone's determination to wage an attack on the Creek Confederacy lead to numerous clashes with his superiors, resulting in his removal from office in 1767. Other changes, particularly the Board of Trade's 1768 decision to return the management of the

⁵⁵ John Stuart, "Superintendent Stuart to the Upper Creeks Defending His Refusal to Cut off Trade with the Choctaws," 1768, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 344-345.

⁵⁶ Henry Conway, "Conway to Grant," August 21, 1766, R1; F299-300, The James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

⁵⁷ "Reports from Commissary Taitt to Superintendent Stuart," 1773, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763 - 1776*, V12; 438.

Indian trade to the colonial governments, marked a shift toward Indian policies that embraced French diplomatic practices in an effort to better control native peoples. “Unwilling to meet the price of annual presents, unable to govern their own traders, faced with dangerous discontent among the Choctaws and even more serious discontent among their neighbors, the Creeks,” the British adopted the French medal chief strategy. By singling out certain headmen, and denoting their influence and power with medals, Stuart “intended to create a set of pliable leaders” who would aid him in diplomatic negotiations and in regulating the trade.⁵⁸

The French and Spanish had used this approach throughout the eighteenth century to try to interfere in indigenous politics. There were typically “three levels of leaders – great medal chiefs, small medal chiefs, and chiefs,” who acted as war leaders. A formal meeting, followed by a ceremonial presentation of the medals, “signified allegiance to the nation presenting them and conveyed status on the recipient.”⁵⁹ For Creek men, medals also connoted access to European sources of power, such as guns, gunpowder, and ammunition. Following the evacuation of the French from the Southeast in 1763, “many Choctaw chiefs turned in their French medals and requested replacements, so that colonial recognition of their leadership might continue unbroken.”⁶⁰ Recognizing the benefits medal chiefs could provide given the precarious state of their new Southeastern colonies, British officials began to employ this strategy among the Choctaws and the Upper Creeks.⁶¹

⁵⁸ White, *Roots of Dependency*, 72.

⁵⁹ Historian Colin Calloway describes these medals as “gorgets,” or small, crescent-shaped pieces of armor designed both as ceremonial wear and to protect a warrior’s throat in battle. See Calloway, *Pen, Ink, and Witchcraft*, 22.

⁶⁰ Calloway, *Pen, Ink, and Witchcraft*, 21.

⁶¹ John T. Juricek asserts that Lower Creeks were not awarded medals.

On the surface, Britain's adoption of the medal chief policy appeared to reflect the empire's growing respect for indigenous leadership. In reality, however, colonial officials hoped these designated headmen would act as conduits through which the empire could assert more direct and effective control over Southeastern native peoples. While many chiefs enjoyed the recognizable prestige their medals signified, they quickly realized Britain's version of the system did little to protect native reciprocity. "When I was at Pensacola," said The Mortar in 1770, "the King conferred a Mark of Distinction on me, I thought it then it would turn out not to my Advantage & I find it so now."⁶² Older chiefs hoped these new approaches would do more to make up for one of the Plan of 1764's major disadvantages, which eliminated the practice of providing an annual allotment of gifts to local headmen. The micos deeply resented this change in policy as it negatively impacted redistribution and reciprocity. In Southeastern native societies, the exchange of presents reflected kinship, and signified relationships of support and protection between fathers, sons, uncles, nephews, and brothers. The micos in particular depended on these mutually dependent relationships, as they allowed native leaders to gain recognizable legitimacy and authority through the traditional process of redistribution.⁶³ Consequently, Creek and Choctaw leaders spent much time and energy after 1764 pressuring British officials to restore the practice of giving native peoples annual presents. They often informed Stuart that without these goods, they could not control the actions of their young people. Shortly following the evacuation of the French from the region, the Choctaw Chief Nassuba Mingo told Stuart, "I expect my people will receive presents in greater abundance than from the French, and if we do not it must

⁶² "British Disarray and the Creek-Choctaw War," in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 326.

⁶³ This is explored in detail in chapters 1 and 2.

proceed from want of ability, I do not Speak for myself but for my Warriours, their Wives, and their Children, whom I cannot Cloathe or keep in order without presents.”⁶⁴

Native discontent stemming from Britain’s decision to end the distribution of gifts persisted well into the 1770s. By this time, Britain’s imperial effort to regulate the Indian trade had collapsed, and the already strained relations between frontier people and Indians continued to worsen.⁶⁵ In 1771 Governor Chester asserted that recent Creek agitation with the government of West Florida grew largely from Britain’s failure to fulfill “the great promises and assurances which were made to the Indians soon after we took possession of this country, of meeting them and their chiefs frequently at publick congresses and distributing presents among them.” While Creek frustration undoubtedly resulted from these policy changes, their alienation also stemmed from a distrust of British officials that had developed over the course of the 1760s. “Though your talks and mouths may now be good towards us,” stated one headman, “yet as you are men they may alter, and intend that as we had not fulfilled our promises in one we might not in another . . .” Chester was not surprised that the chief felt it “prudent that [his people] should take care of themselves . . . they are afraid that without forming some strong confederacy . . . they shall hereafter fall a sacrifice to the English.”⁶⁶

Though Chester does not identify the frustrated mico who is quoted in this account, his views reflect those of other headmen throughout the Confederacy. By the mid-1760s, many Creek leaders feared their young men had become too reliant on British goods. Dwindling deer populations and the Creeks’ prolonged war with the Choctaws impacted hunting practices, reducing annual yields and forcing many young people to

⁶⁴ Quoted in Calloway, *Pen, Ink, and Witchcraft*, 21.

⁶⁵ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 137-138.

⁶⁶ Chester, “Indian Affairs and Sentiments on the Indian Trade,” 1771.

apply for gunpowder, ammunition, rum, and other European commodities on credit. Creek men accumulated high trade debts, cementing the micos' fears of dependence and contributing to the growing epidemic of robbing and raiding frontier settlers. As it became clear that Creek hunters would be unable to pay their outstanding debts with skins, traders demanded land cessions as restitution. This "land-for-debt" idea grew in popularity among both colonial officials and Lower Creek hunters moving in to the 1770s. It did not, however, sit well with certain Creek headmen, particularly from the Upper towns, who felt these practices emasculated their men and made the Confederacy appear weak and ineffectual. As a result, some Creek leaders saw the practical and ideological benefits of sustaining the Creek-Choctaw War. In 1772, for example, Emistisiguo "[said] he was for war, that they were men and must show themselves [if] the white people wanted to take away their lands for the Augusta traders . . ." He blamed the traders and merchants "for trusting their young men with such quantities of goods and taking their lands from them in payment."⁶⁷

Understanding his responsibility as the Upper Creeks' official diplomatic connection to the British, Emistisiguo skillfully drew from shared indigenous and European notions of masculinity connecting warfare to manhood. His comment appears to encourage the hostile actions of young Creeks, which had deeply strained relations with the British over the previous decade. But Emistisiguo, like Stuart, possibly believed that a protracted war with the Choctaws would distract their young men from acting aggressively toward white settlers, reducing the pressure placed on micos to control their young people. Emistisiguo's remark that the traders should not have trusted his young

⁶⁷ Joseph Dawes, "A Hireling of William Gregory Indian Trader in the Creek Nation," August 4, 1772, R2; V579; No. 224, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

warriors and hunters with such large amounts of goods reinforces the importance of traditional notions of Creek power and authority, suggesting a return to consensus-based practices of redistribution. Prolonging the Creek-Choctaw war might provide Emistisiguo and other Creek micos with opportunities to re-gain control over the goods entering their communities, allowing them to bolster their power and authority through more traditional means. But not all Upper Creek chiefs agreed with Emistisiguo. The Second Man of Little Tallassee, who had a notably strong relationship with Stuart, believed “it would not do for them to go to war except they could make guns, ammunition, and if they could not make these things it was now too late, that had their forefathers done it when the white people first came among them from over the great water in the big canoes it might have done, but it was now too late.”⁶⁸

Emistisiguo’s statements illuminate his views and ideas about mature manhood in Creek society. His criticism of the land-for-debt concept implies a belief that the younger generations were not mature enough to provide for their families without accumulating huge debts, resulting in negative consequences for the Confederacy as a whole. It is important to recognize that the idea of ceding native lands to remove outstanding debts originated largely among the Cherokees and the Lower Creeks. The Anglo-Cherokee War of the early 1760s proved devastating to many Cherokee communities, reducing them to “nakedness and extreme poverty.”⁶⁹ This conflict, along with the dwindling deer population and the changes to the hunt that resulted, forced British traders to provide the Cherokees with guns and ammunition on credit. The Cherokees, like the Creeks, also

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Southern Indian Traders (Collective), "Memorial of Traders to Stuart," 1772, in *British Public Record Office, Class 5 Files, Reel 6 volume 73*, ed. Randolph Boehm (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1983).

accumulated substantial debts to the British, which they eventually paid in land cessions.⁷⁰

Conflicting views on land fueled discord among Creek leaders. “There is a coolness between the upper and lower Creeks,” observed Stuart in 1768, “the latter having remained inactive Spectators of the War between the former and the Chactaws.” The Lower Creeks “also refused to let the Upper Creeks have any Vote in the Cession of Lands behind Georgia and East Florida,” at the recent British congress in Pensacola, resulting in “Upper Creek sensitivity” on the subject.⁷¹ “This has excited great Jealousy,” Stuart concluded, “which I am not very solicitous at present to remove.”⁷² Tensions between the Upper and Lower towns had existed throughout the eighteenth century, serving to balance the fundamental order of everyday life. After the Seven Years’ War, however, these natural pressures became increasingly strained as Upper and Lower Creeks found different ways to adapt to the geopolitical shifts of the 1760s. The growing violence of young Creek men, particularly from the Lower towns, paired with divergent views on land and debt, intensified these contrasts. In 1766, The Wolf King, an Upper Creek headman, sent a talk to Governor Wright and Superintendent Stuart in response to their complaint over the recent Payne-Hogg murders.⁷³ Stuart and Wright had requested satisfaction from the Confederacy, or eye-for-eye retributive justice, for the Lower Creek attack. The Wolf King reminded Stuart and Wright that the “Nation is all in tribes . . . we few head Men cannot withstand those Rebels, or attempt to take satisfaction by force.” He did, however, offer a different solution:

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ John Stuart, "Superintendent Stuart to Hillsborough, Reporting Upper Creek Isolation," 1768, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12: 347.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Please see chapter 2.

I have considered what means for curbing and humbling the rebellious set in our nation and find it is to be effected in no other Way than putting a stop to the trade for two years. In that time they will be so humble, that you may have any satisfaction you choose to require . . . Such a step will be a considerable check upon them in the future. They do not get the arms which they use to kill the English with from the French or Spaniards, but from the English themselves.⁷⁴

The Wolf King's suggestion undoubtedly reflects his desire to shirk responsibility for the violent actions of young Creek men; Micos commonly employed this type of response when trying to deflect British requests for control in the post-Seven Years' War era. He did not, however, intend for the British to cut off trade to the entire Confederacy. Instead, he hoped the traders would stop bringing gunpowder and guns into the Lower towns, describing their inhabitants as duplicitous and untrustworthy. His contempt was likely motivated by Lower Creek actions at a recent British congress, where the "Head Men of the Upper Towns were not allowed to speak one Word, and that what was agreed upon was by the Head Men of the Lower Towns . . ." Because the Lower Creeks proved the instigators in the Payne-Hogg attack, "it was of them the satisfaction should be required."⁷⁵

From 1768 on, Upper Creek complaints and demands at British meetings differed greatly from those of the Lower Creek. Emistisiguo, The Mortar, and others repeatedly blamed these natives for the "mischief" taking place among the backcountry settlements. In denouncing the actions of the Lower Creeks and distancing themselves from the offenders, Upper Creek micos could both pressure the British to cut off supplies to the Lower Towns and use their own good behavior to sway British trade and diplomatic policies in their favor. "When you see us I hope you will take us for Friends,' The Oakchoy King told Stuart in 1766, "and as we are in want of Powder Ball and Flints we

⁷⁴ "The Wolf King's Reply to Wright-Stuart Protest," 1766, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, V12: 20.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

hope you will send us twelve Kegs Powder Ball Flints, etc.”⁷⁶ When young men from the Upper Creek towns acted out, which happened frequently but not quite as often as their Lower Creek counterparts, their micos assured Stuart that gunpowder and ammunition would swiftly return them to order; in this same exchange from 1766, the Oakchoy King requested “Plenty of Ammunition . . . to prevent any Jealousys in our young People by the want of it . . .”⁷⁷ Three years later, Emistisiguo informed Stuart “It is the desire of the [Upper Creek] Headmen to acquaint you that they know their Young People are very mad and cross, and Run about a great deal, and that they desire to call them all together to bring them to Better order. But there must be a good many Keggs of Rum sent to each town for that purpose likewise Three Keggs of Powder and Bullets in proportion, and knives. Or let a Big Canoe be sent up the Cousa River with Three great Keggs which will be enough.”⁷⁸

The issue of land, however, continued to divide Upper and Lower Creek leadership in the years preceding the outbreak of the American Revolution. At the Augusta Congress in November 1768, The Mortar and Emistisiguo expressed outrage at Stuart’s removal of the Upper Creek commissary, Roderick McIntosh, complaining that their towns now teemed with insolent traders, described as “Lawless Vagabonds.” The Mortar and Emistisiguo pressured Stuart for more effective trade laws, particularly as the Crown worked to move away from the regulations imposed by the Plan of 1764. The micos strongly objected to trading outside of the towns, especially the exchange of

⁷⁶ Indian Chiefs (Collective), "Answer to His Excellency Governor George Johnstone his Talk to the Creek Nation delivered to the following Head Warriors and Kings This Day at Oakchoy Town Upper Creeks," 1766, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History*, ed. Dunbar Rowland (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), V1: 527 <https://archive.org/details/mississippipro00offigoog/page/n527>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Emistisiguo to Superintendent Stuart Postponing Marking the Boundary," 1769, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, V12: 348-349.

undressed deerskins, and argued that they “reserved the right to Seize the goods of such interlopers.” But above all, Upper Creek headmen stood firmly in defense of their territory. Following the congress, Stuart commented that Emistisiguo and The Mortar were for the most part “amicably disposed but very delicate on the subject of land.”⁷⁹

This is not to say that Lower Creek leaders generously gave away their lands without a second thought; like the Upper Creeks, they were deeply concerned about British expansion and the negative consequences of their increased presence. But micos from the Lower Towns, particularly Coweta, viewed these cessions as necessary for creating greater opportunities to maintain both collective and individual Creek autonomy. This is exemplified in the New Purchase land cession of 1773, a deal arranged by the Cherokees and eventually agreed upon by the Lower Creeks. Here, the Cherokee Indians entered into an agreement with several British traders, wherein their debts would be forgiven in exchange for a large tract of land on the south side of the Savannah River. The Lower Creek Indians, who also claimed this land, did not initially agree to the cession. Angered by the actions of the Cherokees, they attempted to sabotage the agreement. Governor Wright, with the help of George Galphin, convinced the Lower Creeks to support the territorial cession, but their acceptance was not without strings attached.⁸⁰ In exchange for the land, Escotchaby demanded “Four Baggs of Powder and Six Baggs of Ball, four Boxes Paint, Some Guns, four Dozen Knives, [and] five Hundred Flints for every town in the Lower Creeks,” delivered directly to the Coweta headmen.⁸¹

⁷⁹ “British Disarray and the Creek-Choctaw War,” in *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, V12: 329.

⁸⁰ Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Frontier*, 294- 313; Gallay, “Alternate Source of Trade” 212-213, Louis DeVorsey, Jr, “Indian Boundaries in Colonial Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 75-76.

⁸¹ “Lower Creek Chiefs to Superintendent Stuart Accepting Land for Debt Idea,” 1772, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, V12: 113-114.

This decision not only allowed the micos to erase a significant amount of their young people's debt, but also gained them access to highly needed goods, which they could then redistribute throughout Lower Creek communities. Escotchaby successfully parlayed the New Purchase land cession into an opportunity to bolster his power and authority through more traditional means, reinforcing his legitimacy and asserting his authority without employing coercion or force.

Land cessions also took other forms in the early 1770s. In late 1773, and again in 1774, the Lower Creeks leased almost five million acres of hunting land in East Florida to an individual settler, Jonathan Bryan, in exchange for "a steady supply of trade goods of a better quality and at a cheaper rate than any they were furnished at present."⁸² The Creeks, frustrated by attempts to force them into accepting British trade directives, sought out this agreement with Bryan as a way to retain their autonomy in the Southeast. This connection, like those the Cowetas established with Spanish Cuba in the 1760s, served as an important supplementary trade relationship in an era where the British increasingly used commodities to try to force the Creeks to adhere to governmental interests.⁸³ Connections like these restored native options for trade, exchange, and diplomacy, and represent the Creeks' ability to successfully adapt to an expanding British presence in the Southeast. In many ways, they represent a reconsideration of neutrality, providing Creeks with new opportunities to actively keep the British from overpowering them.

Emistisiguo and other Upper Creek headmen indirectly benefitted from the Lower Creeks' supplementary trade relationships. In 1773, David Taitt, Stuart's deputy Superintendent, gave Emistisiguo "a horse load of Ammunition, four Keggs Rum and 1

⁸² Gallay, "Alternate Source of Trade," 222.

⁸³ Lower Creek relationships with Spanish Cuba are explored in chapter 4.

box Paint for the use of his little town” because he had “behaved extremely well” in light of recent Spanish incursions into Creek country. In September of that year, a Creek named The Alligator returned from Havana with news that the Spanish promised to “send this People a supply of Ammunition in Three Moons if they thought well of it.” Hoping to meet with prominent Upper and Lower Creek chiefs, the Spanish sent The Alligator home with a Spanish commission “and some other Papers” for Emistisiguo and the headmen. Emistisiguo’s apparent lack of interest earned him Taitt’s respect, and ultimately, much needed commodities for his people. In brushing off the Spanish, Emistisiguo was able to reinforce his own chiefly power and authority, based in access to outside prestige items and the redistribution of these goods to his family, clan, and community.⁸⁴ The following chapter investigates Lower Creek connections with Spanish Cuba to explore how these diplomatic and trade relationships reflected a larger strategy of native adaptation and adjustment that would prove crucial to preserving Creek autonomy during the Revolutionary Era.

Despite the back and forth over Indian policy, Stuart and Georgia officials briefly cut off the Creek trade in 1774. In closing the trade, they hoped to place pressure upon the Creeks to end their aggressive behavior toward backcountry settlers. Colonists from Georgia and South Carolina flooded onto newly opened territory, and sometimes beyond, following the Creek and Cherokee land cessions of the early 1770s. Though officials stopped the trade in an effort to regulate Indian behavior and reduce the Creek-settler violence that had grown since the recent land treaties, Georgia’s decision to interrupt the Indian trade in 1774 reflected a major gamble on the part of the Southern colonial

⁸⁴ "Reports from Commissary Taitt," 1773, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, V12: 437-438.

governments. By stopping the trade, British officials hoped to reinforce their illusion of control over the Southeast. But this also risked further increasing tensions between the colonies and the region's native peoples, as the Creeks and their neighbors could have easily interpreted these actions as war measures. While this had long been a concern of British officials, the need to reduce tensions with the Creeks and their neighbors became paramount by 1774 as the Crown's colonial focus began to shift from controlling Indians to controlling colonists.

While Indian affairs could not be dismissed, Britain's priorities changed as colonists took up arms against the British government. Instead of managing native behavior and expanding colonial territory, Stuart and the Southeastern governors found it necessary to maintain positive, peaceful relationships with the Indians in hopes of recruiting them as allies and active combatants in the rebellion. To achieve this, British officials had to eliminate native-settler violence and bring an end to the Creek-Choctaw War. Over the previous decade, this conflict served its purpose of keeping the Creeks and Choctaws from joining together in a formal attack against the Southeastern colonies. Now, however, the British needed as much indigenous support as possible. But problems recruiting native allies escalated quickly as the Revolution grew, and a Crown order in early 1776 prohibited all trade between Great Britain and the rebellious colonies. This severely undermined Loyalist Georgia's ability to provide potential Indian aides with presents, particularly the gunpowder, ammunition, and arms they would need to engage rebel enemies.

As conflict among Great Britain and her American subjects intensified, native peoples throughout the continent found new ways to preserve their autonomy and

independence. This dissertation's final chapter explores how Upper and Lower Creeks viewed the colonial rebellion as an opportunity to recreate important tenets of neutrality, playing Rebel and Loyalist groups off of one another during the first years of the American Revolution. The rising influence of the Upper towns in the early 1770s, and the death of The Mortar in 1774, allowed Emistisiguo and other Upper Creek micos to strengthen their connections with the British, while Cowetas and other Lower Creeks continued to solidify their own relationships with the Spanish in Havana. As the final chapter explores, however, Creeks used these separate approaches to trade and diplomacy to their advantage. By making use of the Confederacy's longstanding Upper and Lower divisions, as well as local-level decision-making processes, individual towns and villages were able to determine which cause, if any, they would support.

Chapter 4: “More Advantageous to be With Spaniards”: Lower Creek Voyages to Spanish Cuba, 1763- 1778.

In September 1764, John Stuart, the recently appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Britain’s Southern colonies in North America, met with a party of Lower Creek Indians at Fort San Marcos de Apalache in the empire’s newest colony of West Florida. Located south of modern-day Tallahassee at the confluence of the St. Marks and Wakulla Rivers, San Marcos de Apalache had been a well-known meeting place and trading post for Lower Creeks and Spaniards for the majority of the eighteenth century. The geopolitical shifts that followed the end of the Seven Years’ War, however, forced the Spanish to abandon the fort and relinquish all claims to *La Florida*. Stuart explained to his Creek audience the empire’s motives for removing the Spanish and French from the region, citing “the disorder and confusion occasioned by their False insinuations and misrepresentations” of British colonial aims. He promised that the Spanish presence would be “Succeeded by peace and good order” and that “the Chain of Friendship” between the Creeks and the British “shou’d be Strengthen’d and brighten’d by a plentiful protection and upon terms of Mutual advantage and Security.” Stuart advised the Creeks to respect the terms of the Treaty of Paris if they hoped to reap the benefits of Britain’s increased presence in the region. Implying that the Lower Creeks should sever their remaining ties with the French and Spanish, Stuart told them “to behave as Friends and Brothers to the English who have Succeeded the Spaniards in the possession of [these lands], and Who are more able and willing than they to assist you in every respect.”¹

¹ "Stuart to Creeks at Apalache," September 25, 1764, R6; F193-194, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

Stuart's decision to use Fort San Marcos as the setting for his official introduction to the Lower Creeks was motivated by more than its close proximity to their towns and villages. This choice of meeting place allowed the British to both physically and symbolically occupy a space that for generations had served as a center for Spanish-Creek exchange, diplomacy, and cross-cultural encounter. With their possession of the fort, and Florida as a whole, Stuart and his associates spent the next few days crafting a narrative of British superiority and Spanish weakness to secure a Lower Creek pledge of peace and friendship. After two days of talks, Chehayaché, a warrior from the Lower Creek town of Chescatalouga, finally stepped forward to speak in favor of Britain's expanded presence. "The Spaniards are gone," he stated "and you are now on the ground which we lent them: we approve of it, and will always hold you fast as Brethren."² Pleased with Chehayaché's declaration of goodwill, Stuart concluded the San Marcos meeting, deeming it a successful step toward fulfilling Britain's imperial goals in North America.

Cheyayaché's statement appears to reflect a firm Creek attachment to the British and an acceptance that the era of Creek neutrality had at long last come to an end. Throughout the eighteenth century, members of the Creek Confederacy had successfully maintained authority in the region by practicing "triple-nation diplomacy," a strategy by which they played their British, French, and Spanish neighbors off of one another. The local-level, consensus-based nature of Creek social and political life urged individual headman to act according to the best interests of their towns or villages, encouraging a healthy political division that allowed the Confederacy to thrive without committing to a

² "Chehayaché to Stuart," September 27, 1764, R6: F194, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

strict alliance with any one European power.³ Throughout the eighteenth-century, Upper Creeks invited the French to build trading houses near their communities, while Lower Creeks traveled to Spanish outposts in Florida to receive European presents. Both simultaneously maintained relationships of diplomacy and exchange with the British.⁴

The geopolitical shifts brought by the end of the Seven Years' War, however, eliminated these play-off opportunities and threatened Creek power and autonomy in the Southeast. While Chehayaché may have welcomed the British Empire's increased presence in the region, his acceptance did not represent the sentiment of the entire confederacy. Many Creeks, particularly those from the Lower towns, sought to combat British expansion by finding ways to adapt neutrality for an era void of imperial competition. With the French effectively removed from the region, Upper Creek micos looked to strengthen their relationships with the British, leading these towns to rise to a position of prominence over the one-powerful Lower Creeks in the early 1770s. Lower Creeks, in turn, shifted their focus toward maintaining their ties to the Spanish, whose regional presence now centered in Cuba.⁵

Beginning in the 1760s and continuing through the American Revolution, groups of Lower Creek Indians, largely from the town of Coweta, journeyed from their homes on the Chattahoochee, Flint, and Ocmulgee rivers in modern-day Alabama to Tampa Bay,

³ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 185. Crane asserts that the eighteenth-century Creeks "were able to play for many generations the role of the custodians of the wilderness balance of power in the South."

⁴ The concept of neutrality is explored in depth in the first chapter of this dissertation. For excellent explorations of neutrality as a diplomatic policy, please see Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*; Galloway, "Alternate Source of Trade."

⁵ The Spanish did assume control over New Orleans after 1763, which was geographically closer to Lower Creek towns and theoretically easier for them to access than Cuba. However, it took a number of years for the transfer of power from the French to the Spanish to take hold, and the transition was not a smooth one. In addition, as this chapter will explore, Creeks viewed the overseas journey to Cuba as spiritually significant. Subsequently, Creek men often used travels to Havana as a way to try to access power as recognized in both the spiritual and physical worlds.

where they solicited passage to Havana from Spanish fishermen. Upon arrival in Cuba these Lower Creek, or *Uchizes* as the Spanish called them, traded with the local populations and received gifts from government officials, which they then carried home to distribute among their communities.⁶ For the Spanish empire, continued interaction with these peoples threatened their terms of peace with Great Britain, but also represented the promise of regaining their lost territory in North America. While Cuban officials complained of the expenses associated with hosting Indian visitors and often seemed annoyed at having to supply them with gifts, the Spanish nearly always obliged Creek requests. These connections, though not immediately desirable to officials in Havana, eventually proved advantageous for the Spanish, providing them with opportunities to challenge British expansion during the American Revolution. As Minister General of the Indies José de Gálvez wrote shortly after the Spanish entered the conflict in support of the American cause, the Creeks “know it is more advantageous to be with Spaniards.”⁷

While these travels were impressive in their geographic scope, they should not just be viewed as Creek efforts to acquire presents. Access to European goods *did* form an important motivation for native voyages to Cuba, and is central to the discussion that follows. But this chapter, like the larger dissertation, focuses instead on the social, cultural, and political significance of Creek passages to Cuba and their relations with the Spanish during the Revolutionary period. It emphasizes the processes associated with acquiring certain in-demand commodities, and understands them as part of a larger strategy of Creek adaptation and adjustment following the Seven Years’ War.

⁶ There is also evidence that some Creek women married into Cuban families, legitimizing these cross-cultural relationships as Spanish in-laws and extended family members became attached to Creek society as extended kin.

⁷ “de Gálvez to El Pardo,” January 10, 1780 1290 F205. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

Subsequently, this chapter investigates how Creek travels to Cuba, along with Spanish intrigues among the Lower Creeks in Florida and the North American Southeast, impacted both Creek-British diplomacy and local-level sociopolitical structures within the Confederacy. In an era when British officials often restricted gunpowder supplies to force the region's natives to cede lands and adhere to governmental interests, the maintenance of relations with the Spanish both provided Creeks with opportunities to gain important commodities and allowed them to weaken the British empire's potentially monopolizing trade position in the Southeast. Colonial officials worked tirelessly to put forth a narrative of their superiority and Creek dependence; however, internal correspondence reveals the realities of Britain's weak imperial position. Although the Crown often threatened to cut off supplies of gunpowder to the Confederacy to curb aggressive behavior, they found it impossible to do so, as Creeks would have interpreted this action as a declaration of war. Unable to risk a major conflict with the region's Indians, British officials found themselves in the dangerous position of being forced to provide Creeks with the very tools they needed to attack their vulnerable colonies.

While scholars have long had knowledge of continued Creek-Spanish contacts following the Seven Years' War, ethnohistorians have only recently begun to explore native pathways to Cuba and Spanish-Creek meetings during the American Revolution.⁸

⁸ This chapter is indebted to the research of historians James L. Hill and Bryan C. Rindfleisch, whose scholarship explores the complex sociopolitical and cultural significance of these journeys for both Creeks and Spaniards. In his article "Bring them what they lack: Spanish-Creek Exchange and Alliance Making in a Maritime Borderland, 1763-1783," Hill conceptualizes the Gulf of Mexico as a maritime borderland, arguing that this space functioned as a dynamic zone of cross-cultural interaction, not just an area that Creeks and Spaniards passed through en-route to Cuba or Florida. Both sides took advantage of this region as an area for negotiation and used it to build social, economic, and diplomatic relationships with one another from the end of the Seven Years' War through the Revolutionary Era.⁸ In "'The Owner of the Town Ground, Who Overrules All When on the Spot': Escotchaby of Coweta and the Politics of Personal Networking in Creek Country, 1740-1880," Rindfleisch asserts that Lower Creek voyages to Cuba represent the larger importance of personal connections in the late-eighteenth-century Native American

This chapter uses gunpowder to explore how politics and power shaped Creek journeys to Cuba during this period. Consequently, it seeks to deepen our understanding of the sociopolitical and cultural significance of Spanish travels among the Lower Creek, as well as their voyages to Cuba, both within Creek society and in Creek-British diplomacy. Creek motivations for embarking on the long journey to and from Spanish Cuba were complicated, multifaceted, and subjective. These actions fundamentally provided Creeks with opportunities to push back against the geopolitical shifts of 1763 while simultaneously allowing for alternate sources of trade and diplomacy through the maintenance of personal and political relationships with outsiders. Like the larger dissertation, this chapter views gunpowder not as an object or commodity, but as a valuable tool of diplomatic negotiation that shaped Creek interactions with both the British and the Spanish. It investigates how Lower Creeks skillfully crafted new connections with Cuba and maintained existing relationships with Spanish to preserve positions of authority both in relations with the British and within their own communities.

Notably, while Lower Creeks returned from Cuba with a wide array of foreign goods during the 1760s, gunpowder was usually not one of them. They also did not receive gunpowder in any significant amounts from the Spaniards who made inroads into their communities. In fact, Creeks did not receive substantial quantities of Spanish

world. Because relationships significantly shaped the ways in which indigenous peoples organized and understood the world around them, Rindfleisch argues that individual Creeks saw continued contact with Cuba as a valuable opportunity to build and foster “intimate connections” with outsiders. These relationships allowed Creeks to maintain authority, legitimacy, and power through traditional means, carrying significant cultural value in an era of intense adaptation and change. Please see James L. Hill, “Bring them what they lack!: Spanish-Creek Exchange and Alliance Making in a Maritime Borderland, 1763-1783,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 36-67; Bryan C. Rindfleisch, “The ‘Owner of the Town Ground, Who Overrules All When on the Spot’: Escotchaby of Coweta and the Politics of Personal Networking in Creek Country, 1740-1780,” *Native South* 9 (2016): 54-88.

gunpowder until the mid 1770s, coinciding with the outbreak of the American Revolution; supplies of gunpowder to Coweta in particular increased exponentially after Spain's entry in 1779. Spain's reasons for deciding not to supply their Creek visitors with gunpowder during these early years of contact with Cuba are unclear. Historically, the Spanish Empire did not provide guns or gunpowder to native peoples, citing their focus on religious conversion, the justification for their colonization efforts in the Americas. In Southeastern North America, the small number of missionaries and military personnel in Spain's isolated Florida colony lived in constant fear of Indian attacks. They believed that trading guns and gunpowder to the region's Native peoples would provide these Indians with the means necessary to wipe out the missions and presidios. While certain aspects of these cultural beliefs may have persisted into the late eighteenth century to influence Spanish practices regarding gunpowder, the most probable explanation was that gunpowder was hard to come by in the Americas. Spain, needing to protect its own territorial and commercial interests in the Caribbean, likely could not afford to provide Creeks with gunpowder in the years immediately following 1763. It was not until the mid-1770s, when tensions emerged among Anglo-American colonists, that the Spanish made gifts of gunpowder to the Creeks a diplomatic and military priority.

Despite Spain's initial hesitance to supply their native visitors with gunpowder, Lower Creeks spent the decade after the Seven Years' War crafting deep connections to Cuba that allowed them to skillfully manipulate their relationships with the British. These contacts allowed them to manipulate favorable terms of diplomacy and ensure continued access to important European goods, despite a lack of diverse sources of trade.

Lower Creeks often strategically chose whether or not to disclose details of their travels to Cuba in diplomatic meetings with the British, in order to advance their own agendas and successfully influence the terms of diplomacy. By preserving personal and political connections with Spanish officials in Cuba, Lower Creeks eventually secured an alternate source of gunpowder, which allowed for the maintenance of Creek power and autonomy in the Revolutionary Era.

Previous chapters have detailed the centrality of gunpowder to Creek ways of life in the late eighteenth century. These chapters have also explored gunpowder's gendered significance, detailing its centrality to traditional male activities like hunting and warfare. By the 1760s, however, gunpowder also proved necessary for young Creek men who increasingly used violence and raiding to defend their territory against British expansion. This research has established that access to gunpowder became essential for the development of new definitions of masculinity and mature manhood among Creeks who sought to both preserve the independence of the larger Confederacy while maintaining, or gaining, individual positions of authority within their towns and villages. Thus, this chapter will investigate how Creek men used voyages to Cuba to enhance their own status in Creek society, often through traditional means, such as redistributing Spanish gifts among their communities or establishing and maintaining distant, personal connections with outsiders. It will show how ongoing Creek-Spanish relations shaped personal dynamics among Creek men and deeply affected existing local-level political structures within the Confederacy.

British awareness of Creek-Spanish relations surfaced in early 1767, though native voyages to Havana began as early as 1766. In February 1767, a Creek from Coweta arrived at Fort San Marcos looking to speak with the interpreter, John Simpson. He revealed that at some point during the previous summer, Spanish emissaries had met with an Indian named Thlawhulgu, asking him to deliver a talk to the Lower Creek headmen at the upcoming busk.⁹ Thlawhulgu was now preparing to embark on a trip to Havana to deliver the Lower Creek reply. Simpson relayed the information to Governor James Grant of East Florida, leaving him to decide how to handle the matter. Though he was unsure exactly what the message contained, Simpson suggested the situation could turn serious; “nothing [is] more Certain” he concluded “than the Spaniard has sent Talks into their Nation.”¹⁰ In October 1768, John Stuart, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern Colonies, addressed the Lower Creek Nation about their budding correspondence. Stuart’s talk radiated the rhetoric of peace, brotherhood and friendship characteristic of speeches to Native peoples during this time, but also implored his Creek audience to think twice about Spanish intentions and the risks of straining their relations with the British:

I need not tell you that the Spaniards are incapable of being such Friends to you as we are, you know them well, you have known them for near two hundred years, during which time you were constantly scalping them, what benefits can you reap from them that are equal to the Great King’s favour and protection who is like a friend and father.¹¹

⁹ The Creek “Busk,” also called “The Green Corn Dance” was an annual ceremony celebrated to mark the beginning of the corn harvest season. These ceremonies were most widely celebrated among Southeastern native societies. “Busk” refers specifically to the Creek version of the ceremony, deriving from a poor translation of the Muskogee word *puskita*, meaning “to fast.” Please see chapter 1.

¹⁰ “Simpson to Grant,” February 3, 1767, R13; F88-89, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

¹¹ “Stuart to Grant,” December 16, 1768, R16; F279-281, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

Aside from this cautionary talk, British officials showed little immediate concern for continued Spanish-Creek encounters. Grant initially believed that Lower Creek interaction with Spanish fishermen on the Gulf Coast could be profitable for East Florida, positing that as Creeks traveled through the colony they might meet and trade with settlers there. As Creek-Spanish interactions would bring much needed money into the province, Grant declared that he was “not sure if it would be in our best interest to discourage it.”¹² Rumors of a Creek-Spanish treaty, which would include a Creek land cession along the coast near the mouth of the Apalachicola River, also reached Governor Grant around this time. He paid them little regard, however, remarking that not only did the Lower Creeks already cede these lands to the British, but that “the Spaniards are not in Disposition to make new Settlements [as] they are even in some danger of losing what they have already been put in possession of.” Grant relayed information of the alleged cessions to Superintendent Stuart but assured him that there was likely no truth to the story. Reminding him that the Lower Creeks “are a troublesome Pack,” Grant speculated that they “spread such a report to raise their consequence, for they have their Politicks like other Men.”¹³

Grant’s theory was sound, regardless of whether or not the Lower Creeks actually intended to cede land to the Spanish. Though he and Stuart shrugged off the rumors, it is likely that the Creeks themselves planted and circulated knowledge of the plot to preserve and promote their diplomatic influence in the region. This strategic spread of information, controlled and designed by Creeks, came to significantly shape the terms of

¹² "Grant to Stuart," September 4, 1769, R2; F207-208, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

¹³ "Grant to Stuart," December 22, 1768, R2; F159-160, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

their interaction with the British, becoming a foundational component of their political and diplomatic strategy during this period.

Despite the preliminary optimism of colonial officials, Spanish-Creek interactions began to pose a more imminent threat as the 1760s progressed. Aside from potential economic advantages, British officials thought that regular Creek-Spanish communication might distract these Indians from committing “atrocities” upon backcountry settlers, which had escalated dramatically in the years since 1763.¹⁴ But initial hope that relations with the Spanish could alleviate Creek-Anglo aggression soon proved false. By 1769, acts of native violence, which included murder, theft, and arson, had “otherwise so much disturbed and intimidated the settlers thereabouts” that “some, happy to escape with their lives, have abandoned their houses and property and those who remain live in continual dread and anxiety.” The region’s Indians had been “insolent, dissatisfied, and mischievous beyond measure since the arrival of the Spaniards,” and, according to West Florida’s Lieutenant governor, Montfort Browne, their actions were a result of the “flattering Talks and large Presents” the Spanish gave them.¹⁵

Native violence held the potential to destroy any promise for increased British settlement and growth in a nascent colony like West Florida. Existing on the fringes of the British Empire, settlement was key for West Florida’s survival. Saddled with debt from the Seven Years’ War, however, the Crown had few military or financial resources with which to protect or fund their new territory. With weak defenses against hostile

¹⁴ Ibid. The issue of Creek-British frontier violence is discussed in depth in this dissertation’s third chapter.

¹⁵ Montfort Browne, “Spanish Corrupting Indians,” October 8, 1769, R5; V587; No. 130, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

indigenous neighbors and no money to invest in finding a successful cash crop, settlement in both East and West Florida remained sparse. As Creek aggression grew, their continued relations with the Spanish increasingly threatened the security and expansion of the province. In December 1768, Governor Grant remarked, “the Spaniards have continued to [journey] upon this land ever since the country was ceded. They do not pretend to claim it as a right, but there is no preventing it till the country is settled and inhabited.”¹⁶ Rumors of a meeting at the Apalachicola River in the fall of 1769 truly distressed Browne, who believed “Nothing could be more truly alarming to this province in its present defenseless situation than a congress of Spaniards and Indians . . . Should a treaty of amity between them be effected, the total destruction of this province probably would ensue.” Browne and his counterparts viewed Spain’s presence east of the Mississippi as “a breach of the Peace Subsisting between our Court and theirs,” and something that “can be done only with the worst intentions and views.” They believed persistent Spanish intrigue “indicates a purpose of corrupting all the Indians surrounding us and by their means driving us out of the gulf of Mexico.”¹⁷

These actions and events prompted enough distress that Lord Hillsborough, Secretary of State for the Colonies, called for the governors of Georgia, East Florida, and West Florida to give “more than a common vigilance to what is passing amongst them, particularly in the Coweta Nation.”¹⁸ Hillsborough further warned that the extent of Spanish influence on the Lower Creek was likely more alarming than previously thought,

¹⁶ "Grant to Wright," December 19, 1768, R2; F154-155, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The Earl of Hillsborough, "Increase Watch Over Creeks and Spanish," December 9, 1769, R5; V70, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

advising Stuart to “not let any opportunity slip of endeavoring to counteract these views of Spain in respect to the Indians . . . and to secure their affections to the British interests.”¹⁹ Hillsborough specifically expressed concern about the types of goods entering Creek towns and villages through Spanish channels. In August 1769, Governor Browne informed Stuart that, “six head men had actually returned from Havana some months ago well satisfied with presents and very great promises.”²⁰ Around the same time, traders among the Lower Creeks reported meeting a group of Cowetas who had recently returned from Cuba, bringing with them rum, ammunition, and cloth. Both Browne and the traders relayed knowledge of a rumor that the Spanish hoped to “hold a Congress with the Chiefs of the Upper and Lower Nations, at the Mouth of the Apalachicola River in September next.”²¹ The Cowetas who had just arrived home from Havana also told their traders that the Spanish had promised to send a ship full of goods and presents to Apalachicola in six months time.

Browne feared that if precautions were not immediately taken to put a stop to these plans, the Spanish presence would create significant anxiety among settlers, and “the consequences may be dreadfull in particular to this colony.” He stressed that “the Creeks in general *must* know that it is from us alone they can be well supplied with arms, ammunition, and other necessaries.”²² But by the early 1770s, Lower Creek voyages to Cuba had increased exponentially, and the Cowetas appealed heavily for the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Montfort Browne, "Creek Indians and Designs of the Spaniards," August 20, 1769, R2; V577; No.73, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, West Florida Records, The University of West Florida, University Archives and West Florida History Center, Pensacola, FL.

²¹ "Stuart to Grant," August 4, 1769, R18; F293-295, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.; "Escotchaby of Coweta to Superintendent Stuart," 1769, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; Pg. 88. Escotchaby informs Stuart “at the expiration of four moons, by the desire of the Spaniards, we the Chiefs of the upper and lower Creeks are invited to meet them at a place appointed again.”

²² Browne, "Creek Indians and Designs of the Spaniards," August 20, 1769.

establishment of an officially recognized trade relationship with the Spanish.²³ The British Empire could no longer deny their own economic and political weakness in light of the actions of the Lower Creeks. Knowing that Creek relations with Spanish Cuba were only increasing in frequency, British officials felt they had no choice but to convince the Lower Creeks that they were their only protectors, friends, and providers of foreign manufactures. “The Creeks know it is from the Spaniard alone,” stated East Florida’s governor in 1774, “that they could get any arms and ammunition in case of a rupture with us.”²⁴ Subsequently, the British worked to persuade the Confederacy of their dependence on English goods. If accomplished successfully, the British would ensure their desired reduction of Creek power.²⁵

For the Lower Creeks, the maintenance of relations with the Spanish, specifically through voyages to Cuba, were multifold in significance. There was, of course, the excitement of making the journey and experiencing an exotic culture. But Creeks, like other Southeastern native societies, also “believed that geographically distant places were charged with spiritual power and mythical symbolism.” Accordingly, embarking on a journey “from the familiar to the unfamiliar” offered Creeks, particularly Creek men, an “esoteric” and “exceptional” experience. Eighteenth-century Creeks considered movement through time and space, central components of many North American Indian cultural traditions, as fundamentally dangerous and powerful.²⁶

²³ John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Frontier: A Study of Indian Relations, War, Trade, and Land Problems in the Southern Wilderness, 1754-1775* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1944), 305-309.

²⁴ “Moultrie to Dartmouth,” February 21, 1774, in *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, V8: 54-56.

²⁵ Alan Galloway explores British attempts to thwart Creek power in the context of Creek relations with Jonathan Bryan. Please see Galloway, “Alternate Source of Trade,” 15.

²⁶ Peach, “Tomochichi,” 615.

Water, particularly myths and legends centered upon crossing large bodies of water, also serves as a central theme in many Southeastern Indian origin stories. These stories highlight water as an obstacle that humans cannot easily traverse across, despite their determination or will. The Choctaw Chief, Nassuba Mingo, confirmed this at a meeting with the British in 1765. "Of all the Wonders which the white Men perform," he stated, "in making of Powder and Guns and wondrous Glasses, none Surprises me more than the Bringing a parcel of Boards fixed together with such deep Loading thro' the trackless Waves, by the Power of the Clouds."²⁷ Governor Grant referenced these beliefs again in 1769, when he wrote of meeting a group of distressed Cowetas at a recent congress. They explained that two years earlier, a pair of their townspeople had embarked on a journey to Havana and had yet to return. "Uneasy at their absence," these Creeks asked Grant "to send a message to the Spanish governor to know what was become of them." Shortly thereafter, the missing Creeks returned to Coweta with impressive gifts and trinkets, receiving a celebratory welcome from their community.²⁸

Because of the unknowns associated with long, arduous voyages, Creeks viewed those with the ability to embark on a water-borne journey, and survive, as "possessed of some of the deepest sources of knowledge and power."²⁹ Thus, Creeks undoubtedly recognized travels to Cuba as opportunities to increase their internal, or local, power within their communities. Their motivations, however, differed significantly based on the individual. For example, foreign or overseas travel had traditionally been a privilege

²⁷ Nassuba Mingo, "Nassuba Mingo To Superintendent Stuart," 1765, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives English Dominion: Mississippi Department of Archives and History*, ed. Dunbar Rowland (Nashville, TN: Press of Brandon Printing Company, 1911), VI:5 <https://archive.org/details/mississippipro00offigoog/page/n242>

²⁸ "Grant to Stuart," February 1, 1769, R2; F171-174, James Grant Papers, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

²⁹ Peach, "Tomochichi," 615; See also Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal*, 6.

afforded only to Creek elites. As a result, older leaders saw voyages to Cuba as a chance to maintain positions of power and authority through traditional means. In April 1772, David Taitt, deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, recalled a recent conversation with the Coweta headman, Escotchaby. Escotchaby revealed that his son had just returned from trip to Havana with a message that the Spanish Governor “had such a desire to see him.” Though “he was now Old,” Escotchaby intended to go, despite the fact that “he had been informed that the sea is very mountainous making the boat go from the Top of a high hill into a very Deep valley with great Swiftness.” Though he understood the dangers, Escotchaby held long-standing personal ties to the Spanish Empire and felt he could not decline the Governor’s invitation, as it would make him look weak to his people and destabilize his legitimacy and authority. Escotchaby also feared that a refusal would emasculate him, informing Taitt that “as some of their Women had gon[e] a Cross these waters, he being a man was not afraid.”³⁰ Younger, non-elite men, in contrast, would have understood their place in the Creek societal and political order and would not have been as likely to embark on such voyages earlier in the eighteenth century. Now, however, as these men became more assertive in their quest for authority and independence, younger Creeks of average status ignored the established order, traveling to Cuba in search of goods. Like older, traditional leaders, they used these voyages, as well as the personal connections and gifts they produced, as avenues toward gaining authority and power within their communities.

While the journey to Cuba alone bolstered an individual’s status within the Creek world, Cowetas understood and developed their political and economic interests as

³⁰ “Journal of David Taitt’s Travels From Pensacola, West Florida, to and Through the Country of the Upper and the Lower Creeks, 1772,” April 28, 1772, in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton D. Mereness (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1916), 548-549. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/lhbtn.09410/>

logically and strategically as did their European counterparts. While they sought to create new connections in the Revolutionary Era, they also drew on relationships from the past to foster advantageous interactions in the present. These actions allowed Cowetas and other Lower Creeks “to preserve the fundamental tenets of triple nation diplomacy,” that had become threatened by the geopolitical shifts of 1763.³¹ Thus, voyages to Cuba must be understood as one of many Creek strategies of adaptation and adjustment following the Seven Years’ War, that worked to safeguard central, important features of diplomatic neutrality.

Creek delegations, however, were not always welcome in Havana. As visitors, they posed a considerable financial strain to the Spanish empire, as the government became responsible for housing, feeding, and providing them with gifts upon departure. It proved more economically practical for the Spanish to send goods directly to Creek communities if they hoped to maintain these cross-cultural connections. Furthermore, Cuban officials found it hard to justify the expenses incurred by Creek visits “due to the little fruit which has . . . been borne of them.”³² Spanish administrators initially thought relations with the Creeks to be one-sided, believing these Indians “did not have any other objective in mind than to enjoy the entertainments provided.”³³

Subsequently, in the first decade of Creek contact with Cuba, Spanish officials often pressured their Gulf Coast fishermen to deny Creeks passage from Tampa Bay. These fishermen, “terrified of their threats” and fearing the consequences of Creek

³¹ Steven C. Hahn uses the term “triple nation diplomacy” to describe the Creeks’ policy of neutrality before the reconfiguration of European claims after the Seven Years War. Please see Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*.

³² "Unknown [probably de la Torre] to Arriaga," April 1, 1774, 1218, F613. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

³³ “Arriaga to de la Torre,” June 21, 1774, 1213, F95. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

violence, usually ignored Spanish directives and continued escorting these natives across the Gulf.³⁴ Spanish leaders found it unrealistic to remove these fishermen from the region, as Catholic Cuba would then “lack the indispensable necessities for Lent.”³⁵ Government leaders also believed it necessary to hide this sentiment from the Creeks, with whom they wanted to remain at peace. Thus, Lower Creeks continued to steadily travel to Havana, often in groups of thirty or more. It was not uncommon for entire families to make the journey, with prominent Coweta leaders bringing their wives and children. Single Creek women also made the voyage to Cuba, where many married into Spanish families. Through intermarriage, these native women created permanent political, economic, and familial connections that incorporated Cubans into Creek families and clans as extended kin.³⁶

Standard presents in this first decade of Creek-Cuba contact included cotton shirts, combs, razors, scissors, needles, vermillion, ribbon, tobacco, and alcohol, usually rum or brandy. Creeks who identified as headmen, “caciques” to the Spanish, often returned from Havana with uniquely personal gifts that included tailored red coats, gold coins, and medals. Spaniards also had to provide Creeks with food for their journey home, usually dried beef or pork, squash, sweet potatoes, and plantains. As tensions escalated among Britain’s colonial populations, however, the Spanish became more

³⁴ “de la Torre to Arriaga, : May 4, 1775, 1220, F243-244. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

³⁵ “de la Puente to de la Torre,” March 6, 1773, 1164 F248-251. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

³⁶ “de la Puente to Arriaga, July 2, 1771, 1211 F27-28. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>. Anthropologist John Worth has conducted extensive research in the archives of Havana and Seville, writing on the diaspora of Southeastern Indians to Cuba beginning in the sixteenth century. He posits that it may be possible to make genealogical connections between living descendants of indigenous peoples who migrated to Cuba between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries with the offspring of otherwise extinct native societies from Florida and the Southeast.

willing to provide Lower Creek delegations with gunpowder, ammunition, lead balls, and gunflints. Records after 1775 show expenditures for gunsmiths, suggesting that Creek men brought their firearms to Cuba to be repaired at Spain's expense. Spain's willingness to offer gunpowder, ammunition, and firearm maintenance to Creeks beginning in the early Revolutionary Era reflects a shift in sentiment toward their guests. Cuban officials no longer described native visits as irritating and expensive. By the fall of 1776, colonial administrators, "in an effort to re-establish good correspondence with [the Creek] Nation," pressured the Crown to increase Cuba's budget for expenditures "caused by the maintenance, food, and indispensable gifts (provided to) Groups of Indians of the Uchiz Nation."³⁷ The Spanish now viewed Lower Creeks as valuable military allies, necessary if they decided to join the American Rebels and try to reclaim their former territories in the North American Southeast.

Creek expeditions to Cuba also increased as Cowetas and their neighbors became progressively disillusioned with broken British promises to control settler encroachments. Following the Treaty of Augusta, which ceded almost three million acres of Creek and Cherokee lands to Georgia in 1773, Anglo-American colonists flooded beyond the established boundaries onto Indian territory. Young Coweta warriors, who over the previous decade increasingly used violence and aggression to advance their agendas and assert power in relations with colonials, "vented their frustrations upon the British people who settled ceded lands." These young Cowetas attacked and killed "twenty-two English," creating pandemonium in the backcountry. To bring pressure upon the Creeks to end the violence, Stuart cut off the entire trade to the Lower and Upper towns.

³⁷ "de la Torre to Gálvez," October 9, 1776, 1222 F56-57. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

Escotchaby responded by again setting off for Havana. Upon arrival, he and his party expressed such great contempt for Stuart's actions that one Spanish observer relayed shock at "the terrible Venom which I have perceived coming from the said Indians toward the English, I am persuaded that they intend to make war."³⁸ Escotchaby confirmed this to Governor Navarro, telling him that "the English, having [already] declared War" by suspending supplies, pushed his people to commit these atrocities.³⁹ Britain's stoppage of the Southeastern Indian trade did not last long, however. Distracted by the growing dissent and division among their colonial populations, Stuart felt pressure to reinstate the commerce and establish peace with the Indian nations of the region.

As the American Revolution unfolded in the Southeast, British officials became acutely aware that they were surrounded by competition for Indian loyalty, not just from the Spanish, but also from the region's growing Rebel populations. These colonial tensions promised to provide the Lower Creeks with ample opportunities to revive the "triple-nation diplomacy" of earlier decades, enabling them to play off of Rebel and Loyalist groups, while strengthening existing ties to Cuba. But the ways in which individual Creeks redesigned triple-nation diplomacy and neutrality for the Revolutionary Era exaggerated the gendered and generational tensions that had emerged among Lower Creek men in the 1760s. The geopolitical shifts of 1763 deeply affected existing social, cultural, and political structures within the Creek Confederacy. While Creeks, particularly Creek men, skillfully adapted to these changes to maintain both individual authority and collective autonomy, the ways in which they did so differed based on age, lived experience, and status. As older Creek leaders adjusted neutrality to preserve their

³⁸ Ibid. See also Rindfleisch, "The Owner of the Town Ground," 70.

³⁹ Ibid.

positions of power through the maintenance of personal and political connections, young Creek men increasingly began to use physical aggression to assert authority, preserve influence in relations with outsiders, and gain power within their communities. These conflicting methods of adaptation allowed Creeks to maintain positions of influence in relations with the British, but not without altering existing notions of masculinity, authority, and power within Creek society.⁴⁰

To better understand the ways in which Creek gendered and generational divisions played out following the outbreak of the American Revolution, historians can look to the testimony of the Lower Creek Indian, Tunapé.⁴¹ A self-proclaimed “cacique” from Coweta who had spent much of the previous decade attempting to restore a Spanish presence at Fort San Marcos, Tunapé paid a visit to Havana in 1777, undoubtedly with designs to bolster his personal and political connections. After declaring his loyalty to the Spanish, Tunapé recounted the story of his childhood, in which he described living among the Spanish at St. Augustine from when he was about ten years old. Exuding praise for the paternalism he felt from the Spanish during this formative period in his life, Tunapé described how those at St. Augustine cared for him after his maternal uncle passed away. The Spanish, likely the military personnel stationed at the presidio, taught him how to fire a gun and, he claimed, how to be a man, like a father would have done. Relating his experiences to the present day, Tunapé expressed great fear that younger generations of Creek men, who by this time had lived much of their adult life without a Spanish presence in Florida, did not appreciate their friendship or understand the benefits

⁴⁰ For a deeper exploration of gendered and generational tensions among Creek men, please see chapter 2.

⁴¹ Tunapé’s familial claim to the “cacique” title is unclear, though he is present in many of the Papeles de Cuba documents. He often uses his preexisting ties to the Spanish to try to secure his personal aims. James L. Hill explores Tunapé in depth in his article “Bring Them What They Lack.”

of their protection. Tunapé expressed his fear that “the youth, as they do not know the Spaniards, will turn to the English, since [they] are very obstinate. As the English bring them what they need and provide them with what they have, I fear the English will win them over in such methods.”⁴²

To ensure that these Creeks did not align themselves with the British, Tunapé advised the Spanish “to provide them with what they ask.” Relaying that these young men “are completely lacking in Gunpowder, Ball, Rifles, Hatchets, Hoes and other indispensable necessities (with which) to defend themselves from the Enemy,” Tunapé told the Spanish he would be glad to bring these goods back to Coweta on their behalf. Three weeks later, Tunapé and his delegation departed the island, carrying with him ten machetes, eleven hundred rifle balls, one hundred and twenty flints, and sixty pounds of gunpowder, the most ever gifted to a group of Creek visitors.⁴³

Indeed, Tunapé was correct in his assertion that young Coweta warriors were easily persuaded by access to in-demand goods. Throughout the Revolution, young men were more inclined to align themselves with those who could provide them with gunpowder, as this gave them the ability to act with assertion and force in relations with outsiders. But it is important to frame Tunapé’s account within the context of his own personal and political aims. While there was truth to Tunapé’s opinion that young Creek men did not know the Spanish like their fathers and uncles had, he likely overemphasized his fear of these warriors aligning with the British. In fact, young male Creeks, like Escotchaby’s sons and nephews, often journeyed to Havana alongside older family

⁴² “Declarations of the Boat Captain Bermudez and the Cacique Tunapé,” December 22, 1777, 1290 F635-639. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville.

<https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

⁴³ “de la Puente, Relation of Indians and List of Goods,” January 12, 1778, 1290 F374-375. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

members in order to both access foreign goods and to participate in the ritual-like experience of water-borne travel. In emphasizing these Creeks' connections with the British, however, Tunapé hoped to obtain Spanish gifts, which he successfully did, and worked to encourage political connections that would lead to a permanent Spanish trade with the Lower Creek. As the escalating Revolutionary conflict "had the effect of cutting off trade along the Lower Path and forcing the Cowetas to choose between either British or American loyalties," these connections became essential for the preservation of Creek autonomy.⁴⁴

By 1779, Tunapé's concern that young men might gravitate toward the British finally materialized, raising concern among both Creek and Spanish leaders. Spain's declaration of war against Britain in June of that year prompted government officials in Havana to send Don Francisco Ruiz del Canto to Florida to try to draw these young warriors toward the Spanish and American cause. Cuban officials understood that this could not be achieved, however, without first re-establishing a formal trade with the Lower Creeks. They assigned Ruiz del Canto to this task, asking him to meet with Lower Creek headmen at Fort San Marcos de Apalache in the late summer of 1779. "Despite said opinion of the old Chiefs," Ruiz del Canto stated, "they had three hundred or four hundred young men take party with the English, some of them impulsed by their evil hearts and others by the necessity in which they lived." These young Creeks "placed themselves against the Baquinalques [Americans], whose war had been suspended for the past four months, during which [time] the English did not cease to insist that they follow them, offering them much more than what they had previously paid and gifted."

Estimapé, a headman from Coweta with long-standing ties to the Spanish, relayed that

⁴⁴ Rindfleisch, "The Owner of the Town Ground," 71.

the young men “had done precisely what he had not wanted them to do when they asked him which of the two parties they had to support.” There was little he could do to change their minds, he lamented, as “the response from Spain took so long.”⁴⁵

Estimapé, like Tunapé, preferred to strategically court the Spanish to try to secure advantageous positions within their new trade from Cuba to the Southeast. But it was not uncommon for other established Creek leaders, like their sons and nephews, to be swayed by British or American promises of gunpowder and ammunition. These men, particularly Escotchaby, his brothers, and other “caciques” from Coweta, Cussita, and Apalachicola, also held important, established connections with the British, and understood negotiation with Loyalist and American factions as a natural, foundational component of the neutrality and triple-nation diplomacy they were working to preserve. Ruiz del Canto experienced this first hand when he encountered “two English Gentlemen with twenty two Horses full of Clothing, Arms and munitions” attempting to “solicit” an agreement of military support from both Lower Creek headmen and the young men in the town of Támáli, not far from Fort San Marcos on the Chattahooche River. Though he quickly countered this British bid for allegiance with gifts of his own, the encounter lead Ruiz del Canto to realize that the Lower Creeks would never fully commit themselves to the Spanish-American cause. Expressing his frustration to his superiors, Ruiz del Canto reflected that the Lower Creeks “were like the Dog that guards his house without siding with anyone; when the English came to bother them they would be able to snort at their

⁴⁵ “Ruiz del Canto’s Journey to San Marcos de Apalache,” September 26, 1779, 1290 F221-223. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

pleas and gifts and they were to bark and bite at the Bachinalques.” It was this ability to play both sides, he concluded, that “had persuaded them to remain neutral.”⁴⁶

Ruiz del Canto’s observations confirm that the Lower Creeks’ were able to preserve important features of neutrality to revive triple-nation diplomacy during the American Revolution. Following the geopolitical shifts of 1763, Creeks successfully crafted various strategies of long-term adaptation and adjustment to maintain autonomy in the Southeast, preserving the larger Confederacy’s independence. The efforts of individual Creeks to either foster personal and political connections with Spanish Cuba, or assert aggression in relations with outsiders, provided Creek men with access power and authority through both traditional and non-traditional means. Though these divisions may have, at times, brought conflict to local-level Creek life, they also complemented each other in ways that supported Lower Creek methods of adaptation and adjustment, and sustained the Confederacy’s position of independence and influence in the region. As this chapter has shown, the processes associated with acquiring certain in-demand commodities, specifically gunpowder, played a significant role in facilitating the Creeks’ political and diplomatic strategies during this era. Gunpowder could serve as a tool of negotiation or an instrument of force in Creek-European interactions, meaning access to gunpowder supplies provided members of the Confederacy with avenues toward power, authority, and independence.

⁴⁶ “Ruiz del Canto’s Journey to San Marcos de Apalache,” September 26, 1779, 1290 F221-223. Papeles de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. <https://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Projects/uchize>

Chapter 5: “To Enjoy the Advantages of a Neutrality”: Gunpowder and the Creek Play-Off Strategy in the American Revolution, 1774-1776.

In late September 1775, Sempoyaffee and a number of Lower Creek headmen, including Blue Salt, the Pumpkin King, and the Long Warrior, sent a talk to Superintendent Stuart. Stuart had recently arrived in Loyalist East Florida seeking refuge from the growing Revolutionary movement in Georgia and South Carolina. “We hear there is some difference between the white people,” Sempoyaffee began, “and we are all sorry to hear it.” But the Rebels, he continued, “have sent us a handfull of powder and lead, and now we see your good talk and send us word to come down [to St. Augustine] and get more.” Though the micos welcomed gifts of gunpowder and ammunition from both sides, they expressed their desire to remain “in friendship with all white men.” “We all see now your talk is good,” they informed Stuart, “and the talk from the beloved men from Georgia is the same. We like them both very well, and are not desired to Join any one party.”¹ With this declaration of neutrality, Lower Creek leaders confirmed what Stuart and colonial officials already knew; a decade of significant effort and expense had failed to establish British superiority in the region, rendering the Crown unable to assert control over the Creeks and their neighbors. Because of this, Loyalists would struggle to secure a Creek alliance, particularly from the Lower towns, in the impending war with their rebellious colonies.

The possibility of a full-scale rebellion provided new opportunities for members of the Creek Confederacy to preserve their independence. In many ways, Creeks had been preparing for this moment since 1763, skillfully adjusting to the geopolitical shifts

¹ “Lower Creek Reply to Superintendent Stuart, Declaring Neutrality,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 177.

that followed the Seven Years' War in ways that allowed for the maintenance of their power, autonomy, and ways of life. Britain's victory produced changes that impacted Southeastern native societies on a local-level. The ways in which indigenous peoples responded to these changes were diverse and subjective, resulting in new ideas concerning power in the Creek world. Consequently, the Creek Confederacy of the 1760s and early 1770s saw the emergence of new notions of masculinity, which produced intense violence, widening generational divisions, divergent approaches toward securing legitimacy and authority, and deepening rifts between the Upper and Lower towns. But these adaptations, and their sociopolitical and cultural ramifications, enabled Creeks to preserve factionalism and important tenets of their previous diplomatic policy of neutrality through the 1760s and 1770s. As seen in the Lower Creek talk to Stuart, the outbreak of the American Revolution provided an opening for Creeks to directly replicate the European competition they had benefitted from earlier in the eighteenth century, bringing them closer to reestablishing neutrality than they ever had been during the previous decade.

Understanding both Rebel and Loyalist goals, Creeks used the Confederacy's Upper and Lower divisions, as well as local-level decision-making processes, to resurrect their play-off strategy of earlier decades.² While some headmen, like Sempoyaffee, chose to officially declare neutrality, the preservation of certain coalescent-based sociopolitical practices allowed individual micos, towns, and villages to determine which

² Throughout the war, British officials referred to the colonial opposition as "Rebels" or "Rebel forces." They usually did not refer to them as "Patriots," and likely never acknowledged them as "Americans" or the "Continental Army." To remain historically consistent, this chapter will also employ the term "Rebel."

cause, if any, they would support.³ This safeguarded the neutral position of the entire Confederacy, ensuring the Creeks, as a whole, would not be forced into an alliance with one side over the other. Stuart's strong relationship with Emistisiguo and The Second Man of Little Tallassee, two prominent Upper Creek headmen, tilted many of the Upper towns in favor of the Loyalists.⁴ Many Lower Creek communities, in contrast, actively worked to distance themselves from Stuart and British policies. Their continued contact with the Spanish in Havana, as well as aggressive behavior toward frontier settlements and long-standing personal relationships with Rebel sympathizers Jonathan Bryan and George Galphin, pushed a significant number of Lower Creek towns toward the cause of neutrality.⁵ Thus, the balance of power diplomacy that had served the Creeks so well earlier in the century proved beneficial once again during the first years of the Revolution, affording the larger Confederacy greater flexibility. "The Creeks do not seem hearty in joining against them," Deputy Superintendent David Taitt informed Stuart in 1776, "but would much rather wish to enjoy the advantages of a neutrality by being paid from both parties."⁶

³ Because of the Creek Confederacy's fluid nature, exact numbers of Creek towns and villages vary in the historiography. Historian Joshua Piker estimates that fifty-six towns and villages made up the Creek Confederacy in 1763, whereas anthropologist Robbie Etheridge approximates that the number was closer to seventy-three villages during this time. Because of the ephemeral nature of Creek life, both Piker's and Etheridge's numbers could be correct. I have chosen to approximate the number of villages at fifty-nine based on a report made by Francis Ogilvie, Interim Governor of West Florida from 1763 to 1764. Ogilvie noted fifty-nine Upper and Lower towns and 3,603 Creek "gun men" in the entire confederacy. Please see Piker, *Okfuskee*, 6; Etheridge, *Creek Country*, 31; Francis Ogilvie, "A List of Towns and Number of Gun Men in the Creek Nation," chart, 1764, American Series Vol. 21, The Thomas Gage Papers, 1754-1807, The William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁴ The Upper Creek towns are considered more conservative than their Lower counterparts, with most headmen favoring cautious, controlled interactions with the British. It is also well known that Stuart favored the Tallapoosas, who were Upper Creeks. Please see J. Russell Snapp, "Emistisiguo," in *Colonial Wars of North America: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan Galloway (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996); David Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 269.

⁵ "Devolution and Revolution," in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 129.

⁶ "David Taitt to John Stuart," 1776, in *Documents of the American Revolution*, V12; 159; Also quoted in Galloway, "Alternate Source of Trade," 209.

This chapter investigates how Upper and Lower Creeks took advantage of the schism between the Crown and the colonies, re-working their play-off strategy of earlier decades into a new version of neutrality that allowed the Confederacy to maintain collective power and autonomy during the first years of the American Revolution.⁷ The persistence of Creek factionalism, and the modified version of neutrality that it allowed, created space for Creeks to identify, and benefit from, Rebel and Loyalist weaknesses during the conflict's early years. Creek headmen often determined the terms of diplomacy with the Rebels and Loyalists who were trying to secure their allegiance. As the rebellion took shape, Creeks throughout the Confederacy successfully manipulated both sides to secure a steady supply of trade goods that, as evidenced above, usually included gunpowder and ammunition. Discussions of gunpowder heavily influenced cross-cultural dealings during this period, as Rebels, Loyalists, and Creeks each used it to achieve their own goals. Consequently, this chapter explores gunpowder's place within the Creeks' revised neutrality narrative, using both Creek demands for gunpowder and ammunition, as well as Rebel and Loyalist discussions about these supplies, to better understand how Upper and Lower Creeks interacted with both sides to maintain neutrality and independence in the first years of the Revolution.

Continued Creek violence upon settler populations, aggravated by the New Purchase land cession of 1773, impelled the Southern governors to re-establish amiable relationships with the Creeks if they hoped to recruit them as potential allies in the growing Rebel movement. As the Crown's focus began to shift toward controlling their colonial populations, British administrators implemented a temporary stoppage of the

⁷ Gallay, "Alternate Source of Trade," 230.

Creek trade. Beginning with Georgia in early 1774 and spreading to East Florida, West Florida, and South Carolina by mid-summer, Stuart and others intended for the embargo to support a narrative of British superiority and Creek dependence. They also hoped a trade prohibition would force the Creeks to “give satisfaction,” for recent attacks upon New Purchase settlers, and encourage them to accept a Choctaw peace. The goal was to motivate both native groups to support of the Loyalist cause in the case of a full-scale rebellion. By October, Georgia’s Governor Wright declared that the obstruction of the trade had finally “convinced” the Creeks of their reliance on British trade goods. “They saw (which they never would believe before),” Wright boasted, “that the Trade could be Stop’t. They saw the Four Provinces unite, and then Declared that they found we were one People and that if they made War with Georgia it was making war with all the other Provinces . . .” On top of this, “they also found themselves reduced to the greatest Necessity and Distress for having received no Supplies for ten months.”⁸ Superintendent Stuart also touted the plan’s success. “Nothing but the Distress occasioned by stopping the Trade induced the Creeks to give the Satisfaction that was demanded,” Stuart wrote in January 1775, “[as] they were pushed hard by the Chactaws and had little or no Ammunition among them.”⁹

The reflections of Wright and Stuart failed to consider the Lower Creeks’ continued diplomatic connections with Spanish Cuba, which the British were well aware of by the fall of 1774. They also overlooked their supplementary trade relationship with Jonathan Bryan, established when Lower Creek leaders leased almost five million acres of territory in East Florida to the entrepreneurial land owner in exchange for a steady, but

⁸ “Governor Wright to the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State, Reporting on the Creek Congress,” 1774, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 156-157.

⁹ “Superintendent Stuart to General Gage,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 167.

clandestine, supply of European goods. Understanding that British sympathizers would need as much indigenous support as possible as the Revolutionary struggle unfolded, Wright and Stuart likely washed over these issues when communicating with their superiors to paint a picture of British dominance and control in the region. Once it became clear to the Loyalists that the Creeks would play a crucial role in the conflict, potentially as military allies, both sides worked rapidly to secure the Confederacy's support. The Rebels, in contrast, initially worked to keep the Southeastern Indians neutral. They rightly understood that the Creeks had more to gain from a Loyalist alliance, particularly gunpowder and ammunition.

While British colonists in North America had long been unable to produce gunpowder because they lacked the saltpeter, charcoal, and sulphur needed to create it, they were also hindered by the fact that the Crown had kept their colonies free of the facilities that were necessary to manufacture it. Mercantilism had restricted the development of commercial agriculture and manufacturing in British North America since the late seventeenth century. To keep wealth within the empire, the colonies served as a source of raw materials for the mother country, where these resources became transformed into consumer goods that were then sold to British subjects around the globe. By the mid 1770s, this economic policy promised to create difficulties for the growing Rebel movement, hindering their production of the gunpowder necessary to fuel their insurrection and secure indigenous allies.

Though Loyalists faced similar hurdles, their pro-British stance initially allowed them easier access to gunpowder and ammunition through established channels.¹⁰ But

¹⁰ In the spring of 1776 the king issued a war measure prohibiting trade between Great Britain and the American colonies. This hindered loyalists from accessing and importing gunpowder from British

where Indian relations were concerned, the Rebels had an invaluable advantage with George Galphin, who “had no pale faced rival for influence among the Lower Creeks, and few among the colonists.”¹¹ Establishing himself as a trader and merchant in the early 1740s, he quickly cemented his connections to Coweta micos through marriage to the sister of Escotchaby and Sempoyaffee. This familial bond motivated the Southern colonial governors to engage Galphin as an unofficial agent to the Lower Creeks, using him as necessary to meddle in Indian affairs.¹² After decades of serving as an intermediary between the Lower Creeks and Georgia, Galphin was primed to lead the colony’s Revolutionary movement. Though he was initially hesitant to join the rebellion, he did so out of fear that continued British colonial rule would threaten his children’s economic futures. But longstanding tensions with Superintendent Stuart (the two men shared a mutual dislike) also influenced Galphin’s decision.¹³ By the spring of 1774, Revolutionary leaders were poised to exploit this rivalry, with the Georgia and South Carolina Councils of Safety naming Galphin their “Indian Commissioner.” With the Revolutionary “Indian Department” now centered at his Silver Bluff plantation, Galphin “mobilized his connections in the Native South to create one of the largest information-gathering infrastructures in that region.” Consequently, Galphin’s home served as the

merchants, and limited their ability to provide Indians with the goods necessary to secure their allegiance. "Letter from the Parliament of Great Britain, Prohibiting all Trade and Intercourse with the Colonies in Rebellion," March 14, 1776, R8; V665; Doc 32, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, Georgia Records, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

¹¹ “Devolution and Revolution,” in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 128.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Galphin was a proponent of Creek neutrality until a group of Loyalists, suspected to be acting upon orders from Stuart, attempted to assassinate him in early 1777. Moving forward, “Galphin labored zealously to banish British agents from their stronghold in Creek Country . . .” Bryan Rindfleisch, "George Galphin and the War in the South, 1775-1780," allthingsliberty.com, last modified September 1, 2015, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2015/09/george-galpin-and-the-war-in-the-south-1775-1780/>

center for Rebel negotiations with Southeastern native peoples throughout the Revolution.¹⁴

Throughout 1774, Superintendent Stuart, his deputy David Taitt, and Governor Wright heavily criticized Galphin for acting counter to their interests regarding the Lower Creek. In January of that year, Taitt accused Galphin of blatantly “deceiving” a number of headmen concerning the amount of gunpowder and ammunition they should expect to receive from Stuart as part of their annual presents. Galphin informed them that Stuart and Wright had apportioned “two Horse Load of Ammunition, two Boxes Paint and Two Keggs Rum,” for the small towns, and “four Horse Load of Ammunition, Three Boxes Paint and Four Keggs Rum,” for the large towns, each horse load carrying forty pounds of powder. Taitt alleged, however, that Galphin was “willfully mistaken” in this assertion, as Stuart and Wright had ordered only one horse load of ammunition sent to the large towns. The remaining three horse loads were to arrive after the Creeks’ annual Busk celebration in August, and only if their behavior justified it. According to Taitt, a number of towns, including Coweta, had not yet received any gunpowder. “I have a great deal of Trouble with the Indians on this Account,” complained Taitt, “[and] I must now beg the favour of you to give me Orders what to say to the Indians on this subject and whether they need to Expect the fulfillment of the Agreement made with them.” Their agitation would only increase upon realizing they would not be receiving two horse loads as Galphin had told them. Adding to the confusion were the actions of the traders, none of whom had a valid license. Those from Silver Bluff believed “that the Old Licenses were to Serve until Summer which is not so, the Licenses were all expired in November.” To keep their goods from being seized, “Mr. Galphin’s traders are Running from Town to

¹⁴ Ibid.

Town along the Tallapoosa River with Goods without any kind of Certificate to Show to whom they belong. They say,” he concluded, “that it is Mr. Galphin’s orders so to do.”¹⁵

Galphin’s actions reinforced Lower Creek skepticism of Stuart, and drew many of these towns even closer to his interest. As 1774 progressed, his blatant disregard for Indian policy, particularly the decision to close the Creek trade, gradually wore down British colonial officials. In September of that year, Stuart reported that a number of Galphin’s traders, in conjunction with others from East Florida, “have been detected in Supplying the Creek Indians largely with goods and ammunition, and I hope they will be dealt with by the Governors according to their Deserts.” These illicit activities, paired with continued violence between the Creeks and the backcountry settlers, “frustrated and rendered abortive” Stuart and Wright’s efforts “to restore and maintain peace” by stopping the trade. Unauthorized trading originating from Silver Bluff continued through the end of the year. Though the British lifted the Creek embargo in late October, Wright’s discovery of the Bryan lease on October 14 kept tensions high and trade guidelines strict. Galphin and his traders, however, continued to operate according to their own rules. In December, Taitt informed Stuart that a John Kinnard had reported meeting two of Galphin’s Indian factors on the lower path. The factors had “fourteen horse loads of ammunition” between them, and told Kinnard “that they had Bought the Goods at Mr. Galphins.” An irritated Taitt requested that an affidavit of the meeting be sent to Governor Wright, remarking, “altho [sic] it will be impossible to prosecute these people of Silver Bluff it will serve to shew his Excellency how they made good their

¹⁵ David Taitt, "Galphin and Taitt Ammunition," 1774, R7; V75; No 0002, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

story which they told the Indians at Savannah that they would Trade as they pleased and pay no Regard to any Regulations.”¹⁶

Knowing that the Creeks were desperate for ammunition, Loyalist officials used their access to gunpowder as a way to control the Confederacy and secure their support in the forthcoming Revolution. Though the Rebels clearly served to benefit from Galphin’s connections, they were at a disadvantage when it came to acquiring supplies of gunpowder and ammunition for potential Creek allies. They needed to find opportunities to even the odds. In June 1775, Galphin sent a talk to the Lower Creeks informing them that he was the new Superintendent of Indian Affairs. He stated that “Mr. Stuart’s end was near at hand, it being determined that he should die: and that they were not to expect any more talks from him.” Galphin additionally told the Lower Creeks that “the Americans had quarreled with the great King because he wanted to withdraw the trade from the Indians,” but as he “took part with the Americans,” they should listen closely to his talk.¹⁷ Shortly thereafter, Rebel groups began seizing incoming supplies of gunpowder and ammunition from British ships. On June 27, Governor Wright reported the arrival of one hundred armed men from South Carolina at the mouth of the Savannah River. “We expect a vessel from London every day, with a considerable quantity of gunpowder on board,” Wright explained, “and report says, that these people mean to take it out, and carry it away; and it is not in my power to prevent it.”¹⁸ On July 7, the ship *Philippa* arrived, carrying thirteen thousand pounds of gunpowder and seven hundred

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Report to Stuart on Galphin’s Rebellious Talk to the Lower Creeks and the Cussita King’s Reply,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 168.

¹⁸ R.W. Gibbes, ed., *Documentary History of the American Revolution: Consisting of Letters and Papers Relating to the Contest for Liberty, Chiefly in South Carolina, from originals in Possession of the Editor, and other Sources* (New York: Appleton Press, 1853), 1:101. <https://archive.org/details/gibbsdocument01gibbrich>.

weight of lead bullets. The Rebels that Wright had referred to ten days earlier quickly approached the *Philippa*, and after producing an order from the Georgia Provincial Congress, boarded the vessel and confiscated its cargo.

The *Philippa* seizure could not have come at a better time for South Carolina's members in the Continental Congress, who just a week earlier had issued an appeal to their colony's Secret Committee for gunpowder supplies. Headed by William Henry Drayton, a wealthy planter and lawyer, South Carolina established the Secret Committee in April to engage in covert activities against the British. They spent the next two months raiding gunpowder magazines throughout the colony, as well as the armory in Charleston. As news of the committee's successes reached Philadelphia, the Continental Congress asked Drayton to secure gunpowder for their newly established Continental Army. Hoping for at least four thousand pounds, they asked Drayton to send as much as the colony could spare from their public stock, including any damaged or spoiled powder. They additionally requested that the Southern colonies "secure all the saltpetre that can be got as well from the stores as from private persons," for manufacture in Philadelphia. "As large quantities of powder will be wanted," the letter concluded, "we strongly recommend that you continue to import all you can."¹⁹

Following the Rebels' capture of the *Philippa*, Drayton organized a shipment of gunpowder to Philadelphia. The provincial governments of South Carolina and Georgia divided the remainder of the loot, with the Georgians sending two thousand pounds to the

¹⁹ "Application From Our Members in Congress for Gun Powder, July 1 1775, Addressed to The Secret Committee W.H. Drayton, A. Middleton, C. C. Pinckney," 1775, in *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, ed. Robert Wilson Gibbes (New York, NY: Appleton and Company Press, 1855), 117, <https://archive.org/details/documentaryhisto01gibbuoft/page/117>. The Continental Congress informed the Secret Committee, "In order to prevent suspicion, we have sent bushels of Indian corn in this vessel which may be sold or exchanged for rice, in which the casks of powder may be concealed, so, perhaps, as to prevent suspicion, should she unhappily be unable to avoid being overtaken by a cruiser."

Creeks as a gift “not from the King or from the [royal] Government or from the Traders, but from the People of the Province.”²⁰ Word of the gunpowder seizure quickly reached British officials, though they were not immediately aware that a portion of the plunder was headed to Indian country. Writing to General Gage almost two weeks later, Stuart described the Rebels’ appropriation of *Philippa* as “very unlucky, as it prevents a supply by the traders to the different [Indian] nations, which they will probably attribute to the other reasons than the true one.” He correctly postulated, “the great supply of ammunition and other presents which their agents will be enabled to carry will possibly have a great effect on the Indians.”²¹ David Taitt was in the Upper Creek town of Little Tallassee to meet with the headmen and “acquaint the Indians with the situation of affairs in the different province[s],” when a group of traders from Savannah arrived to deliver the news about *Philippa*. Taitt urged the micos to keep their young people away from the backcountry settlements “for fear of any accident happening by any of the mobs.” The headmen “promised to do all in their power to keep their people quiet until they should see how matters would turn out,” but, according to Taitt, they expressed frustration at the Rebels “for stopping their ammunition and fighting against the Great King’s people.” “They told me,” he continued, “that if ammunition could be got soon things might remain quiet among them, but if they could not be supplied they could not answer for what their

²⁰ James H. O'Donnell, III, *Southern Indians in the American Revolution* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 19. O'Donnell cites the original Document as Sir James Wright to Lord Dartmouth, July 18, 1775 “Wright Letters” Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, III, 199. This letter is also cited in J. Russell Snapp, *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire on the Southern Frontier* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 163; See also Sheldon Cohen, “The Philippa Affair,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (Fall 1985), 350-351; In August, David Taitt informed Charles Stuart, Deputy Superintendent to the Choctaws, “[the] Carolina Committee will not give the Cherokees any Ammunition so that you may easy Judge what the consequence must be.” See also “Taitt to Deputy Superintendent Charles Stuart,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 171.

²¹ John Stuart, “Letter from Stuart to Gage,” July 20, 1775, Document 174, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

young people might do.” Taitt “begged them to wait patiently for about two months as I was sure that in that time they might have a supply of ammunition . . .” After asking the same of the Lower Creeks, Taitt sent a request to Mobile to purchase four hundred pounds of gunpowder from the merchants there, and to borrow an additional amount from Governor Chester, if needed.²²

Following his meeting with the Lower Creek, Taitt expressed concern that Galphin, the Rebels’ newly appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs, had sent his own private talks to the Confederacy. “There seems a coolness among the headmen to me not usual among them, and that villain Sympiaffe refused to come to the meeting. The Pompkin King,” he continued, “observed their cool behavior but could not tell the reason of it . . .” Anxious to smooth things over, Taitt asked Stuart for a daily update on the powder from Mobile. “Should it be entirely kept from these people they will certainly go in a body to demand it and a refusal will most certainly prove the ruin of Georgia. At present there is a great murmuring about it,” Taitt concluded, “and if they can only get a supply of that article I believe they will remain neuter [sic].”²³

From the summer of 1775 through the end of 1776, Rebel and Loyalist diplomacy with the Creeks centered upon gunpowder.²⁴ If the *Philippa* raid illuminated the logistical challenges of importing gunpowder for the Loyalist cause, the months that followed revealed the difficulties both sides would face in using it to gain Creek support. As Loyalists and Rebels struggled to meet indigenous demands, they increasingly undercut the other in meetings and talks with native peoples. In August, Superintendent Stuart sent a talk to the Confederacy addressing the *Philippa* incident. “I was sorry to

²² "David Taitt to John Stuart," 1776, in *Documents of the American Revolution*, V12; 159.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Report to Stuart on Galphin’s Rebellious Talk," in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 168.

hear that the Gun Powder, which the Merchants and Traders had sent for to England, that they might supply the Red people with a Necessary quantity for hunting and Defence against their enemies had been seized on account of a difference amongst the white People . . . They have, I understand, sent you some of it – but not a sufficient quantity for Your necessities.” Stuart assured the headmen that he would soon send them powder and bullets, as long as their people behaved well and placed themselves in the British interest. He described the colonial rebellion as “an unhappy Dispute between the People of England and the white People of America, which however cannot affect you.” “It is not the Intention of Either Party,” Stuart concluded, “to hurt or Molest you . . . ”²⁵

A few weeks later, David Taitt received news from his trusted confidant, Emistisiguo, of Rebel maneuverings among the Lower Creek. Galphin had recently sent a messenger to the micos of the Lower towns to tell them he “would fill the Superintendants place in the Nation . . . ”²⁶ Shortly thereafter, Galphin sent another representative to the Lower Creek towns to inform them of “some Persons that is coming up with some Ammunition as a present to the Indians from the rebels . . . two thousand Weight of Powder and four thousand Weight of Bullets . . . ”²⁷ Galphin warned the Creek that Stuart and Wright had intended to impoverish them, and as their new superintendent he was “the only proper Person to take Care of the Indians.” To bolster his position of influence, Galphin also informed the headmen that some Rebels were now making their own gunpowder at Hollow Creek, near his Silver Bluff plantation; he did not, however,

²⁵ “Superintendent Stuart to Lower and Upper Creek Chiefs,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 170.

²⁶ “Report to Stuart on Galphin’s Rebellious Talk to the Lower Creeks and the Cussita King’s Reply,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 168.

²⁷ “Taitt to Deputy Superintendent Charles Stuart,” in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 170. Taitt noted this gunpowder was “part of Captain Maitland’s Cargo . . . ” Richard Maitland captained the *Philippa* in July 1775.

promise to send them any.²⁸ Around the same time, Jonathan Bryan also sent a talk to the Lower Creek, telling them “that His Majesty allowed Sir James Wright and Mr. Stuart a great many Presents to give the Indians, but they kept them from them on purpose to purchase their Lands . . .” Perhaps hoping to secure more Creek territory for himself, Bryan promised “to send them up a Present of Ammunition,” to relieve some of their distress.²⁹

Though Galphin and Bryan were trying “every means in their power to set the Indians against Sir James Wright and Mr. Stuart,” Taitt was pleased to hear Emistisiguo report “none of the Chiefs would give any consent to any of these Talks except Sempoyaffie and some of the Cowetas.” Taitt asserted that the other Lower Creek towns “have agreed to everything that I have said to them and will pay no regard to any Talks but what comes from Mr. Stuart or the Governors of the different Colonies as they look upon them only to have the Great Kings Mouth.” He firmly believed that they “will rest quiet,” if they continued to view the rebellion as “the white people’s disturbance.” But Emistisiguo also communicated that the Lower Creeks seemed “very much Confused with different Stories brought into their Nation by different People.” As he knew well, this “confusion” was typical of the factionalism that characterized the eighteenth-century Creek world. Factionalism encouraged division within the Confederacy, which allowed the Creeks to sustain their diplomatic policy of neutrality in the years before 1763.

Emistisiguo observed Lower Creek “confusion” once again, as individuals, towns, and

²⁸ This statement about gunpowder manufacturing should be viewed with skepticism. If a group of Rebels was actually making gunpowder at Hollow Creek, they were probably only producing enough for their own personal use. Galphin likely tried to use this information to ease Creek skepticism about his ability to provide them with gunpowder and ammunition.

²⁹ “Taitt to Deputy Superintendent Charles Stuart,” in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 170-171.

villages worked to manipulate Rebel and Loyalist tensions to their advantage. They hoped to play off of widening colonial divisions to achieve a number of goals that would allow for the maintenance of Creek independence and ways of life. One aim was to secure access to gunpowder and ammunition.

The ways in which Creeks worked to secure goods differed throughout the Confederacy, particularly between the Upper and Lower towns. The persistence of coalescent-based social, diplomatic, and cultural practices during the Revolution's first years let individual Creek leaders and specific communities negotiate with the antagonistic colonials on their own terms. Creeks occupied a position that allowed them to collectively determine the terms of diplomacy with Loyalists and Rebels, enabling the Confederacy as a whole to maintain authority and independence in the region despite localized interactions that, from an outsiders' perspective, might be viewed as contradictory. Though members of the Creek Confederacy held shared ambitions and goals, such as gaining gunpowder supplies, the various paths they took to attain them resulted in a modified version of neutrality that became obvious to Loyalist and Rebel officials by the fall of 1775. In early September a group of Lower Creek headmen asked Governor Wright to send them "as much ammunition, as you Possibly can," and promised that they would not entertain any talks that did not come from him or "the beloved man," John Stuart. But the micos also made their current neutral stance clear, telling Wright, "We are determined to Lye quiet and not Meddle with the Quarrel." "We wish all the White People well," they claimed, "And as you are all one Mothers Children,

we hope the Great Man above, will Soon Make Peace between you, that you May Live as usual.”³⁰

A few weeks later, Emistisiguo, speaking on behalf of the Upper Creek, sent a similar talk to Stuart. He told the Superintendent that while the Indians “know very well that no white man but a Governor or the Alibama King can make a Talk or give to receive anything of a red man,” they would continue to “Look upon all the white people as one people . . . [and] hope that the Governor of Saint Augustine and the Alibama King will use their endeavor to reconcile matters between the white people, that they may not remain in Confusion.”³¹ Like his counterparts in the Lower towns, Emistisiguo’s desire for peace amongst the colonial populations was directly connected to gunpowder supplies. The British, he said, had long agreed to support the Creeks with ammunition, and as “The great King Ordered the ships allways to come over with a Supply for us, we do not know the reason why they should now be hindered . . .” While Emistisiguo was glad to hear that Stuart had secured some gunpowder and ammunition for his people, he expressed frustration that they would have to travel hundreds of miles from Little Tallassee to St. Augustine in order to retrieve it. “We cannot get Horses to send for the Powder and bullets,” he relayed. “We did not Expect that you was at St. Augustine but expected you to be at Pensacola where we made you a King and where you promised to take Care of the red people.” Emistisiguo then informed Stuart that the long journey to St. Augustine for a “handful” of powder would not be feasible. “You must Consider,” he

³⁰ “Lower Creek Reply to Governor Wright’s Talk of July 25,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 173-174.

³¹ Both the Upper and Lower Creeks often called Stuart as the “Alibama King,” as well as the “Beloved Man.”

concluded, “we are not a small people but many in Number and the Quantity of Ammunition will be too little.”³²

Emistisiguo, with the unnamed chiefs from the Lower towns, correctly understood that if the Revolution intensified, indigenous access to gunpowder and ammunition would be severely compromised. Thus, on the surface, Emistisiguo’s decision to snub Stuart’s offer appears impulsive and somewhat irresponsible. From the Creek perspective, however, this choice was strategically wise. Unlike other micos, Emistisiguo had a close relationship with Superintendent Stuart. Though he often used this relationship to his advantage, this connection naturally encouraged Loyalist leanings. Emistisiguo knew that as the rebellion escalated, a discernable preference toward the British cause could pose a risk to Little Tallessee’s position of influence, damaging his own legitimacy as a leader and threatening the autonomy of the Confederacy as a whole. By snubbing what he perceived to be a paltry gift of gunpowder, Emistisiguo reminded Stuart, Taitt, and other Loyalist leaders that an alliance with the Upper towns was not a guarantee, and that the Creeks were not as dependent on ammunition as British officials tried to make them out to be. In illuminating this perspective, Emistisiguo provided an Upper Creek counterbalance to the actions of the Lower Creek, many of whom continued to journey to Havana during this period, returning to Coweta with small amounts of Spanish gunpowder. Emistisiguo’s approach supported larger Creek efforts to maintain a position of authority in cross-cultural diplomacy, often forcing Loyalists and Rebels to acquiesce to the demands of individual towns and headmen.

³² “Emistisiguo’s Reply to Superintendent Stuart’s Talk of August 15,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 174-175.

Around the same time Emistisiguo rebuffed the offer of gunpowder from St. Augustine, David Taitt reported standoffish behavior from the Lower Creeks. He had recently arrived in the town of Chehaw, a village on the Chattahoochee River just south of Coweta, to deliver thirteen horse loads of ammunition from the Loyalists.³³ Taitt was to divide the gunpowder among the town micos in attendance and deliver a message of peace and friendship from Governor Wright. Shortly after his arrival, however, a talk arrived from the Georgia Council of Safety, explaining their reasons “for Keeping the Ammunition that was intended for the Indian trade and Acquainting them of the Quantity of Ammunition now sent them as a present.” They blamed aggressive Crown policies, namely, “his Majesty’s demanding more money of the people on this side of the great water than they could afford to pay . . .” for only sending the Creeks two thousand pounds of the gunpowder seized from *Philippa*. Because the king had “sent his Soldiers to demand [the colonists’ money],” and there were rumors that “the French or Spaniards was to [also] make war against his Majesty . . .” the Rebels argued that they needed as much gunpowder as possible in case they might “Join as one Man [with the French and Spanish] to feight there enemy.” The interpreter also read a letter from Galphin, “acquainting the Indians how far he had been their friend in writing to the to the people of Georgia and Carolina in their favour,” and “promising the Indians of a Supply of Goods etc. as usual from them . . .”³⁴

³³ Taitt states that the thirteen horse loads was the “quota” for the Lower Creeks, but it is unclear if this is in reference to an annual quota or an amount agreed upon at a previous meeting. As a general rule of thumb, horses should carry no more than twenty percent of their body weight. An average, twelve hundred pound horse, therefore, should only carry no more than two hundred and forty pounds of gunpowder. Thus, Taitt’s delivery would only bring about three thousand pounds of gunpowder to numerous Lower Creek communities, not much more than the Rebels gifted the Creeks from *Philippa*.

³⁴ “Taitt to Superintendent Stuart,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 176-177.

The Lower Creek headmen “would only give one answer to His Excellencys, Mr. Golphins and that from the Committee,” refusing to acknowledge each talk individually. Though he did not detail their reply, it appeared to Taitt “that the Cowetas had received their lesson before they came into the square, for Escochabee behaved rather a little too rash . . .” Taitt observed divisiveness among the Coweta headmen, noting that while some “seemed well satisfied with their share of the present,” others “esteemed it as a mere nothing.”³⁵ But this discord proved beneficial for the Lower Creeks, particularly those Cowetas who held strong ties to influential Rebel leaders. The messages from Wright, Galphin, and the Georgia Council of Safety made clear that all sides had come to understand the critical role of Creek participation in the struggle. Members of the Confederacy welcomed this realization, as it created opportunities for them to demonstrate neutrality by revisiting their play-off strategy from earlier in the century. The Lower Creeks’ collective reply to the Rebel and Loyalist talks exhibited their neutral position, showing Taitt and others that they might not be as willing to support the rebellion as previously thought. As the Cowetas’ reaction to the Loyalist ammunition elucidates, however, convincing them to support the British would also be a difficult task. Moving forward, Creek cooperation would depend largely on access to gunpowder, requiring Loyalists and Rebels to ensure a near-constant flow of it into Creek communities.

Stuart and Taitt were accordingly relieved to receive news that General Gage was sending powder from Boston to East Florida. He hoped this gift would enable Stuart “to supply the Indians with what they want and consequently bind them more firmly to you . . .” But Gage’s request went beyond using gunpowder to induce the Creeks to support

³⁵ Ibid.

the Loyalist cause. Relaying that the Massachusetts Rebels “have brought down all the Savages they could against us here,” Gage advised Stuart to use the ammunition to “make the Indians take arms against his Majesty’s Enemies,” while he “still has it in his power to hold a correspondence with them.”³⁶ Though General Gage hoped to shift Loyalist Indian strategy toward an approach that used gunpowder to engage native peoples as active combatants, Stuart understood this plan would not work with the Creek Confederacy. The rebellion in the Southern colonies differed deeply from that in Massachusetts, making Stuart reluctant to follow through with Gage’s request. “As a great majority of the frontier and back inhabitants of Carolina are attached to and inclined to support the [Rebel] government,” Stuart replied, “I conceive that an indiscriminate attack by Indians would be contrary to your Excellency’s idea, and might do much harm.”³⁷

It is likely that anxieties about gunpowder supplies also shaped Stuart’s perspective, influencing his decision to seek the support of individual headmen through medals, titles, and accolades. In mid-October, he asked Taitt to “apply in private to Emistisiguo and the Second Man of the little Tallassees, and endeavor by every practicable means to engage them to act in His Majesty’s service, and I shall see whatever promises you shall think necessary to make fulfilled.” While this may have included gifts of ammunition, Stuart explicitly instructed Taitt to ensure that Emistisiguo knew if he “exert[ed] himself in the King’s cause,” he would “draw to himself the greatest honour,” and “he may be assured of every Mark of distinction or favour that I can conferr on him.” Understanding that the non-elite members of the Confederacy

³⁶ Thomas Gage, “Employing Indians Against Rebels,” 1775, R7; V76; No 0253, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

³⁷ “Superintendent Stuart to Gage,” 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 178-179.

would likely demand gunpowder, Stuart encouraged Taitt to blame inadequate supplies the on dissenting populations. “In Publick,” he explained, “let your Talks in general be tending to confirm the Confidence of the Indians in His Majesty and his Servants, to convince them that their want of Trade and Ammunition is entirely owing to the bad Designs of the Rebels.” Taitt was also to warn the Upper Creek communities that if they chose to support the “committee people,” they “must continue Poor and deprived of the means of subsistence; whereas by attaching themselves to the King’s interest, they will find plenty of all necessaries pouring in upon them from Pensacola and St. Augustine.”³⁸

Stuart’s directives represent the Loyalists’ fragile position in the Southeast as well as the success of the Creek play-off strategy. The obvious unpredictability of gunpowder supplies allowed Emistisiguo to both determine the terms of diplomacy with the Loyalists and Rebels, and potentially influence the Upper Creek towns to support one side over the other. Knowing that he could not rely solely on gunpowder to secure Emistisiguo’s interest, Stuart hoped instead to employ a modified version of the medal chief strategy. By emphasizing Emistisiguo’s influence and guaranteeing him further recognition if he could promise that the Upper Creeks would assist the Crown, Stuart sought to bolster the Loyalists’ diplomatic position. In so doing, he aimed to offset any weaknesses that Emistisiguo, or other micos, might perceive of their irregular access to ammunition. Since he could not bestow titles or accolades upon common Creeks, Stuart publicly misrepresented the Loyalists’ ability to secure gunpowder for the region’s native peoples. Thus, he sought to disingenuously draw everyday Creeks toward a Loyalist alliance to strengthen their position of power in the region. The persistence of Creek factionalism,

³⁸ John Stuart, "Emistisiguo Mark of Distinction," 1775, R7; V76; No 0253, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

however, hindered the plan's success. While Stuart may have been able to draw a number of Upper Creeks towards an alliance, the Lower towns had already made their stance clear.³⁹ By late November, the need to undercut Lower Creek neutrality had become critical. To make this happen, Stuart called a meeting with the Lower Creeks, hoping to counteract recent Rebel meddling. "I find no Argument prevail so much with the Indians," he informed Lord Dartmouth, "as telling them that whilst the present Disturbances continued they could not Expect to be supplied with Ammunition and other necessaries from Carolina and Georgia, and that it would be their own interest to join His Majestys faithfull Subjects in restoring Government and good order."⁴⁰

On December 4, Stuart met with a large group of Lower Creek warriors and headmen at the Cowfords, a well-known location near the St. John's River on the path that connected St. Augustine with the major trading towns in Georgia. Accusing the Rebels of "shut[ting] their Eyes and their Ears as they grope about in the Dark and refuse to hear the great King's talks," Stuart reminded the Creeks that "The Goods, Arms and Ammunition which the Traders Usually carried amongst you, were made in England by the People of that Country – for the people of Georgia and Carolina cannot Make any . . ." Drawing upon the Confederacy's well-established trade relationships with Great Britain, Stuart urged the Indians to recall that it was "by the great King's permission and order that Ships used to bring gunpowder and ammunition to Savannah and Charles Town every year. Traders carried them Amongst your Towns, and bartered them for Deer Skins, by which Means you found yourselves happy and your Wants supplied."

³⁹ "Lower Creek Reply to Superintendent Stuart, Declaring Neutrality," 1775, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 177.

⁴⁰ John Stuart, "Stuart Ceasing Gunpowder to Indians," 1775, R7; V77; No 0305, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

While the British “sent out Ships with the Usual Supplies of Goods Arms and Ammunition this year,” the Rebels from Georgia and Carolina “would not suffer them to be carried amongst you, [as] They are Enemies to the great King and all His faithful Subjects.” Referencing the *Philippa* seizure from July, Stuart accused the revolutionaries of “endeavor[ing] to make you Poor by Stealing your Ammunition and stopping your trade.” He accused them of sending the Creeks “a handful of Your own Powder, not enough to Kill Bear or Deer to feed your Children, far less to get Skins to pay Debts or purchase Necessaries with.”⁴¹

Though Stuart admitted he did not have much gunpowder, he urged the Lower Creek micos to take what little he could give. Stuart hoped the gift “will shew that I always think of you and Study your good.” But as the meeting came to a close, Stuart’s discourse shifted from a fairly standard talk centered upon the themes of peace and friendship, to an uncharacteristically passionate speech castigating Rebel actions. Upon realizing the Rebels had sent only two thousand pounds of *Philippa*’s gunpowder to the Creeks, a distraught Stuart claimed “I could not be happy. I could not sleep. I could not rest until I should relieve [you.]” “I thought I saw my friends in distress!,” he continued. “I thought I saw my Children naked and hungry! I thought I saw them exposed to their Enemies without the Means of cloathing feeding or defending themselves.” Stuart encouraged the idea that the provincial governments of South Carolina and Georgia had in fact, “Stolen your powder,” sending the Creeks the smallest quantity acceptable and passing it off as a gesture of good will. Galphin’s recent actions, he argued, supported this claim. “Mr. Galphin is a trader but he is not a beloved man; he tells you that he will

⁴¹ John Stuart, "Talk to Creeks at Cowford," 1775, R7; V77; No 0305, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

supply you, why then has he not sent you ammunition?” The truth, Stuart contended, was that “he cannot supply you, and you cannot have a Trade from Georgia until the Rebels are reduced to Obedience and Reason. The sooner this can be effected,” the Superintendent concluded, “the sooner you will have plenty of ammunition amongst you and be happy.”⁴²

When the Lower Creeks did not immediately issue a reply to Stuart’s December talk, the Superintendent reached out to Lord Dartmouth requesting to “stop all supplies of ammunition and Indian goods” into South Carolina and Georgia. With still no Lower Creek response by mid-January, Stuart wrote again with a proposal “to open and encourage a Trade to the Indian Countries from Pensacola, [as] a supply of Ammunition from thence will greatly contribute to keep the Indians in a good Disposition . . .” He asked Dartmouth for permission to apply for “seven thousand pounds weight of Gun powder and fourteen thousand pounds weight of Indian Trading Ball” for the West Florida merchants.⁴³ Almost two months passed before Stuart heard anything from the Upper or Lower towns. Finally, on March 2, Emistisiguo sent the Superintendent a letter. Showing favor toward the Loyalists, Emistisiguo recognized Stuart as “the person to supply the wants of the Upper and Lower Creeks,” and acknowledged that his people “are all very sensible to whom we are to apply to when in want.” Both the Upper and Lower towns, “Have been very poor of late Occasioned by the People of Georgia telling us lies. We have given ear for some Time to the lying talks of these people,” he continued, but “The People of Augusta particularly Messrs. Rea and Graham have told a great many lies and made us look very poor . . .” Claiming that the people of Georgia and

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ John Stuart, “Trade to Indian Country from Pensacola,” 1776, R7; V77; No 0305, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5 Files, The University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

Carolina “have thrown away their Great King’s Talks,” Emistisiguo sent tobacco and white wings to Rebel and Loyalist leaders, including Galphin, Stuart, and the governors.⁴⁴ He hoped that the “officers and Soldiers (that wishes us well) may smoke it,” and consequently “drop their dispute.” “And when I hear from them and they do not agree,” he asserted, “I then shall know who are in the fault, and shall know who are the great King’s Enemies, and will look upon them as my Enemies as well . . .”⁴⁵

Though Emistisiguo appealed to Stuart and the Crown for gunpowder, ammunition, and other trade goods, much of his talk served to reaffirm Upper Creek autonomy. He intended for his gesture of peace to also serve as a reminder that “We are the Masters of this Land and they are Only settled on the Borders of it. We have twice given them land thinking that it might be of service to them, and am sorry to find it otherwise . . .”⁴⁶ Emistisiguo’s statement, addressed to Stuart, appears to have been aimed largely at the Rebels. While a number of land-for-debt transactions shaped Creek-British Indian policy earlier in the decade, the growing rebellion had lately reoriented the empire’s goals in the Southeast, shifting their focus away from Indian lands. Mercantilist economic policy, to which the Revolution now posed a serious threat, additionally kept the Crown and its colonial supporters from making westward expansion a top priority. Given his long-standing connections with Stuart, Taitt, and British colonial officials in Pensacola, it is seems likely that Emistisiguo would have realized this fact by early 1776. Over the next three years, the threat to native lands posed by American forces became

⁴⁴ Sending a “white wing,” or the feather of a white bird, commonly symbolized peace in the eighteenth century Creek world. Smoking tobacco with outsiders also symbolized peace, reflecting a symbolic invitation into one’s family or community.

⁴⁵ “Emistisiguo to Superintendent Stuart,” 1776, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 180-181.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

increasingly evident to the Creeks and their neighbors. Despite assistance from the French and Spanish, which included greater access to gunpowder and ammunition, the majority of the Creeks had pledged themselves to the British cause by the end of the decade.

But this was not yet the case during the spring of 1776. Having found the Lower micos and warriors “exceedingly well disposed,” and showing potential to “act as I shall direct” in December, Stuart was surprised when the headmen of the Lower towns formally reaffirmed their neutrality in late March.⁴⁷ Stuart suspected that George Galphin had influenced this position, a conjecture confirmed in early May when he organized a meeting between the Rebel commissioners from Georgia and almost two hundred Creeks at Augusta. While the majority of those in attendance were from the Lower towns and villages, a number of Abeikas and Tallassees, lead by the Upper Creek micos Handsome Fellow and The Beaver Tooth King, also attended. The gathering opened with a talk from the Continental Congress, informing them that they had “requested a Neutrality” of the northern Indians, “which they have faithfully promised and we believe will perform.” After thanking the Lower Creek, particularly the young warriors, for their “Zeal and Services rendered us,” the Continental Congress, backed by Galphin, requested that the Confederacy formally declare neutrality. As further incentive, the Rebels offered, “a few presents for our brothers,” and reminded the Creeks “in many of the Colonies We are Manufacturing powder and other necessary goods, which we will divide with our friends the Indians.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ “Journal of a Conference Between the American Commissioners and the Creeks at Augusta,” 1776, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 184.

It was this promise of ammunition that drew the Creeks to Augusta in the first place. All that Galphin, the committee leaders, and the Continental Congress wanted in return was a formal pronouncement of neutrality. Since those from the Lower towns “had no intention of taking sides and had already declared neutrality several times,” the arrangement “was a painless bargain.”⁴⁹ To ensure they would leave the meeting with ample gunpowder, the Lower Creek micos enlisted Nitigee, the head warrior of Little Coweta, to issue a response on behalf of “all of the other Head Men and Warriors of the Nation who are present.”⁵⁰ The micos likely chose Nitigee for this task because he already held a favorable relationship with the Georgia Rebels; as the warrior reminded them more than once during the congress, it was he who had represented the Lower Creeks in the New Purchase land cession three years earlier.⁵¹ But Nitigee did more than just affirm Lower Creek neutrality. After the Rebels admitted to a scarcity of ammunition in Georgia, Nitigee successfully argued in favor of maintaining trade and communication between the Lower Towns and Pensacola. He also used his speech as an opportunity to criticize David Taitt, accusing him of giving out “very bad talks,” that advised “them all to spill all their brothers (the White people’s) blood.” Taitt, Nitigee continued, “had done everything he could to oppose my coming here,” telling him that the path to Augusta had been closed, and that “Mr. Galphin was poor and had nothing to give me.” “Everything he told me,” Nitigee concluded, “was false.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Juricek, *Endgame*, 233.

⁵⁰ “Journal of a Conference Between the American Commissioners and the Creeks at Augusta,” 1776, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 184.

⁵¹ Juricek, *Endgame*, 233.

⁵² “Journal of a Conference Between the American Commissioners and the Creeks at Augusta,” 1776, in *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, V12; 185.

It did not take long for Taitt to learn of Nitigee's demonstration at Augusta. Upon their return to the Upper towns, Handsome Fellow and the Beaver Tooth King relayed the events of the meeting and, according to Taitt, "have thrown the nation into great confusion . . ." Taitt blamed Galphin for using rum to manipulate the Lower Creek delegates, informing Stuart that the Cowetas alone "had ninety or one hundred kegs," and "were constantly drunk and threatening to kill their traders."⁵³ He realized that the Augusta congress might seriously impede Loyalist goals in the region, giving the Rebels an advantage "by confirming, at least temporarily, the Creeks' strong inclination for neutrality."⁵⁴

The meeting at Augusta was a success for the Rebels in that it "bought them precious time" moving into the summer of 1776.⁵⁵ But the congress also represented a pivotal moment in time for the Creeks. The Lower towns' declaration of neutrality, counterbalanced by Emistisiguo's visible affinity for Stuart and the Loyalists, revealed the persistence of deep divisions within the Confederacy. These divisions, along with the Confederacy's continued military strength, benefitted Creek towns and villages. The resulting factionalism permitted the emergence of a modified version of neutrality that proved the Confederacy as a whole had found ways to successfully adjust to the geopolitical shifts of 1763. The Creeks, subsequently, were able to both adapt and preserve important sociopolitical practices to maintain their independence and ways of life.

⁵³ "David Taitt to John Stuart," 1776, in *Documents of the American Revolution*, V12; 159.

⁵⁴ Juricek, *Endgame*, 235.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Rebel and Loyalist weaknesses during the Revolution's formative years undeniably provided members of the Creek Confederacy with new opportunities to preserve their independence. These opportunities, however, often depended upon access to gunpowder and ammunition. The need to build up trade routes from Pensacola to Upper and Lower Creek communities were crucial for the British cause. As the Revolutionary War progressed, Loyalist merchants in West Florida gradually cemented their position as the primary suppliers of gunpowder and other goods to the Creek Confederacy. The promise of steady ammunition strengthened the existing bonds between the Loyalists and the Upper Creeks while nudging many of the Lower towns toward the British interest.

Despite the Spanish entering the war on the side of the Americans in 1779, the prospect of consistent access to gunpowder encouraged many Creeks to fight on behalf of Great Britain moving into the 1780s. Though the Spaniards acted as an alternate source of manufactured goods for pro-Rebel Creeks, many native men believed joining Loyalists in military service was the easiest way to access ammunition and other necessary European commodities. While this is evidenced in the large number of Creeks who fought alongside British forces in the Mobile and Pensacola campaigns of 1780 and 1781, a number of Lower Creeks continued to maintain personal and diplomatic ties to officials in Havana. Consequently, the Confederacy as a whole never engaged in significant fighting, or sustained military campaigns, during the conflict. The factionalism that served as a foundation for the Creeks' diplomatic policy of neutrality earlier in the eighteenth century continued to benefit the Confederacy throughout the Revolution,

allowing them to both access gunpowder and protect their sovereignty and independence through cautious, strategic participation in the conflict.

Conclusion

In 1707, John Archdale wrote a short piece reflecting upon his time as governor of Carolina, detailing the early settlement of the colony and providing some general musings on relations with the Indians. According to Archdale, the English owed Carolina's success to a number of "Grand Scenes of Divine Providence" that aided their colonization of the Southeast. These sacred interventions included "unusual sicknesses" among the indigenous populations, and a "Civil War" between the Westo and their neighbors, the Savannah, which served "to lessen their numbers." But it was "the discovery of gunpowder" that Archdale deemed the most significant of these acts, believing God had "reserved [it] for this last Age" to provide Europeans with "[a] medium to subdue millions of people that lay under a barbarous and brutish state."¹

Archdale's claim supported broad justifications for colonizing the New World, rooted in a moral obligation to spread Christianity. It provided his European audience with an example of how some British officials viewed their presence in North America as representative of God's will, using gunpowder to project an image of European civility and superiority over the Indians. Archdale's statement, however, did not accurately reflect the ways in which gunpowder impacted indigenous life in the eighteenth-century Southeast. While the British hoped ammunition would allow colonial officials to better control Native Americans, believing that gunpowder could be used as a means "of extracting [Indian] wealth," in the form of land and deerskins, the reality was that gunpowder served as a source of power for native peoples, specifically the Creeks.² As

¹ John Archdale, *A New Description of That Fertile and Pleasant Province of Carolina With a Brief Account of its Discovery and Settling and the Government Thereof to This Time* (London: A.E. Miller, 1822), 6.

² Angela R. Riley, "Indians and Guns," *The Georgetown Law Journal* 100 (2012): 1686.

this dissertation has shown, gunpowder and ammunition offered Creek men opportunities to access legitimacy and authority, enabling the maintenance of Creek power and independence following the Seven Years' War. It shaped the ways in which indigenous men adjusted to the social, political, and cultural challenges of this era, allowing them to influence the terms of cross-cultural interaction with Europeans. Thus, the introduction of gunpowder to North America did not, as Archdale claimed, pacify a continent of crude, uncivilized natives. It enabled the very opposite, providing Creeks with the ability to maintain autonomy and challenge threats to their independence through the American Revolution.

Archdale's considerations, put forth during the first decade of the eighteenth century, reflected his experience as a colonial official in a nascent colony on the outskirts of the British empire. His time as governor was characterized by constant native warfare and the expansion of Indian slavery, both of which shaped the development of Carolina. If gunpowder could not "subdue" Native Americans, Archdale hoped it would at least secure indigenous dependence. But the Confederacy soon established a diplomatic policy of neutrality, wherein individual towns and headmen could play their European neighbors off of one another to ensure multiple sources of trade goods and favorable terms of alliance. This system served the Creeks well through the early 1760s, allowing them to determine the course of diplomacy with the British, French, and Spanish. The end of the Seven Years' War, however, brought profound geographic and political changes to the Creek world, threatening Creek neutrality. Fearing the consequences of Britain's victory, the Confederacy embraced sociopolitical factionalism, adjusting their neutrality policy of previous decades to protect their position of authority and influence in the region.

This research has used gunpowder as a lens to explore these adjustments, working to better understand how access to ammunition reshaped the ways in which members of the Creek Confederacy gained authority and legitimacy, the basis of their power, in the era between the end of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution. Gunpowder allowed Creek men to confront the expanding British presence in the Southeast, reshaping existing notions of manhood and masculinity in the process. Though British officials tried to restrict gunpowder and ammunition supplies to force the Creeks to comply with imperial goals, their inability to completely cut off Creek access to these goods enabled their power and autonomy, as demonstrated by the Lower Creeks' continued connections with the Spanish in Cuba. In embracing sociopolitical factionalism and revising their neutrality policy of earlier decades to play Loyalists and Rebels off of one another, members of the Creek Confederacy ensured both continued access to gunpowder and the maintenance of their collective independence during the first years of the American Revolution.

On a broad level, this dissertation has answered questions about who held authority in the eighteenth-century Creek world, and why. It has used gunpowder to explore how certain commodities could facilitate both cultural continuity and change in indigenous societies, as ammunition allowed Creek men to gain power by either maintaining existing ways of life, or by adjusting to the social, political, and economic challenges brought by the end of the Seven Years' War. By placing gunpowder at the center of an ethnohistorical study, this dissertation has expanded upon recent scholarship, such as Jessica Yiruch Stern's *The Lives in Objects*, in illuminating how native peoples actively shaped the terms of interaction with Europeans, often making them engage in

exchanges directed by forces outside of their control. It has revealed how members of the Creek Confederacy not only participated in the global market economy, but understood their place within it in ways that allowed them to extract favorable terms of diplomacy and access to valuable goods, like gunpowder.

Separating gunpowder from the existing scholarship on Indians and firearms stresses its uniqueness as a non-renewable resource only accessible to native peoples through Europeans. While this distinction is crucial for understanding why a gunpowder-focused study is necessary, it risks undermining native agency. On the surface, research that highlights Indians' continuous need for ammunition while emphasizing its significance to Creek life might appear to fall in line with dependency-theory scholarship. But placing Creeks at the center of the narrative allows for the employment of ethnohistorical methodologies that allow for a deeper exploration of how specific European goods could impact Creek culture, as well as spiritual belief systems and ideas surrounding gender. This approach simultaneously illuminates how Creeks used gunpowder to respond to these changes, allowing scholars to understand the ways in which European commodities could provide native peoples with opportunities to maintain both individual and collective autonomy as they navigated the geopolitical shifts brought by the end of the Seven Years' War.

This lens of gunpowder can also be used to examine the ways in which Creeks adjusted to the changes brought to their culture and communities by the end of the American Revolution. An exploration of gunpowder's impact on native life during this period can help to bridge the gap in understanding how Creeks adapted to the social, political, and cultural shifts of 1763 and how they navigated the unique challenges that

resulted from American independence. By the 1790s, Creeks found their ways of life altered once again as Britain's former North American colonies were removed from the empire's mercantile economic system. With the market for Indian deerskins now altered, the global economy no longer needed native producers as it did in the colonial period, changing the nature of the Indian trade for Southeastern Indians.³ While Creek relationships to gunpowder and ammunition began to change, the connections between gunpowder and Creek power that developed during the 1760s and 1770s held consequences beyond the Revolutionary Era. Consequently, this research provides a foundation for exploring the evolution of gunpowder and Creek power through the early nineteenth century, inviting scholars to trace how these connections produced significant moral and philosophical conflicts for Americans as they thought about how and where native peoples would fit into the legal framework of their new nation.

The inevitability of westward expansion encouraged fears of "hostile" Indians attacking American settlers as they flooded into the region between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. While concerns about furnishing potentially violent natives with guns and gunpowder were not unique to the Early Republic, it is likely that these anxieties influenced, at least in part, the Framers' commitment to the second amendment, guaranteeing the existence of a powerful military force to protect the new nation against outside enemies, which included Indians.⁴ The conclusions put forth

³ It is important to note, however, that North American furs and beaver pelts remained in high demand in Europe until the 1840s, when styles shifted in favor silk. Commercialized hunting and trapping continued to serve as a major source of economic stability for native peoples in the Intermountain West until the mid-nineteenth century. Please see Jennifer Monroe McCutchen, "Hunting (American Indian)," in *The World of Antebellum America: A Daily Life Encyclopedia*, ed. Alexandra Kindell (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clío, 2018) 119-120.

⁴ In the seventeenth century, colonies like Massachusetts and Connecticut prohibited the sale of firearms and gunpowder to Indians. In 1619, the Virginia legislature passed a law that authorized the death penalty for any colonist who taught a Native American how to use a gun; it also decreed death for the Indian who

in this dissertation lay the groundwork for a deeper exploration of how and why United States citizens started to think about indigenous access to guns and gunpowder in new ways. Following independence, many began to view gun ownership, particularly for the defense of property and self, as a distinctly American right that carried certain public obligations. Native societies, in contrast, were seen as sovereign, political entities, or “domestic dependent nations,” distinct from the federal government. Because members of Indian nations “were not citizens of the United States and could not naturalize,” they lacked both constitutional rights and citizenship responsibilities. Native Americans’ status as outsiders, along with African slaves, allowed the Framers to firmly “equate whiteness with fitness for citizenship and self governance.” Thus, as race became tied to American citizenship, gun privileges became increasingly connected to race.⁵ Despite a century of cross-cultural relations that forged deep personal, economic, and political connections between Indians and Europeans, native peoples continued to distinctly occupy the place of “other” in the eyes of white Americans, complicating their relationship to gunpowder and firearms. Because they existed outside of the normal frameworks of American law and society, Indians with guns posed a threat to the nascent nation’s goals, which, by the early nineteenth century, included securing indigenous lands.

Though the American victory significantly altered the Indian trade and indigenous ways of life, Southeastern native peoples still needed steady, reliable access to gunpowder. At the same time, divergent opinions on land, property ownership, and

sought to learn. While these laws were rarely, if ever, enforced, the frequent number of European-Indian conflicts throughout the colonial period, such as King Philip’s War, the Yamasee War, and Pontiac’s War, kept fears about armed Indians at the forefront of policymakers’ minds. Please see Riley, “Indians and Guns,” 1688.

⁵ Riley, “Indians and Guns,” 1697.

relations with the United States deepened existing divisions within the Confederacy. The last decade of the eighteenth century brought extreme pressure upon Creeks to cede territory for American settlement, producing tensions between Upper and Lower leadership reminiscent of the land disagreements that emerged during the 1760s. As the Lower Creek towns were closer to Georgia and South Carolina, their micos ceded a significant amount of territory to these states through land-for-debt agreements. The localized-nature of these contracts aggravated existing tensions within the larger Confederacy, ushering in another generational shift in Creek power and authority. By the 1780s, a new cadre of Creek leaders, born of British fathers and native mothers, began working to consolidate and centralize Creek power. Headed by Alexander McGillivray, they hoped to reshape Creek domestic policy in ways that would allow the Confederacy to assume a national identity, defined by territorial boundaries and a centralized leadership structure. The resulting National Council sought to eliminate the practice of allowing individual headmen to sign treaties or cede lands to the United States as autonomous entities. Moving into the nineteenth century, the scope and authority of the National Council expanded, further threatening the consensus-based nature of Creek social and political life.

Many Creek leaders, particularly those from the Upper towns, resisted these reforms. Due to their westward geographic location, the Upper Creeks were slightly more protected from the changes brought by American independence and continued to hold more traditional beliefs and practices in terms of leadership and land. They opposed the expansion of the United States through Creek land cessions and resisted new social and economic practices that had created large wealth disparities within the Confederacy.

Governmental efforts to assimilate Southeastern native peoples toward American ways of life drew Creek men further away from commercial hunting, encouraging them instead to focus on farming and ranching. Moving into the nineteenth century, tensions between the Upper Creeks, who supported village independence, and the Lower Creeks, who largely endorsed the National Council and economic practices based in agriculture and cattle raising, grew more severe. By 1813, these strains produced a civil war between the factions, with the Upper Creek “Red Sticks” opposing the Lower Creeks and their American supporters. As Choctaw and Cherokee warriors joined the American cause, the Red Stick War “quickly transformed into a multidimensional war that resulted in the total defeat of the Creek people at the hands of American armies and their Native American allies.”⁶ An in-depth exploration of this period will illuminate both continuity and change in Creek relationships to gunpowder and ammunition over time, allowing scholars to detail the ways in which the connections between gunpowder and Creek power created in the 1760s carried into the nineteenth century.

Though John Archdale was correct in deeming gunpowder one of the most important commodities of the early modern era, it did not, as he asserted, allow Europeans to subjugate an entire continent of native peoples. While this may have seemed possible at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was clear to British officials by the 1760s that gunpowder had become integral to native culture, identity, and ways of life. As this dissertation has shown, gunpowder provided indigenous peoples with opportunities to access legitimacy, authority, and power, to maintain both individual

⁶ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, “Creek War of 1813 - 14,” Encyclopedia of Alabama, October 28, 2008, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1820>.

and collective independence between the end of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution. In using gunpowder as a lens to explore how Creeks, specifically Creek men, adapted to the geopolitical and cultural changes of the period, this research opens doors for deeper investigations into the connections between commodities and native culture. By offering new interpretations of indigenous power during the Revolutionary Era, this dissertation encourages scholars to ask more nuanced questions the late eighteenth-century Creek Confederacy, inviting them to challenge established narratives of Creek history after 1763. Given its significance in providing Creeks with opportunities to maintain their power, autonomy, and independence while adjusting to the social, diplomatic, and economic changes of this period, gunpowder's importance to Creek culture should no longer be obscure.

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ABSTRACT

GUNPOWDER AND THE CREEK-BRITISH STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN THE SOUTHEAST, 1763 – 1776

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This dissertation uses gunpowder as a lens to explore power within the Creek Confederacy following the Seven Years' War. It seeks to better understand how Creeks adapted to the geopolitical shifts of 1763 to maintain authority and independence during an era of intense change for native peoples. By removing gunpowder from the existing narrative of Indians and guns, new interpretations of Creek life and culture emerge. Consequently, this research illuminates the Creeks as active participants in shaping their own history and the history of the late eighteenth-century Southeast.

Gunpowder is a useful tool for this type of exploration because it was a non-renewable resource, accessible only through diplomacy and exchange with Europeans. It was also a highly gendered commodity that proved vital for Creek men who sought to protect their communities and families from Anglo-American encroachment. Access to gunpowder allowed for the development of new definitions of masculinity among Creek warriors, who attempted to gain power through force after 1763. Older Creek leaders, in contrast, sought to regulate the flow of gunpowder into their communities to bolster their own positions of authority and preserve traditional notions of masculine leadership.

Gunpowder held the potential to provide all Creek men with access to power as they reconsidered existing notions of masculinity and adapted to the rapidly changing

world in which they lived. Recognizing this, British officials attempted to use their perceived monopoly over gunpowder supplies to restructure Indian policy, shape diplomacy, and assert control over Creek men. By maintaining factionalism and encouraging individual towns and headmen to act according to local level needs and interests, Creeks challenged British efforts to cement economic and political authority in the Southeast, establishing trade and diplomatic relationships with outsiders, notably the Spanish in Cuba, to emulate their play-off system of earlier decades. In using gunpowder to maintain both individual and collective autonomy throughout the 1760s, the Creeks were able to revise their neutrality policy to manipulate Loyalists and Rebels during the American Revolution. This allowed them to access gunpowder and other European goods from both sides, preserving Creek power and independence during the first years of the conflict.