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# RISING SUNS, FALLEN FORTS, AND IMPUDENT IMMIGRANTS: RACE, POWER, AND WAR IN THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

A DISSERTATION

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degree of

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By

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Norman, Oklahoma
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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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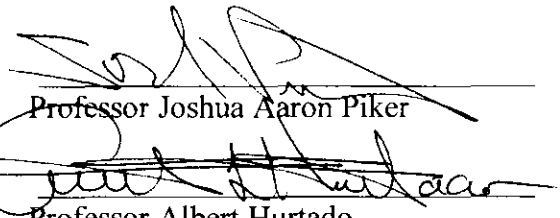

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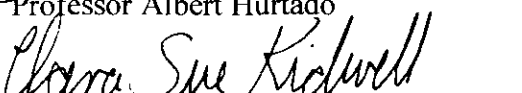

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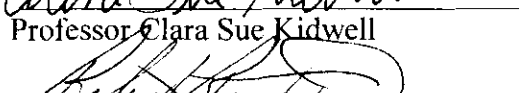

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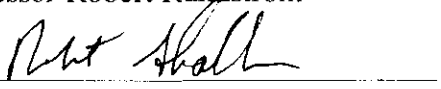

Professor Robert Shalhope

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## Abbreviations

AC…….. *Archives coloniales*: the colonial archives of France. These are divided into sub-series, the following are those that appear the most in this dissertation:

1. Sub-series 8: Martinique
2. Sub-series 9: St. Domingue (Haiti)
3. Sub-series 11: Canada
4. Sub-series 13: Louisiana

Each sub-series is further broken down into volumes and folio numbers.
For example: *AC, C13A, Vol. 7, 207-209v* contains a dispatch in the *Archives Coloniales* (AC), from Louisiana (13) to the Ministry of Marine (A), volume seven, folios 207 through 209 verso.
Unless noted, these citations are from the microfilm holdings of the Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana.

AM…….. *Archives de la Marine*: Naval Archives of France.

ASH……..... *Archives du Service hydrographique*: a division of the Ministry of Marine responsible for producing charts and maps.

BN……..…. *Bibliothèque Nationale*: These include subdivisions "fr." (French) and "n.a." (new acquisitions).

*HBNAI* *Handbook of North American Indians.* Washington. Smithsonian Institution, 1978-2004

*JR*…… *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents; Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, l610-1791*. 73 Volumes [The original French, Latin, and Italian texts, with English translations and notes] Edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Cleveland: Burrows Bros. Co., 1896-1901.

*MPAFD*…….. *Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Domination*. Compiled and translated by Dunbar Rowland, A. G. Sanders, and Patricia Galloway.

NYPL……..… Rare Book collection of the New York Public Library.

VP……..…. *Vaudreuil Papers*, Loudon Collection, Huntington Library.

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## Abstract

During the 1720s, colonial observers recorded Southeastern Indians using the term "red men" to distinguish themselves from the "whites" and "blacks" from overseas. The Natchez embraced this red identity, using it to unite factions within their nation and then employed the solidarity that it created to eject the French from their homeland. This dissertation reconstructs the ways that Native Americans in the Lower Mississippi Valley co-opted the European discourse of racial categories and shaped it to achieve their own ends.

This chain of events began when Indians and Europeans assumed that the other would fit handily into their respective social orders. To the French, the Natchez's temples and hereditary leadership resembled the ancient civilizations of the Old World, ripe for conversion. To the Natchez, the first Frenchmen who arrived in the 1680s often looked and acted like Native Americans. The handful of Europeans who followed frequently joined Natchez kinship networks and rendered service to native political leaders. The Europeans' willingness to adapt culturally lulled the Natchez into believing that the French were candidates for assimilation.

Their assumption became untenable when hundreds of Europeans and their African slaves moved into Natchez country. The resultant web of Indian, French, and African communities created a unique matrix for the production of a new racial category: red men. The plantation system of the 1720s gave the Natchez and neighboring groups opportunities to see the Europeans dominate Africans, a permanent underclass identifiable by skin color. The colonists also attempted to marginalize the Indians as "racial inferiors." In response, Natchez leaders appealed to a shared identity as red men

to quell their internecine rivalries and forge an anti-French coalition among their villages.

In 1729, the Natchez struck, destroying the newcomers' farms and forts. The Indians' success was transitory; the French counterattacked, killing or enslaving hundreds. Because of persistent attempts to exterminate the remaining Natchez, France alienated many of the Southeast's Indian nations. Weakened diplomatically, the French could no longer resist their British adversaries and lost their colonies in North America. The legacy of redness, however, survives to this day.

**Rising Suns, Fallen Forts, and Impudent Immigrants: Race, Power, and War in the Lower Mississippi Valley: An Introduction**

Two rows of severed human heads faced each other in the Natchez Grand Village. Those in the first line once belonged to French colonists and those in the other to French soldiers and officers. This display was the product of the single bloodiest Native American assault on the continent to date. Early one morning in late November 1729, several hundred Natchez warriors entered Fort Rosalie, ostensibly to pay off old debts and to borrow firearms for a great hunt. They positioned themselves throughout the post and among the surrounding homes. Upon a pre-arranged signal from the Natchez leader, the Great Sun, each warrior fell on the nearest Frenchman. In less than an hour, all but a handful of the European males at the settlement were dead. The Natchez cornered the fort's commander, Captain de Chépart, in his vegetable garden. The high-status men thought it beneath them to soil their hands by killing such a lowly character. They called for a lesser individual to dispatch the officer, and a low caste "stinkard" chief soon arrived to club the Frenchman to death.[1] From that day on, the tenor of Native American relations with the French in the Lower Mississippi Valley changed forever.

Nearly all historians of colonial Louisiana agree that this event marked a turning point in France's colonial project. Nearly all of their analyses state that the destruction of the French settlement and post was the culmination of mounting tensions over the

[1] Périer to Maurepas, March 18, 1730, AC 13A, Vol. 12, fol. 23-45; Lusser to Maurepas. "Journal of a journey that I made to the Choctaws" January 12, 1730 to March 23, 1730. *MPAFD*, Vol. 1. 97-99; Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France avec le Journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionnale*, Vol. II (Paris: Chez Nyon et Fils, 1744), 467-69; Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane contenant ce qui y est arrivé de plus mémorable depuis l'année 1687*, Vol. II (Paris: J. B. Bauche, 1753), 138-46, 319; Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres*, Vol. III (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 258.

Europeans' attempts to seize Natchez land.[2] The Indians' coup of November 28, 1729, however, represents a turning point in American history because of one of the means the Natchez chose to solve their problems: the discourse of racial categories. The rhetoric used by Natchez headmen before the attack constitutes the first recorded example of an Indian polity uniting its members by invoking a shared "racial" identity. In the words of one of their leaders, the Natchez were "peoples who call each other Red Men."[3] Moreover, the actions that they took following the coup helped to spread the discourse of redness throughout the Southeast.

Until recently, most historians of European and Indian contact have embraced a narrative of encounter, encroachment, and extermination.[4] This narrative developed for many reasons, but it often masks the strategies used by the First Peoples to maintain their freedom of action. Despite the work of scholars over the past quarter century to shed light on the Indians' contributions to the development of French Louisiana, there is

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[2] Andrew C. Albrecht, "Indian-French Relations at Natchez," *American Anthropologist* 48, no. 3 (1946): 321-54; Mathé Allain, "*Not Worth a Straw": French Colonial Policy and the Early Years of Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1988) 74-75, 86; Verner Winslow Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1928), 273-75; Jean Delanglez, "The French Jesuits in Lower Louisiana (1700-1763)" (Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1935); W. J. Eccles, *The French in North America 1500-1783* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 185-86; Michael J. Foret, "War or Peace? Louisiana, the Choctaws, and the Chickasaws, 1733-1735," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995): 296-312; Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana: The French Domination* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 1866; reprint, 1998), 286-315, 390-450; John Francis McDermott, *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969); James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Alan Taylor, *American Colonies*, (New York: Viking, 2001), 382-91; Mason Wade, "French Indian Policies," *HBNAI* Vol. 4: 20-28.

[3] Le Page de Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III, 87.

[4] The historian Daniel Usner warns those who seek to understand those times: "The fateful decision of the Natchez leaders to revolt against the French in 1729 should not be viewed as the inevitable result of some linear process of conquest by more advanced or more powerful Europeans." Daniel H. Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Social and Economic Histories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 16.

still much to learn about Native Americans' use of skin color as a tool of diplomacy.[5] Moreover, the record of Indians' political strategies in the Lower Mississippi Valley remains obscured by the willingness of eighteenth-century Louisianans to whitewash their failures either by charging their bureaucratic rivals with incompetence and corruption or by accusing their Native American neighbors of treachery.

The key to understanding the Natchez's role in the development of race as a diplomatic tool begins with a simple fact: many of the former owners of the heads and the men who cut them off had known each other, in some cases for years. For three decades, the Natchez—or the "Théoloëls" as they called themselves—and European settlers had lived near one another in a patchwork of villages.[6] They planted crops in neighboring fields. Their chickens browsed the same feeding grounds. They bought and sold at the same warehouses. They fell in love with each other, married, and had children. It was within this multi-ethnic world that thrived along the banks of the Mississippi River during the early 1700s that the ideology of redness took shape.

The search for an understanding of this world begins with a number of questions. The first of these asks, how did such diverse sets of people come together and live in

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[5] American historians, beginning with Francis Parkman, thoroughly romanticized the interaction between the French and Indians, "Spanish civilization crushed the Indian; English civilization scorned and neglected him; French civilization embraced and cherished him." Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 1867; reprint, 1983), 432. A long list of late twentieth-century and twenty-first century authors have overturned Parkman's idealized assessment. One of the first revisionists was Bruce Trigger, followed by Olive Patricia Dickason, Patricia Woods, and others too numerous to mention. See Dickason, "The Concept of *l'homme sauvage* and Early French Colonialism in the Americas," *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 64, no. 234 (1977): 5-32 and, *The Myth of the Savage: and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984); Bruce G. Trigger, "The French Presence in Huronia: the Structure of Franco-Huron Relations in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century," *Canadian Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (1968): 107-41; "The Jesuits and the Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory* 12, no. 1 (1965): 30-53: *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 1980.

[6] The name came from their Sun deity, Thé. "Théoloël" can be translated as "People of the Sun." Patricia Galloway and Jason Baird Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," in *HBNAI* Vol. 14: 619.

such close proximity for nearly thirty years despite their obvious differences? I will demonstrate that these differences were not so obvious when the two groups first stumbled upon one another. To the Natchez, a Mississippian people experienced in absorbing outsiders, the French appeared to be one more collection of wayfarers. Aside from aspects of their excellent technology, La Salle's 1682 expeditionary party looked and acted much like the Native American bands that had come to the Grand Village in search of food and protection in years past. The first European who settled in Natchez country acted the role played by earlier refugees by marrying a female Sun. The small numbers of missionaries, *coureurs de bois*, and merchants who followed during the first fifteen years of the 1700s did little to upset the Théoloëls' sense of order. When the *Compagnie des Indes* opened its first trading post in 1714, the handful of Frenchmen who worked there were too few to be considered anything more than a small band of traders, albeit traders with extremely useful and durable goods. They presented little threat to the Natchez hierarchy. In fact, as long as the Suns retained control over the distribution of the European merchandise acquired from the *Compagnie* warehouse, the newcomers were welcome additions to the Théoloëls' polity.[7]

To the French—the Natchez, with their hereditary ruler, social ranks, political offices, temples, and monotheistic theology—appeared to have many of the hallmarks of "civilization." The Théoloëls organized themselves into descending ranks of "suns," nobles, "honored men," and "stinkards."[8] To the Europeans, the Indians' hierarchy

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[7] Karl G. Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," in *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Pensacola: University Press of Florida, 2000), 159; Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 25.

[8] For an account of the Natchez hierarchy, see Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 307-405. See also John Reed Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911). For Natchez marriage practices

resembled the inherited privilege of eighteenth-century France where complex rules, administered by state officials, determined fine degrees of rank. These grades of status guided behavior and shaped opportunities for each of Louis XIV's subjects. They recognized in the Théoloëls' Great Sun a monarch who wielded the power of life and death over his subjects.[9] Others detected similarities between ancient Roman and Egyptian religions and Natchez spirituality.[10] In the eyes of many of these observers, the Théoloëls had constructed a state in the European sense of the term, or were on their way to doing so. These perceptions of similarity—mistaken as they were—temporarily submerged many of the difficulties that plagued other colonial ventures.

The next question in the search for understanding asks, what went wrong? Why did these people start killing each other? The fighting started once the Théoloëls and French discovered that they were very different indeed. Unfortunately for the Natchez, their earlier assumptions that the Europeans were candidates for adoption into their polity lulled them into permitting several hundred of these newcomers to move into their homeland unopposed. As well-financed plantations with large numbers of settlers and slaves augmented the initial mission station and a handful of traders, the People of

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and their role in the nation's social structure, see Jeffrey P. Brain, "The Natchez 'Paradox'," *Ethnology* 10, no. 2 (1971): 215-22; Galloway and Jackson, "The Natchez and Neighboring Groups," 602-604; Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi." 152-58; George. I Quimby, "Natchez Social Structure as an Instrument of Assimilation," *American Anthropologist* 48, no. 1 (1946): 134-37; Elizabeth Tooker, "Natchez Social Organization: Fact or Anthropological Folklore?" *Ethnohistory* 10, no. 3 (1963): 359-73; Douglas White, George P. Murdock, and Richard Scaglion, "Natchez Class and Rank Reconsidered," *Ethnology* 10, no. 4 (1971): 369-88.

[9] James Sheehan, "The Problem of Sovereignty in European History," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (2006): 1-16; Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, trans. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, Vol. II (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 904.

[10] Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indian Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore, vol. I (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974), 127, 238; Anonymous, "A Letter about Louisiana," [1718], 41; Anonymous, "Nouvelle Relation de la Louisiane," [1717], 69-71, both originally published in the *Nouvelle Mercure* reprinted in *Le Plus Beau Païs du Monde* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 2005); François Le Maire, "Memoir of François Le Maire," in *Le Plus Beau Païs du Monde*, ed. May Rush Gwin Waggoner (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1714; reprint, 2005), 133.

the Sun discovered that the Europeans were not just another band of refugees.[11] These immigrants did not recognize the authority of the Suns, nor did they partake in the old practices that reinforced the Suns' power over the local population. They also resisted the Théoloëls' efforts to incorporate them into the Natchez world. For a few years during the 1720s, the diplomatic acumen of senior Native American and French negotiators mediated the worst effects of this growing tension. It was during these times that female Natchez envoys played a prominent role in keeping the peace between the two groups. When these experienced men and women left the scene, individuals with fewer skills led their peoples into war.

It was within this web of Natchez and European settlements that a number of circumstances converged to create a unique cultural matrix for the production of a racial ideology. As a consequence, this is a story of villages and villagers. Richard White described seventeenth-century North America as "a village world." White observed that, "The units called tribes, nations, and confederacies were only loose leagues of villages."[12] Although this dissertation will show that the Natchez held themselves together by stronger bonds than White saw among the peoples of the Great Lakes, the village represented the elemental social unit of both the Southeastern Indians and Western Europeans' worlds. As the historian Joshua Piker put it, "colonial era communities, Euro-American and Native American alike, are broadly comparable and

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[11] In 1980, Patricia Dillon Woods suggested that the Théoloëls may have considered the French "a totally different race, so foreign that they could never be absorbed into the Natchez tribal structure." See Woods, *French-Indian Relations,* 108. While my work demonstrates that the Théoloëls did not always view the French as "a totally different race," the ramifications of Woods' suggestion informed much of my research.

[12] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 16.

that each peoples' experience have relevance for our understanding of the other."[13] During the 1600s and 1700s, indeed, throughout recorded history, most of the planet's population lived in small agricultural towns. It was the experiences of village life, garnered from communities in the Old World and the New that informed the ways that the Natchez and the French interacted with each other during the early eighteenth century.

These experiences also shaped the practices by which these two sets of peoples fashioned their own identities over the course of thirty years. One set came from Europe and attempted to replicate certain social and economic conditions of the Old World while adapting to the environmental and political demands of the New. The other had lived in the region from time beyond memory. Yet, the first inhabitants also struggled to meet a number of political and social challenges. Both sets of communities used long-established methods to bridge the gaps between their respective villages in their struggle to form cohesive polities. The Natchez relied on the social, economic, and spiritual practices used by earlier Mississippian polities to draw scattered hunting bands and farming hamlets into their paramount chiefdom. The French, who emigrated from a nation that had only recently emerged from a century of chaotic civil and religious strife, sought unity through the ecclesiastical and administrative machinery they imported from their homeland. The efforts of both peoples initially met with some degree of success.

The final question in the search for more understanding asks: what did the Natchez do to solve their problems with the immigrants? The answer to this question leads to a

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[13] Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: a Creek Indian Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 4.

reinterpretation of Natchez-French relations and ultimately to a more complete understanding of Native American and European relations during the eighteenth century. In this story, the Indians are primary agents of change and not the subjects of some relentless and unalterable process. They shaped their own world as well as that of the colonists, and made decisions that left a lasting impression on intercultural relations in the United States.

These changes began when the Natchez leadership realized that the old Mississippian system of commodity redistribution, conspicuous display, and religious ceremony no longer offset the destabilizing trends of the late 1720s. The French had failed to respond to traditional means of coercion. Worse, the outlying Native American villages in Natchez country that routinely traded with the English via the Chickasaws had become increasingly confrontational toward the Suns of the Grand Village. The Natchez turned to a European import to solve their problem: race. They co-opted the discourse of race that they had observed in nearby French and African communities. The People of the Sun did not, however, merely adopt this Old World ideology without refashioning it; they adapted indigenous origin stories and rhetorical practices to formulate the new category of "red men," and then added it to the binary classifications of "black" and "white." Colonial Europeans used their racial ideology to control their enslaved African population, but the Natchez used redness for another reason: to unite their people under a new rubric to defend their homeland against the outsiders.

Although the French eventually rallied and destroyed the Théoloëls as an independent polity, the discourse of biological difference took on a life of its own. The

idea of a people who were not Europeans, and not Africans, of a people who shared a common identity and had common interests, was already spreading through the Southeast. This idea eventually underwrote the Pan-Indian movements that followed later in the eighteenth century and persist until this day. This discourse of difference, as violent and contentious as it became, arose from conditions brought about by perceptions of similarity.

Ironically, the First Natchez War reinforced those perceptions of similarity. In 1716, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville took a small army to avenge the murders of five *coureurs de bois* by an anti-French faction residing in the outlying Théoloël villages. The force moved up the Mississippi and camped a short distance from the Grand Village in the spring of that year, soon after the Deer Moon Festival. The Indian festival included a part in which a party of Natchez, playing the role of an enemy nation, captured the Great Sun in a sham battle. Men acting the part of the Sun's partisans then pretended to rescue him from his "captors." The celebration ended with a large feast at which visiting dignitaries were especially welcome. Bienville's actions mimicked one aspect of the native ritual when he lured the Great Sun and his brothers into a trap and then released them unharmed a few weeks later. The eight hundred Natchez warriors at the Sun's command could easily have wiped out Bienville's tiny company of thirty-four soldiers and a few dozen militiamen. The lack of open combat and the peaceful resolution of the crisis mirrored the Deer Moon festival, allowing the People of the Sun to continue to view the French as conforming to indigenous practices.

The terms of peace strengthened the Franco-Natchez relationship in other ways. As part of the settlement, the Natchez agreed to build a stockade on the bluffs overlooking

the Mississippi River. They also re-established the French trading post that was first built in 1714 but abandoned a year later. This commercial outpost would be a source of goods with which the Suns could continue to reward their loyal followers. Another provision mandated the imprisonment and secret execution of the ringleaders who had murdered the *coureurs*, particularly the Sun of the Apple Village. The French thereby eliminated several opponents to the Grand Village's hegemony over Natchez country.

A few years after the end of the first war, a series of changes in France's colonial policy sent hundreds of her subjects into the region. Between the years 1718 and 1721, immigrants from Western Europe poured into the Gulf Coast and Lower Mississippi Valley. Some of those who arrived in Mobile eventually found their way to the rich parklands around Fort Rosalie where two European investors had procured a concession, or land grant. Their newly-acquired real estate stood on the banks of St. Catherine's Creek, upstream from the Natchez's Grand Village. By 1722, nearly two hundred farmers and workers from France, the Rhine Valley, and Africa labored a few miles from the temple mounds of the Great Sun.

These *arrivistes* failed to take up a subordinate role in the Théoloëls' world. Worse, they competed for land with another group who had moved to the region. The Apple Village Natchez had recently extended their town into an area to the west of St. Catherine's Concession. Throughout the spring and summer of 1722, men from each settlement exchanged musket fire. Carefully choosing their targets as if to notify particular offending Europeans of their transgressions, the Apple Villagers gradually increased the frequency and intensity of the violence. For instance, Natchez warriors shot and wounded Mr. Guenot, one of the managers of the concession—the political

equivalent of one of their Suns who had been executed by the French in 1716. The Théoloëls' attack came encoded in a syntax that might have been understood by earlier Native American immigrants but its meaning was lost upon the colonists. The concessionaires considered these attacks little more than proof of their neighbors' "savagery." The Indians' selection of targets, however, implied that the Théoloëls still reckoned that at least some aspects of the French village's social and political institutions mirrored their own.

This Second Natchez War ended when one of the Grand Village's Suns, the Tattooed Serpent, negotiated a tenuous peace with his opposite number, the war-leader of the French: the commandant of Fort Rosalie. The other Natchez delegations at work during this time included women, several of whom played significant parts in maintaining good relations with the French in later years.

The quiet lasted for only a brief interval—the next spring the Apple Villagers, joined by men from Jenzenaque and Grigras settlements, began killing livestock from St. Catherine's Concession. In autumn 1723, Bienville arrived with an army of several hundred regular troops, militia, Choctaw, Tunica, and Houma allies with the intention of destroying the Théoloëls. The Tattooed Serpent mediated once again during this Third Natchez War, this time with the aid of several villages that supported the Great Sun's policy of co-existence. The French then proceeded to lay waste to the Apple, Grigras, and Jenzenaque towns, destroying the enemies of St. Catherine's. The Tattooed Serpent and the Great Sun stood by while the Franco-Indian forces reduced these borderland communities and helped eliminate more native leaders who posed a threat to their power.

The conclusion of the Second and Third Natchez Wars did not put an end to the tension between the two peoples. The Fourth and final Natchez War and was instigated by a conflict over land, particularly the plain between St. Catherine's Creek and the Mississippi River which produced outstanding tobacco. This crop showed promise as an export commodity that would augment Louisiana's income. However, the sharp decline in European immigration after 1722 meant that the concessionaires needed to find another source of laborers. Even before the founding of the concessions in Natchez territory, the colonists clamored for African slaves to work in their fields. The *Compagnie des Indes* was quick to comply, sending thousands of people kidnapped from the Senegal-Gambia region. These unfortunates harvested crops and tended livestock within sight of Théoloël villages and homesteads. These latest immigrants were unlike any who had come before them; the French treated them cruelly and made no effort to incorporate them into their communities as equal members. Moreover, the Europeans identified these slaves in a way that must have seemed novel to the Native Americans of the region: skin color.

With the rise of their captive African population, Louisianans found it necessary to combat the social instability endemic to slave societies. In order to control what was becoming an enslaved majority, the Superior Council, which acted as a legislative body and as a court of last resort, appended a series of edicts to the *Code Noir* (the slave code issued by the French government in 1685).[14] During the early 1700s, the Council

[14] Mathé Allain, "Slave Policies in French Louisiana," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 174-182; Carl A. Brasseaux, "The Administration of Slave Regulations in French Louisiana, 1724-1766," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 209-225; David J. Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720-1835* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004); Daniel H. Usner, "From African Captivity to American Slavery: The Introduction of Black Laborers to

restricted the activities of Africans and Native Americans ("*negros"* and "*sauvages"*), but not those of European indentured servants. Moreover, they used with increasing frequency "black" skin color to distinguish their African slaves from the king's "white" subjects. Between 1702 and 1714, the French in the Southeast also worked out a discourse that attributed industry and integrity to those who were "more white," and laziness and treachery to those who were not. More important, although they did not mention the Indians' biological characteristics, the Superior Council's proclamations grouped Native Americans together with Africans as a permanently disenfranchised people. [15]

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Colonial Louisiana," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 183-200.

[15] For the development of racial categories in Louisiana and other French colonies, see Guillaume Aubert, "'The Blood of France': Race and Purity of Blood in the French Atlantic World," *William and Mary Quarterly* LXI, no. 3 (2004): 439-78; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Thomas N. Ingersoll, "Slave Codes and Judicial Practice in New Orleans," *Law and History Review* 13, no. 1 (1995): 23-62; Brasseaux, "The Administration of Slave Regulations in French Louisiana," 209-225; Glenn R. Conrad, "*Emigration Forcée*: A French Attempt to Populate Louisiana 1716-1720," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 125-135; Grady W Kilman, "Slavery and Agriculture in Lousiana: 1699-1731," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 201-208; William Resnick Riddell, "Le Code Noir," *The Journal of Negro History* 10, no. 3 (1925): 321-29; Brett Rushforth, "'A Little Flesh We Offer You': The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," *William and Mary Quarterly* LX, no. 4 (2003): 743-76; Jennifer M. Spear, "Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana," *William and Mary Quarterly* LX, no. 1 (2003): 75-98; George W. Shorter Jr., "Status and Trade at Port Dauphin," *Historical Archaeology* 36, no. 1 (2002): 135-42; Robert Louis Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: an Old Regime Business* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979); Nancy M. Miller, *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Regime, 1699-1763* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Company, 1916). For the development of racial categories in the English colonies, see Kathleen M. Brown, "Native Americans and Early Modern Concepts of Race," in *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850*, eds. Martin Dauton and Rick Halpern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 79-98; Joyce E. Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); David Brion Davis, "Constructing Race: A Reflection," *William and Mary Quarterly* LIV, no. 1 (1997): 7-18; Winthrop P. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Jennifer Morgan, "'Some Could Suck over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1700," *William and Mary Quarterly* LIV, no. 1 (1997): 167-92, and Almon Wheeler Lauber, *Indian Slavery in Colonial Times Within the Present Limits of the United States*, Vol. 59, (New York: Columbia University, 1913).

The Louisianans' propensity to rank human beings by skin color did not escape the Indians' notice. The Superior Council routinely distributed its edicts throughout the colony, including Natchez country. This left little doubt concerning Europeans' regard for those whom they considered to be outsiders. With the construction of Fort Rosalie and the concessions, the Théoloëls lived close to several French villages and a major administrative center thus they could not fail to observe the conditions of Africans working in the nearby fields and see the deleterious effects of this discourse of race.

The final insult came in December 1728, when the Council disinherited the Indian widows and children of Frenchmen. Those who remained in colonial settlements were allowed an annual pension doled out from the deceased's estate. Native women who returned to their families got nothing. This law subverted the time-honored Natchez practice of fostering intercultural relations through marriages with outsiders. It also made it abundantly clear that the Indians were not the equals of the Europeans in the French order of things.

This gradual marginalization at the hands of the Louisianans and the Natchez's observation of their plantation system generated unforeseen consequences came together to create a "critical mass" perfect for cultural production. During the late 1720s, Native Americans turned these racial categories, devised by Europeans to control their enslaved labor, against those who wished to relegate them to a lower status. Rather than accepting an inferior position, the Indians of the Southeast distanced themselves from the French and British by creating the term "red men."[16]

[16] Nancy Shoemaker made a compelling argument that "redness" was a creation of the Native Americans of the Southeast. My dissertation will closely explore not only the act of creation but the reasons why it succeeded or failed in particular situations. See Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (1997): 625-44; Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness:*

The Natchez—along with the Creeks, Choctaws, and Mobilians—employed the rhetoric of redness by the mid1720s at intercultural conferences. The Théoloëls, however, were the first to use redness to forge a consensus among their villagers and then to employ that unity to fight back against the French. With Bienville recalled to France, and with both the Tattooed Serpent—the Natchez's master diplomat—and the old Great Sun dead, the region's most culturally aware negotiators were gone. The new Great Sun met with the nations' elders in the spring of 1729, after De Chépart ordered the new Sun of the Apple Village to evacuate his people to make room for the captain's new plantation. The Indians played for time as they formulated a new policy toward the impudent immigrants. Rather than trying to incorporate them into their polity, the Natchez planned to destroy all of the men of the rebellious foreign settlements. On November 28, 1729, they struck, wiping out the European homesteads among them. The elders' invocation of a shared red identity had helped to overcome opposition from those who still harbored pro-French sentiments. It also allayed resentments among the outlying towns long controlled by anti-French leaders who had suffered for their resistance to the old Natchez regime's pro-Louisiana policy.

Within a few months, France launched a series of campaigns that destroyed the Natchez as an independent power. The violence of the Fourth Natchez War spread to the Yazoos and to Chickasaw country to the north. Eventually it crossed the Mississippi to involve the Quapaws, Natchitoches, Avoyelles, and Ouachitas. By the

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*Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 124-40. See also, Alden T. Vaughan, "From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American-Indian," *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (1982): 917-53. It should be noted that other historians have looked at France's role in the construction of racial categories, but few deal with them in relation to French Louisiana, and fewer still investigate the Indians' role in their development, see Guillaume Aubert, "'Français, negres et sauvages': Constructing Race in Colonial Louisiana" (PhD, Tulane, 2002); Dickason, "The Concept of *l'homme sauvage"* 5-32.

mid-1730s, many of the Southeastern nations had sided with the French while the Natchez took refuge with the British-supported Chickasaws. By this time, physical difference rather than cultural similarity had become a major component of Native American and French relations. The Indians had successfully shaped race into a tool to coerce European cooperation or to limit European encroachment. The creation of a red identity allowed them to delineate their people, their lands, and their economic assets from those of Louisiana, Carolina, and Georgia. They were "separate but equal" to the Europeans.

Consequently, this dissertation reexamines French and Indian relations in the Lower Mississippi Valley in the light of perceived similarities, local coexistence, and racial ideology. The next chapter, "Rising Suns," compares the particular aspects of French and Natchez society, politics, and religion that informed the illusion of shared institutions and practices. The second chapter, "Captive Suns," looks at the ways that these illusions helped to resolve the crisis of the First Natchez War in 1716. Rather than erode these perceptions of resemblance, the manner in which the French conducted themselves during the war and during the peace negotiations afterwards actually reinforced them. The following chapter, "Impudent Immigrants," examines the decline of relations between the French and the Natchez. By the early 1720s, the veneer of resemblances began to discolor. The Louisianans settling between the Grand Village and Fort Rosalie lived and acted very differently from the first Frenchmen who sojourned among the Natchez. Moreover, the newcomers lived and acted very differently from the Natchez themselves.

"People Who Call Each Other Red Men," the fourth chapter, deals with the collapse of diplomatic solutions and the mounting pressures that eventually led to open warfare. At first, the Indians tried to keep the peace through the offices of prominent Natchez women. After the French rebuffed their efforts, the People of the Sun abandoned the idea that they shared important characteristics with the Europeans and embraced a discourse of "racial" difference.

The fifth chapter, "Fallen Forts," traces France's destruction of the Natchez as an independent polity between late 1729 and 1731. Here the destruction of Fort Rosalie figures prominently. This episode manifested the Théoloëls' revised policy toward the French. During this time, the People of the Sun continued to use high-status women, both Natchez and European, as negotiators. By January 1731, it was clear that their efforts had failed, and the French captured most of the nation's women and children along with nearly all of the Suns. The defeat and death of the Sun of the Flour Village at the Battle of Natchitoches in the autumn of 1731 removed the last important Natchez leader recognized by the French.

The conclusion of this dissertation briefly traces the Théoloël Diaspora throughout the eighteenth century to the present day. It also summarizes the fate of the French colonial project in Louisiana after the Fourth Natchez War. France relied increasingly on military solutions to achieve its ends in the province. Louisiana became entangled in campaigns against the Chickasaws, and by the start of the French and Indian War in 1754, its fortresses, built in the vain hope of controlling the region, dotted the Mississippi watershed. In their competition with Britain for control of the continent, the French slipped into an arena where they were badly overmatched. In the ensuing

struggle, Great Britain deprived France of its colonial possessions in North America. The Natchez, however, are still here and still celebrate the Deer Moon Festival each spring at the site of their ancient temple.

## Chapter One: Rising Suns

During the early spring of 1700, a small party of European officers, sailors, craftsmen, and laborers, guided by Native Americans, rowed up the Mississippi River. They had come to chart the region for the King of France. After several days of traveling north along the waterway, they stopped to visit a large town inhabited by a powerful nation of Indians. The brother of the local headman greeted the expedition's commander with a gift of a small white cross. He then escorted the newcomers to the Grand Village to meet the Great Sun.[1] They had arrived in Natchez country at a particularly auspicious occasion—around the time of the Deer Moon —when headmen from the nation's dependent towns attended feasts with the Théoloël leader.[2]

Part of their story is contained in the ship's log of the *Renommée*, written by its captain, Charles le Moyne, *sieur* d'Iberville. In his entry for March 11, 1700, he described the countryside surrounding the native's town as "very much like France." He called the inhabitants *Nadches*, after the name of their principal village, although they used another name for themselves: the Théoloëls—the People of Sun—after their solar deity, Thé.[3] Their ruler attracted particular attention. D'Iberville wrote, "To me he seemed the most tyrannical Indian I have beheld."[4] The Jesuit chaplain, Father du

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[1] Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, *Iberville's Gulf Journals*, trans. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Mobile: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 125-26. For D'Iberville's early career, see *France's Forgotten Legion: Service Records of French Military and Administrative Personnel Stationed in the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast Region, 1699-1769* CD-ROM (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000). For a review of Montréal's merchant community in the late 1600s, see Louise Dechêne, *Habitants et Marchands de Montréal au XVII siècle essai* (Québex: Boréal, 1988), 125-51, 409-11.

[2] The full moon appeared on March 20, 1700, as per Erling Poulsen's on-line moon calendar program; http://www.rundetaarn.dk/engelsk/observatorium/nymeng.html, accessed April 18, 2006.

[3] Karl G. Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," in *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Pensacola: University Press of Florida, 2000), 159; Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier, 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 25. Thé was also the name of the first Great Sun who, along with White Woman, started the Natchez dynasty.

[4] D'Iberville, *Iberville's Gulf Journal*, 126.

Ru saw the same man in a more favorable light: "The chief's manner impresses me; he has the air of an ancient emperor." The missionary recorded the elaborate courtesies paid to the "Great Chief" by his retainers and by all of the Natchez.[5] Du Ru spent several more days writing about the temples and the society of the Grand Village and the outlying districts.

The accounts of Captain d'Iberville and his companions provide glimpses of the ways eighteenth-century Frenchmen perceived the people they met. One theme reappears in many passages—within Natchez society, these Europeans saw glimmers of "civilization." D'Iberville's characterization of the Natchez's chief as a tyrant demonstrated that he detected an unusual amount power at the disposal of the native ruler. Other observers saw reflections of Old World discourses of authority, dignity, and power in the Mississippi chiefdom. The Natchez, in turn, saw many practices and offices among the French that resonated with their own experiences of power and civility.

This chapter will examine some of the reasons that the French and the Natchez were able to assume certain things about each other. These two peoples shared many attributes not apparent at first glance. The People of the Sun and the subjects of Louis XIV made their assumptions because of the ways that each organized their society, distributed resources, and described their relations with the unseen powers. The first section of the chapter will briefly discuss these practices in the Sun King's France. In Louis's kingdom, most people attributed natural phenomena to the work of supernatural beings. They ascribed status through kinship, and believed that its supreme temporal

[5] Paul du Ru, *The Journal of Paul Du Ru (February 1 to May 8, 1700)*, trans. Ruth Lapham Butler (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1934), 34.

ruler held a divine mandate. The second part will look at similar practices in the Great Sun's dominion. The Natchez believed that the ruler of their land also based his tenure upon divine appointment. Supporting him in his political activities were his blood relations. The Théoloëls also attributed their triumphs and tragedies to the intervention of unseen forces. The final section of this chapter demonstrates that the French and Théoloëls' tendency to see parallels among each other were based on coherent and intelligible observations. It recalls the first French visitors to the Natchez in 1682. René-Robert Cavalier, sieur de La Salle's party looked and sounded like a Native American trading or hunting expedition because most of them were Native Americans. Moreover, those in the party who were not Native Americans often acted like Native Americans. This last section will go on to summarize the similarities that allowed each of these two peoples to fit the other into their respective epistemological categories.

The following descriptions of the worlds of the Sun King and the Great Sun are by no means exhaustive. I merely intend to outline some of the characteristics that allowed each group to recognize aspects of their own culture in the other's way of life. Many of their assumptions about such resemblances were the result of gross misperceptions—neither group saw the other without distortions. Nonetheless, neither side was staring at mirages; each had good reasons for making connections between themselves and the other. The later chapters of this dissertation will examine the consequences of these perceived resemblances as the French and Natchez drew upon them to construct their polices for dealing with each other.

### *The Sun King*

The section that follows briefly reviews certain aspects of France's political, social, and religious institutions in force during the time when d'Iberville sailed up the

Mississippi. The realm of Louis XIV represented the most refined expression of Western European civilization at the dawn of the eighteenth century. The colonization of Louisiana was an attempt to extend the glory of his kingdom. France's political institutions provided a template for the governance of the new province. The shape of its society determined who would cross the seas to rule at Mobile and New Orleans and, equally important, who would stay at home. Despite the nation's sophistication, most of its inhabitants lived in small agricultural hamlets in which daily life had changed little since the Middle Ages. The French missionaries, settlers, soldiers, and officials who came to the Southeast drew upon their experiences of the high culture of the court and church. They also drew upon those culled from the rural villages where many of them spent the early parts of their lives. The realm of the sacred also played a crucial role in shaping their views of themselves, the world around them, and the world they would soon encounter. These sources of experience informed the ways they perceived and wrote about the Indians they met in Louisiana's forests and prairies. Therefore, it is important to ground our understanding of the early days of the colony within life of the French peasant as well as within the grand sweep of Louis XIV's policies.

Grandeur was the watchword of late seventeenth-century France. Louis emblazoned his realm with images of the sun to illustrate the central place of his monarchy within the state. The motto *une foi, une loi, un roi*—one faith, one law, one king—epitomized this ideology of unity. France, however, was not a homogenous state or society. Even within the government, the area in which he should have been able to exert his authority without question, Louis XIV faced numerous obstacles to the untrammeled exercise of his power. Louis imagined himself at the center of the state,

with his nobles, church, and people orbiting the throne in the same way the planets revolved around the sun. He created a cult of personality and employed cultural and social patronage to counter centrifugal political forces that threatened to sunder the kingdom and to steer the state in the directions that he chose. At times he succeeded, in other instances, he accomplished less than he intended. The king's penchant for centralization played an important role in framing Louisiana's government as well as that of the *metropole's*. Although circumstances thwarted Louis's hopes for administrative efficiency at home, the colonies seemed to offer a clean slate. His plan for a strong governor and Superior Council (a legislative body as well as court of last resort) to run Louisiana exemplified the Sun King's authoritarian ideal.[6] The *tabula rasa* of "le Mississippi" notwithstanding, stability eluded his transplanted subjects—many of France's social and political tensions followed them to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico.

Numerous obstacles impeded the Sun King from exerting greater control over France's institutions. Despite his desire for a firm grip on the domestic government, Louis found his designs thwarted by ancient traditions, civil and canon law, foreign distractions, restive nobles, and refractory *parlements*.[7] He also faced constitutional limitations on his power to levy taxes. The means by which he circumvented some of these obstructions produced a bureaucratic legacy that lasts to this day. Louis's high-level administrative appointments and his efficient use of supervisory officers called

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[6] For an in-depth examination of the powers of the Council, see James D. Hardy, "The Superior Council in Colonial Louisiana," in *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley*, ed. John Francis McDermott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), 87-101.

[7] The thirteen *parlements* acted as courts of law and as quasi-legislatures. The most important of these was the *Parlement* of Paris. For the development of the intendants official powers and the problems their investigations caused, see James B. Collins, *From Tribes to Nation: the Making of France 500-1799*, (Fort Worth: Wadsworth, 2002), 306 –07, 339.

*intendants,* aided him in his quest. Louis also marshaled the finer things in life to solve some of his political problems. The celebrated Court of Versailles and the magnificent artistic and literary culture associated with his reign tamed his nobles and won the admiration of the rest of Europe.

For all his political maneuverings, Louis's right to the throne rested on his birth into the royal family. Louis's claim arose from his descent from the Bourbon line of kings that began with his grandfather, Henri IV. In France, as in nearly every other state throughout the globe, kinship played the defining role in determining who held the reins of power. Through blood or marriage, the king was related to the noblest families in Europe.

The elegant trappings of the court hosted a world in which kinship, the most elemental and ubiquitous of all human relations, meant everything. Here, Louis's most powerful relatives attempted to influence national policy through their wealth and ancient prerogatives. This elite group had exerted enormous influence only a few decades earlier, often with violent outcomes such as the St. Bartholomew's Day's Massacre and the Fronde uprisings. During the 1640s and 1650s, the upper nobility strove to take advantage of the vacuum created by the death of Louis XIII and the minority of his heir. Throughout these years, Louis XIV lived in the Louvre as little more than a prisoner of the mobs of Paris and princes of the blood. Yet, the boy-king escaped assassination, a fate that had overtaken many of his predecessors. Despite the plotting of those who jostled for power, respect for the rule of succession eventually won out, and Louis ascended to the throne.

His youthful experiences as a virtual hostage and the chaos that marred his father and grandfather's reigns strengthened his determination to concentrate the power of the state in his own hands. In 1661, after the death of Cardinal Mazarin—the man who successfully navigated the young king through the turbulent politics of his early life—Louis began to rule his kingdom directly. To achieve this end, the king embarked on a program to restructure the government. Essential to this reform was the development of a corps of professional bureaucrats dependent upon the king's favor rather than upon high birth for their authority. These technocrats gradually circumvented the ancient prerogatives of the upper nobility by performing the necessary but monotonous work that kept the wheels of government turning. Jean-Baptiste Colbert personified this trend by heading many of the government's ministries during Louis's reign. In a society in which kinship legitimized control, his family's obscure origin and lack of prestige precluded any usurpation of the king's influence.

Colbert saw the efficient management of the state's resources as crucial to maximizing France's (and his own) influence. The colonies felt Colbert's sway when he developed a mercantilist agenda to channel the wealth of France's overseas possessions into the coffers of the motherland. To accomplish this end, he standardized colonial commercial and legal practices through a series of edicts. The *Code Noir*, although published two years after Colbert died, exemplified the minister's proclivity for organization and attention to detail.[8] Besides regulating slavery, the *Code* excluded

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[8] For a review of Colbert's life, see Jean Meyer, *Colbert* (Paris: Hachette littérature générale, 1981); Ines Murat, *Colbert*, trans. Robert Francis Cook and Jeannie Van Asselt (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984). For Colbert's impact on French slave policy, see Mathé Allain, "Slave Policies in French Louisiana," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 174-82; Carl A. Brasseaux, "The Administration of Slave Regulations in French Louisiana, 1724-1766," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 209-25; Thomas N. Ingersoll, "Slave Codes and Judicial Practice in

non-Catholics from the colonies and standardized judicial proceedings. These reforms were to have an enormous impact on Louisiana's government, society, and economy. The racial aspects of *Code Noir* would play an especially significant role in France's relationship with the People of the Sun.

Louis and Colbert's centralizing program needed men to oversee its local implementation. *Intendants*, officers with fiduciary authority, administered the day-to-day functions of the government. Since the king drew these men from his household staff and paid them directly, the *intendants* executed royal policy without depending on external sources for their salaries.[9] Because they often reported on state business in the provinces and audited account books of those who oversaw it, these independent bureaucrats often found themselves at odds with high officials who had inherited or purchased their offices.

Some of the administative practices of Old France made their way to the New World, albeit with certain modifications. In Louisiana, the governor acted as chief executive, mirroring to some extent the power of the monarch. Assisting him was a *commissaire-ordonnateur*, who managed the fiscal affairs of the colony.[10] Both held seats on the Superior Council where six or seven important men of the colony advised them. This body mimicked some aspects of the *parlements*, first serving as a court of

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New Orleans," *Law and History Review* 13, no. 1 (1995): 23-62. For a general review of the *Code Noir* see William Resnick Riddell, "Le Code Noir," *The Journal of Negro History* 10, no. 3 (1925): 321-29. See also Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana: The French Domination* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 1866; reprint, 1998), 531-39. Gwendolyn Hall also wrote extensively about the French slave codes. See Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

[9] The *Code Michaud* regularized the office of intendant in 1629. See G. R. R. Treasure, *Louis XIV* (New York: Longman, 2001), 69-101.

[10] The *commissaire-ordonnateur*, roughly translated as "comptroller," held a restricted commission that granted him less power than an *intendant* in the *metropole*. See Donald J. Limieux, "Some Legal and Pratical Aspects of the Office of *Commassaire-Ordonnateur* of French Louisiana," *Louisiana Studies* 14, no. 4 (1975): 379-93.

last resort and eventually acquiring legislative powers.[11] Despite the apparent simplicity of this arrangement, Louisiana's records are strewn with conflicts between the officers who controlled the military and civil affairs of the colony and those who held its purse strings. The imprecision with which the king defined their powers led to constant bickering between the *ordonnateur* and the governor. The historian Donald Lemieux observed: "The reason for this conflict lie not within French Louisiana, but rather in Versailles."[12] These disputes routinely intruded upon diplomatic relations with the Indians. Parsimonious bureaucrats sent Louisiana's negotiators to the Indians' council fires with empty hands to face the derision of Native Americans who had been expecting their customary gifts.

The political divisions in Louisiana reflected larger problems in the domestic French government. Louis possessed a limited ability to increase the state's revenue because of statutory restraints. He could impose few new nationwide taxes without the consent of the *Etats Générales*, a legislative body that had not been convened since 1613. Moreover, the crown often granted certain provinces tax exemptions in exchange for advanced payments, further throttling the state's revenue. The nobles and people of these regions jealously clung to these "liberties" decades after they obtained them from the crown.

Consequently, the king raised part of the money that he needed through the creation of venal offices. These saleable positions came with inheritable titles that admitted their purchasers into the "nobility of the robe." Such offices permitted their holders to

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[11] Hardy, "The Superior Council in Colonial Louisiana," 88; Jerry A. Micelle, "From Law Court to Local Government: Metamorphosis of the Superior Council of French Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 9, no. 2 (1968): 85-107.
[12] Limieux, "The Office of *Commassaire-Ordonnateur*," 403.

charge fees for their services. Aside from the promise of steady, if small, returns, Louis's sale of offices catered to the aspirations of wealthy merchants who wanted to improve their social rank. Louis's use of venality was not new; connections between "public authority and private property" dated back to the Frankish kingdoms of the seventh century. Henry IV increased the number of these saleable positions in the late sixteenth century.[13] His grandson, Louis XIV, sold many more of these offices to pay for his palaces, his art collections, and, most of all, his wars. Yet, this solution had its limits. Venal offices were property under French law and could not be recouped by the crown without compensation. Moreover, such offices were inheritable; once created and sold, they passed beyond the reach of the king forever. Thus, Louis was forced to create and sell even more of them as his projects required greater infusions of capital.[14]

The profligate sale of posts produced several regrettable consequences for Louisiana. First, the French merchant class diverted its capital away from investment in risky ventures like colonization. Second, they siphoned off talented men from commercial vocations—the law prohibited new nobles from engaging in mercantile activities.[15] The crown actively enforced this provision with the threat of derogation. Consequently, the most ambitious and successful men of the realm bought their way out of commerce and into the *noblesse de robe*. Candidates with poor management skills like Antoine de le Mothe, the *sieur de* Cadillac, held positions of authority in Louisiana because the best men were ensconced in venal positions at home. Third, since the king

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[13] Collins, *From Tribes to Nation*, 292.
[14] Louis XIV raised an estimated 500,000 *livres* by the creation and sales of venal offices. Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France, 1660-1789* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970; reprint, 1993), 274. In the 1690s, Louis issued nearly a thousand blank letters of ennoblement that he sold through his *intendants* for the sum of 6,000 *livres* apiece. Pierre Goubert, *The Ancien Régime. French Society, 1600-1750*, trans. Steve Cox (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 180.
[15] Goubert, *The Ancien Régime*, 166.

could not eliminate an office or eject its holder without first refunding its purchase price, he was forced to invent yet more positions whenever his treasury ran low. This expanded the bureaucracy and created knots of overlapping jurisdictions and redundant functions that took a revolution to untangle. Finally, the sale of venal offices pitted the parvenus against the ancient "nobility of the sword" who had inherited their status from the medieval warrior class. Louisianans struggled over this rift when relatively highborn officials from the mother country and low-born Canadians wrestled for control of the financial and military affairs of the colony.[16]

Louis found other ways besides administrative reform to consolidate his power. The arts and the theatre of state proved to be among his most effective tools. These came together at the Versailles, a hunting lodge a few miles outside of Paris, which Louis built into the most opulent residence in Europe. With balls, fetes, and plays, Louis drew France's restive nobility to its halls and reduced them to dandified courtiers. There he selectively dispensed perquisites, gifts, and pensions to those in regular attendance. Through these emollients, he demonstrated his respect for the rank of the nation's most important families that chose to make the palace their *de facto* residence. To attract Louis's attention, some of the most important men of the kingdom became little more than servants during certain times of the day. The king's *lever* (rising) was one of the rituals that provided the Sun King with a daily reminder of exactly who resided within his orbit. The men who handed Louis his clothing, carried his candle, and brought his "pierced chair" gained contact with the royal personage. Princes of the blood, dukes, and counts from families who had once directly competed for power with

[16] Mathé Allain, *Not Worth a Straw: French Colonial Policy and the Early Years of Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1988), 1-13.

earlier monarchs willingly took roles in the spectacle and dissipated their time and their resources doing the work of stagehands in the grand theater of state. Courtly life diverted members of the nobility and their money from other endeavors. In contrast to the seventeenth-century English colonial project, few highborn nobles concerned themselves with France's overseas provinces, leaving those mundane concerns to the *noblesse de robe*. Unlike the grandees of the kingdom's ancient houses, these second-tier elites lacked the social and political capital to effectively advocate for distant outposts like Louisiana.[17] There were no French equivalents of the Earl of Shaftsbury, Henry Hyde, 2nd Earl of Clarendon, or Baronet George Carteret—to name a few of the driving forces behind England's burgeoning Atlantic colonies.

Although the monarchs of Europe looked on the opulence of Versailles with envy, they also feared its master's territorial ambitions. Louis sought to consolidate the patchwork of interlocking duchies, bishoprics, and petty principalities that made up France's marchlands. These semi-autonomous remnants of medieval kingdoms and city-states within the heartland of the nation clung to ancient "liberties" that conflicted with the king's sovereignty. Worse, the Hapsburgs' domains on the Spanish frontier and along the Rhine pinned France between lands held by its traditional enemies. To remedy these conditions, Louis XIV engaged in five wars during his reign. The territories that he acquired during these conflicts were not always populated by

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[17] For a discussion of Louis cooption of the French nobility, see Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes, Two Essays by Joseph Schumpeter* (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1951), 56-64. For some eighteenth-century consequences of this policy, see Eric. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (New York: Signet Books, 1962), 22-44. For an overview of Louis's court, see John B. Wolf, *Louis XIV*, (New York: Norton, 1968), 269-85. Wolf provided a concise description of the *lever*, *coucher*, and other daily activities that became rituals for those vying for the monarch's glance. Ibid. 209-71. See also Louis de Rouvroy Saint-Simon and Henri Jean Victor de Rouvroy Saint-Simon, *Mémoires complets et authentiques du duc de Saint-Simon sur le siécle de Louis XIV et la régence* (Paris: A. Sautelet et cie, 1829).

Frenchmen. His victories brought large numbers of Germans, Walloons, and Flemings under Bourbon rule. The state had to find ways to acculturate these newcomers.

Other aspects of France's society were as complex as its marchlands. The hierarchy in place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries allowed each Frenchman, from the lowest beggar to the monarch, to know her or his place. Over the course of several hundred years, legal scholars had worked out the intricacies of this system in a discourse that reached its most refined state under the Bourbons. Innumerable charters, decrees *parlementaires*, royal dispensations, municipal prerogatives, heraldic law, and local customs dictated every interaction. Seemingly trivial considerations—the marching order of a procession, the seating arrangements in church or at a dinner, the removal of hats—denoted an individual's rank. However, cracks in the foundation of this apparently stable structure were developing just out of sight. Stresses such as war or the uncertainty inherent in the early stages of colonization often uncovered these fractures. The experiences of Louisiana's first years revealed these fissures when low-born men gained positions of power by virtue of their military prowess or their linguistic and diplomatic skills. The colony's governing house, the Le Moynes, exemplified this trend. They lacked ancient titles; consequently, their social capital at Versailles would have been negligible compared to that of the grand families at court. Nonetheless, they wielded considerable power in the New World through their successes in battle and at the council fires of North America.

The ascension of the Le Moynes illustrated a fundamental characteristic of French society: the family was the primary source of identity and status. From the highest to the lowest orders of the realm, the family was the elemental social unit. Moreover,

biological relationships with other families—kinship— dictated where a particular family stood in the structure and thus determined the amount of power at its disposal. The princes of the blood were directly related to the king but far enough removed to preclude them from the line of succession. Louis bridled their political ambitions by inviting them to live amid the splendor of Versailles as his guests.[18] The high nobility inhabited the next tier, often literally, at the palace. The lessons culled from the uprisings of early years of his reign taught the king to keep these lesser families entertained and under his supervision. After these ancient houses came the *noblesse de la robe*. The families that furnished members for the *parlements* constituted the most prestigious group in this order. These households also fed the pools of candidates from which Louis drew his *intendants*. Behind the *parlementaires* followed a bewildering array of middle and low-ranking nobles that trailed off into obscurity among the impoverished masses.

It was from the middle and lower ranks of the nobility rather than its upper reaches that Louis selected promising men to staff his expanding government. Colbert owed his rise to this policy, as did his son and grandson who replaced him as Minister of Marine. Hence, seventeenth-century France presented opportunities for social mobility over the course of several generations. This era witnessed the rise of few self-made men, but it saw the slow ascension of many self-made families.

These rising houses often secured their place in the web of kinship and government through carefully considered marriages. Such unions provided parvenus with connections within the hierarchy. This practice gave elite women important roles as

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[18] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime: a History of France, 1610-1774* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 225.

negotiators and advocates for their husbands at Court and with other prestigious families.[19] Rich merchants, some with enormous fortunes, bought their way into the nobility. As discussed earlier, many of these became petty bureaucrats by purchasing one of Louis's many venal offices. A few rose quite high in French society. For instance, the financier Antoine Crozat, through a series of judicious loans to the king, rose from peasant to marquis. Crozat's experience was an anomaly; most officials contented themselves with comfortable, if obscure, positions among the *noblesse de la robe*. Few men of ability abandoned such security for a dangerous and uncertain future in Louisiana.

Not all business people managed to purchase titles, the overwhelming majority spent their lives as commoners. Like most of humanity in early modern times, the bulk of the French people lived in small agricultural villages. After the family, the village was the primary social unit of France. Most of Louis's countrymen usually identified themselves as *habitants* of their community rather than as his subjects. The bulk of the aristocracy and nearly all of the peasantry lived out their lives in rural hamlets and towns grouped around a parish church. The ties that bound people together seldom extended beyond the jurisdiction of the local noble and priest. Shopkeepers and craftsmen exercised some control over their condition through guild associations. Together with religious fraternities, they provided a buffer against bad economic times. These tradesmen also housed and trained generations of apprentices, many of whom married the master's daughters and entered into his kinship network. These arrangements provided a modicum of security; at least enough that few French people

[19] Sara Chapman, "Patronage as Family Economy: The Role of Women in the Patron-Client Network of the Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain Family, 1670-1715," *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 11-35 (2001): 11-35.

willingly left their farms or workshops. Although some men sought seasonal employment in Spain or the Low Countries, most returned to their native towns at the end of the year.[20] New France and Louisiana offered bleak prospects for a promising plowman or apprentice, particularly after stories from repatriated colonists circulated throughout the countryside during the 1720s. The village, although crucial, was not the only institution around which French society organized itself.

Like many governmental and social institutions, religion was an important unifying element for both those who remained in the motherland and for the emigrants to the Mississippi.[21] Whether peasant, noble, or king, nearly everyone in France looked toward the Catholic Church for spiritual guidance and an intelligible cosmology. Its rituals and pedagogy provided a common set of experiences for all but a few of the French. The Church afforded a sense of order through its elaborate administrative apparatus on earth and through its representations of the heavenly kingdom as a hierarchy. This penchant for order made Catholicism understandable not only for the European immigrants to the Mississippi, but also for the indigenous people of the New World. Certain aspects of clerical offices and church hagiography resonated with Indian spiritual practices, particularly those of the Natchez.

Catholic theologians portrayed heaven as a kingdom, with God the Father as the supreme ruler. Christ sat at his right hand as God's only begotten son. The person of the Holy Spirit completed the tripartite godhead. Mary, the mother of Jesus, took the

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[20] Nicholas P. Canny, "In Search of a Better Home? European Overseas Migration, 1500-1800," in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas P. Canny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 263-85.

[21] France was so hard pressed for immigrants that it allowed a handful of Protestant Germans to settle in Louisiana in contravention to the *Code Noir*. See "A Census of the German Villages Near New Orleans," November 12, 13, and December 20 1724, AC, G, Vol. 1, 464 np.

penultimate place in Catholic hagiolatry, just below the Trinity. By the high Middle Ages, the cult of Mary offered solace to penitent sinners, distraught mothers, and condemned criminals. Moreover, she represented a feminine component in Catholic mythology lacking in Protestantism. The "communion of saints" inhabited the next level of existence. According to Church doctrine, a saint was a deceased human whose faith and good works allowed him or her to dwell in proximity to the Almighty. Due to this closeness, a saint could intercede with God on behalf of the living. Moreover, many saints looked after certain groups and occupations or took up particular causes. Hunters, soldiers, farmers, craftsmen, and carpenters all called upon their respective patron saints for aid. For instance, Saint Eustachius protected huntsmen, Saint Benedict of Narsia attended to farmers, Saint Joseph served as the patron saint of carpenters, and Saint Michael watched over soldiers.[22] Those afflicted with throat disorders could invoke the intervention of Saint Blaise.[23]

As Mary and the saints' status implied, the Almighty did not inhabit heaven alone. In Catholic eschatology, the soul lives on after death. Those who lived immoral lives would find themselves in hell, a place of fire and torment richly depicted in European literature and art. Martyrs and those who exhibited heroic virtue earned instantaneous admission to heaven. Most believers, however, spent time expiating their sins in the middle realm of Purgatory. The denizens of that place could gain merit from prayers, Masses, and good deeds performed on their behalf by those on earth, thereby shortening

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[22] http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/indexsnt.htm, viewed February 15, 2005.
[23] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Latin Text and English Translation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 2a2ae 81:88; Colman O'Neill, "Saints," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 852-53.

the length of their penance. Thus, the dead remained part of the sacred routine of the living.

Other aspects of the church became part of their routine as well. The celebration of the Mass allowed Catholics to participate in a historic moment through a discrete performance. The consecration of the host was the culmination of the Mass. According to Catholic theology, it was at that point of the service that the bread and wine became the Eucharist, the actual body and blood of Christ. By consuming the host, each congregant took part in the vicarious death of Jesus. Therefore, the Eucharist itself became an object of adoration. Roman Catholicism granted the authority to administer this and other sacraments only to the ordained. Priests alone conducted Mass and other rituals for the benefit of their parishioners.[24] The monopoly priests possessed over the dispensation of these grace-bestowing rituals gave them tremendous power over the believers in their communities—they held the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

This spectacular nature of Catholicism played an important role in the Church's missions in the Western Hemisphere. The Mass permitted Indians to observe this theology as a performance complete with talismans, transformational utterances, sacred smoke, and specialized ceremonial equipment. Many of these practices and items resembled those of Native Americans. These resemblances gave Catholic missionaries a significant advantage over Protestant clerics whose emphasis on the written word and didactic sermons had little in common with indigenous spiritual ideas.[25] Clerics acted as

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[24] With one exception: a lay Catholic could administer baptism if the death of a willing unbeliever was imminent.

[25]For an overview of the rivalry between French Catholic and British Protestant missionaries, see James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: the Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For similarities among Catholic and Native American ritual and iconography, see James Taylor Carson, "Sacred Circles and Dangerous People: Native American Cosmology and the

intermediaries between the earth-bound and the spirit world, a role also played by Indian holy men. The unique vestments of the priests set them apart not only from the Indians, but from French laity as well. These clerics also took vows of chastity that removed them from the competition for wives among the people whom they served. This practice relieved them from kinship obligations in Native American societies, allowing them to mediate disputes among their Indian hosts without favoritism. Most Catholic priests in colonial Louisiana eschewed commercial activities. Hence, they posed no economic threat to their Native American charges beyond the cost of their food and lodging.

Although Catholic priests exercised unique authority, they and the church they represented suffered from some factionalism. This followed them to the shores of the Gulf Coast. The colony's civil leaders wrote about the rivalries among the Jesuits, Capuchins, *Recollets* (a branch of the Franciscans), and the Priests of the Foreign Missions. Fathers from the latter order fell under the jurisdiction of their headquarters in Quebec, where their superiors enjoyed frequent contact with the only North American bishop outside of Mexico. However, their poor performance as proselytizers and the lack of support given them by the Foreign Missions led to their replacement by the Capuchins in 1726.[26]

The Society of Jesus also vied for the right to harvest the souls of the Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley. The Jesuits played a prominent role in the French colonial project in the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River Valley. In the late seventeenth

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French Settlement of Louisiana," in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, ed. Bradley G. Bond (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 63-82.

[26] For a brief history of the Fathers of the Foreign Missions, see Louise Phelps Kellogg, *Early Narratives of the Northwest, 1634-1699* (New York: C. Scribners & Sons, 1917), 337.

century, they set up a mission at the Tamoroas' village at Kaskaskia. The Jesuit "Black Robes," however, encountered difficulties enlarging their foothold in the West. Edicts from the government and arrangements with Crozat gave the Priests of the Foreign Missions and later, the Capuchins, exclusive privileges to set up parishes and distribute the sacraments. Yet, the Jesuits retained enough prestige with French authorities to eventually extend their jurisdiction south from Illinois into Louisiana. After 1726, the Society of Jesus was spiritually responsible for a region that stretched from the Great Lakes to the Grand Village of the Natchez.[27]

Despite their internecine squabbles, the opulence and rich traditions of the church and the court of the Sun King provided stability for most French people. Men from various ranks of the nobility staffed positions in both institutions. France's social system also ascribed status to the wellborn. Although this practice sometimes hindered the rise of natural talent, it provided a place for all of the king's subjects. Catholicism offered a set of shared experiences and an understandable cosmology that gave solace to the lowly and buttressed the power of the mighty. Many of these characteristics of French society survived the journey across the Atlantic to become part of France's colonial project. Enough of these characteristics arrived on the bluffs west of the Grand Village of the Natchez for the People of the Sun to recognize similarities with their own government, society, and spiritual practices.

### *The Land of the Great Sun*

In much the same way that Louis XIV's opulent reign cloaked the divisiveness that troubled France during the seventeenth century, the Great Sun's prestige obscured

[27] For a comprehensive, though often celebratory, assessment of the Jesuits, see Jean Delanglez, "The French Jesuits in Lower Louisiana (1700-1763)" (Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1935).

divisions within the Natchez polity from European observers.[28] The two "Suns" faced the challenge of consolidating their authority in the face of political rivals. Both men had to deal with acculturating foreigners who dwelt in the marchlands of their realms. Finally, despite charges of despotism, the Great Sun's power often depended on his ability to forge consensus among the upper ranks of his people. The Sun King, despite the discourse of absolutism attributed to him, spent much of his time and money garnering the support of his nobles. The following pages will examine some aspects of the Natchez world that resembled Louis XIV's France. These similarities, as ephemeral as some of them were, explain why the newcomers thought that they had found an Indian kingdom that shared many characteristics that they had left behind in the Old World.

To the French, the Natchez appeared to be most technologically advanced society that they had encountered in North America. Although most of the northern nations familiar to them engaged in farming, none of these peoples cultivated fields as large as those that d'Iberville saw near the Grand Village. Likewise, the temple mounds built by the Natchez had no equals among the Indians of the St. Lawrence Valley and the Great Lakes basin.

Of all the characteristics that seemed to fulfill the legends of a powerful native kingdom, the image of an Indian potentate loomed large in the minds of those who encountered the Natchez. The Théoloëls' centralized polity resembled not only the

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[28] These "observational 'blind-spots'" were the subject of Patricia Galloway's essay about the difficulties of using European sources to evaluate Indian social and political institutions. See Patricia K. Galloway, "The Direct Historical Approach and Early Historical Documents: The Ethnohistorian's View," in *Archaeological Report No. 18, The Protohistoric Period in the Mid-South: 1700-1700, Proceedings of the 1983 Mid-South Archaeological Conference*, ed. David H. Dye and Ronald C. Brister (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1986), 14-23.

Spanish myths, but also displayed many attributes of a state. Indeed, Europeans often remarked upon the regal status of the Great Sun. D'Iberville's description of the Indian's authority as "tyrannical" drew upon images of despotism from ancient history.[29] André Penicault, a ship's carpenter who sojourned at the Grand Village for the year 1704, recorded his ideas on the matter:

> This Grand Chief rules over all other chiefs of the eight other villages. He sends his orders to them by way of his thirty [lackeys]…This Grand Chief is as absolute as a king. His people, out of awe, do not come close to him: when they speak to him, they stand four paces away from him…When he rises from his bed, all his kinsmen or several distinguished old men draw near his bed raising their arms aloft and howling frightfully. This is how they pay their respects to him; still, he does not deign to look at them.[30]

The description of the Sun's activities at daybreak resembled the ministrations of France's nobility as they helped Louis XIV rise each morning. Nor was Penicault alone in this assessment of the Indian leader's power. Antoine le Page du Pratz, a farmer and *concessionnaire* who lived among the Natchez for several years during the 1710s and 1720s, wrote:

> …these people are reared in such perfect submission to their sovereign that the authority which he exerts over them is a veritable despotism, which can be compared only to that of the first Ottoman emperors. He is, like them, absolute master of the goods and life of his subjects, he disposes of them according to his pleasure, his will is his reason…When he orders a man who has merited it to be put to death, the unhappy individual neither begs nor makes intercession for his life, nor seeks to escape. The order of the sovereign is executed on the spot and no one murmurs.[31]

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[29] Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indian Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore, vol. I (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974), 127, 238.
[30] Andre Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Penicualt Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana*, trans. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 100-01.
[31] John Reed Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911). 106.

When Father Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix passed through the Grand Village in December 1721 on a his survey of the Mississippi, he too noted the status of the Great Sun and his mate:

> The great chief of the Natchez bears the name of the Sun…They also give to his wife title of female chief [*femme-chef*]; and although she does not ordinarily meddle with the government, they pay her great honors. She has also, as well as the great chief, the power of life and death. As soon as somebody has had the misfortune to displease one or the other, they order their guards, whom they call Allouez [lackey], to kill him, "Go rid me of that dog" say they; and they are immediately obeyed. Their Subjects, and even the Chiefs of the villages, never approach them unless they salute them three times, setting up a cry, which is a kind of howling. They do the same when they retire, and they retire walking backwards. When they encounter them, they must stop and arrange themselves on road and make the same cries…until they have passed. Their subjects are also obliged to carry them the best of their harvest, and products of their hunts and fishing trips.[32]

In this passage, Charlevoix referred to protocols familiar to his European readership; for instance, one never turned one's back to royalty. More important, the Jesuit's narrative provides a stark contrast to earlier accounts of Native Americans' egalitarianism and clemency.[33]

An anonymous description published in 1758 echoed the Suns' control over the economic resources of the nation:

> The veneration which these savages have for their great chief and for his family goes so far that whether he speaks good or evil, they thank him by genuflections and reverences marked by howls. All these Suns have many

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[32] Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France avec le Journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionnale*, Vol. III (Paris: Chez Nyon Fils, 1744) 420. An essential characteristic defining a state is the monopoly of legitimate coercion. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, ed. Vol. II (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 903-5.

[33] Charlevoix may have been taking aim at Baron Lahontan's "dialogue" with Adario, an Algonquin orator, in the latter's *Nouveaux voyages de Mr le baron de Lahontan, dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*. During an extended debate with Lahontan, Adario castigates French society for its rigid hierarchy and extols the virtues of his own classless nation. Moreover, Adario spends a good deal of time criticizing the Jesuits' efforts to convert the Indians. See Baron Louis-Armand de Lom d'Ares Lahontan, ed., *New Voyages to North American*, Vol. I (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905), 555-67.

> savages who have become their slaves voluntarily, and who hunt and work for them…All these relatives of the Sun regard the other savages as dirt.[34]

Once again, the parallels between Natchez and European protocols appear in stark relief. French peasants endured similar treatment at the hands of their "betters." They owed their labor to the lord of their manor, a nobleman who also administered justice in their *seigneury*. Commoners also had to show proper respect when they encountered nobles and high churchmen or face the consequences.[35]

The parallels between the two Suns did not end with the treatment of their subjects; both leaders faced domestic unrest. The Great Sun's problems arose from the recent changes within the Natchez polity. In the years just before d'Iberville arrived, the Théoloëls shifted their paramount town south to the Grand Village. This displacement generated tension with the outlying communities whose leaders consequently had less access to the nation's decision-making apparatus. The early Bourbons faced a similar problem when they began to concentrate the power of the state in the monarchy, provoking sections of the French nobility to plot against them. Moreover, the Great Sun and his entourage, like Louis, faced the trials of acculturating the waves of immigrants moving into the Natchez's polity. This influx of newcomers fit in with the cyclical nature of Mississippian chiefdoms.

Patricia Galloway described the ebb and flow of these civilizations. In her book, *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700*, she argues that the earliest stage of the cycle began with segmented tribes led by "big men" who used their persuasive skills to lead their people. The next phase came about as the segmented tribes joined together as "simple chiefdoms." During this stage, the chiefs used the community's agricultural surpluses

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[34] Anonymous, *Memoire sur Louisiana*, Recueil B. A Luxembourg, (Paris: 1758), *NYPL*, 143.
[35] Goubert, *The Ancien Régime*, 82-84.

in displays of conspicuous consumption. These groupings then consolidated into complex chiefdoms that were highly centralized and had leaders who used rituals to cement their control over their societies. According to Galloway, this final stage collapsed when the population outstripped the fertility of the soil and the technology the people used to collect food. The lesser chiefs revolted, breaking the polity into segmented tribes to begin the process anew. [36]

This cyclical theory suggests that the Natchez were in the process of assembling a complex chiefdom when d'Iberville arrived. Vulnerable native clans, already weakened by pandemics, sought asylum from the incessant low-level warfare and slave raids of the late 1600s by moving into Théoloël country.[37] The opulence of the Natchez's culture and the prospect of safety provided by their military strength attracted disparate groups to join the Théoloëls as subordinate members of a Mississippian chiefdom. French observers reported that the towns southeast of the Grand Village contained the

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[36] For a detailed explanation of the Mississippian cycle of consolidation and dissolution, see Patricia K. Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 27-74. For other views of Mississippian coalesence and dispersion, see John Blitz, "Mississippian Chiefdoms and the Fusion-Fission Process," *American Antiquity* 64, no. 4 (1999): 577-92; Charles R. Cobb, "Mississippian Chiefdoms: How Complex?" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 82 (2003): 63-84; John F. Scarry, "The Late Prehistoric Southeast," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, ed. Charles M. Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 17-35; Randolph J. Widmer, "The Structure of Southeastern Chiefdoms," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, ed. Charles M. Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 125-155.

[37] For the effects of European pathogens in North America, see Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 212-17; "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in Aboriginal Depopulation," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1976): 289-99; Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: the Fates of Human Societies* (New York: Norton, 1999), 77-70, 210-13. For an overview of Natchez population trends, see Peter H. Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South: an Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Gregory A. Waselkov and M. Thomas Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 73-79. Paul Kelton questions the role of disease in the decline of Indian populations in the Gulf Coast region. See Paul Kelton, "Avoiding the Smallpox Spirits: Colonial Epidemics and Southeastern Indian Survival," *Ethnohistory* 51, no. 1 (2004): 45-72; "The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, 1696-1700: The Region's First Major Epidemic?" in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, ed. Robbie Etheridge and Charles M. Hudson (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), 45-72.

Tunican-speaking Grigras and Tioux. The Koroas also enjoyed a peculiar connection with the Natchez. The Yazoos identified with the Théoloëls to such an extent that they joined the "uprising" of 1729 and the subsequent campaigns against Louisiana. The Natchez, however, had not always acted as a magnet for distressed populations.

European observers wrote about the Grand Village as if it was a kind of capital of the Théoloël polity, but it had acquired that role only a few decades before the founding of Louisiana. A much larger settlement to the north that archaeologists call the "Emerald Site" previously held the most important position in the region's paramount chiefdom. During the Emerald Site's predominance, the Grand Village operated as a tributary of the larger town. In turn, it administered its own satellite communities scattered across the lands near St. Catherine's Creek. Archaeological excavations undertaken during the 1940s revealed that the Natchez abandoned the Emerald Site by the turn of the eighteenth century. The reason for this desertion remains unclear. Perhaps, like their Tunican neighbors to the north, the People of the Sun were escaping from Chickasaw raiders. Written sources corroborate the archeological data regarding the previous center of the Théoloël polity. Several European authors related Natchez stories about a great temple that once stood at the northern edge of the Indians' homeland.[38]

[38] For the importance of the Emerald Site, see Jeffrey P. Brain, "Late Prehistoric Settlement Patterning in the Yazoo Basin and Natchez Bluffs Regions of the Lower Mississippi Valley," in *Mississippian Settlement Patterns*, ed. Bruce D. Smith (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 331-68; John Cotter, "Stratigraphic and Area Test at the Emerald and Anna Mound Sites," *American Antiquity: A Quarterly Review of American Archaeology* XVII (1951): 18-31. Swanton surmised that the northern temple might have been the Taensa's structure, which Father Davion burned down in 1704. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 165. Father Poisson mentioned a connection between the Natchez temple and the Tunicas, who lived north of the Yazoo River at the turn of the eighteenth century. Paul du Poisson; aux Akensas, October 3, 1727, *JR* 67: 311.

Not all of the surrounding towns supported this reconstituted central government. The headmen of several outlying Natchez settlements competed with the Great Sun and his supporters for control over relations with outside groups, most notably the *arrivistes* from Europe. The most adamant challengers came from the Apple and Jenazaque Villages.[39] These people lived near the site of the Emerald Mound; perhaps they were trying to regain the leadership by virtue of their proximity to the "old capital." More important, their towns were close to the Chickasaws who had access to British traders. During the second and third decades of the eighteenth century, the marchland towns of the Apple and the Flour Village were led by "big men" who built consensus by means of persuasion and by demonstrating prowess on the battlefield. These headmen, who were unrelated to the Théoloël hereditary elite, gained enough political capital to demand a voice in the Natchez polity's decision making. In doing so, they challenged the "autocratic" rule of the Great Sun and his family. Several of these refractory leaders were at the forefront of the anti-French faction that played an increasingly prominent role in Natchez diplomacy during the 1710s and 1720s. After his surrender at the close of the fourth Franco-Natchez War, the last Great Sun reported that one of his chief rivals, "the Sun of the Apple Village was a usurper, who, although he was not a noble, had seized the place which rendered him the third most powerful person in the nation."[40]

The Natchez "*ancien regime*" sought to counteract such centrifugal impulses of the opposition with traditional rituals, offices, and architecture. The classic Mississippian

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[39] Ian W. Brown, "An Archaeological Study of Culture Contact and Change in the Natchez Bluffs Region," in *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1982), 180.
[40] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. III, 491.

tool of statecraft—conspicuous consumption— resembled that of the Louis XIV, and often attracted the attention of the French chroniclers.[41] Like nobles who attended the *enlever* of Louis, the nation's elders greeted the waking Great Sun. The Indian leader spent the rest of his day surrounded by retainers who supplied him with sustenance and protection. Much like Versailles, the elaborate temple grounds served as a stage for the Théoloëls' spectacles, evoking the admiration of native and European visitors alike.

The Natchez hierarchy shared other traits with its European counterparts. In a system that resembled the division of labor and governance within Old World states, several types of workers and officials served the Great Sun. The Sun's brother acted as the nation's chief diplomat by greeting visitors to Natchez country and conducting them to the main village. During the second and third decade of the eighteenth century, this envoy's job became extremely important in the development of the Natchez's French policy. This trend was evident in the career of the Tattooed Serpent, the penultimate Great Sun's brother, as he negotiated several agreements with d'Iberville's brother, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, sieur de Bienville.

Other Natchez served the Great Sun in less distinguished capacities. The diarist Penicault made a cursory reference to thirty "lackeys" through whom the "Grand Chief" transmitted orders to the other eight villages that made up the Natchez realm.[42] These individuals constituted a proto-bureaucracy that acted in the leader's name. In addition to this group, an entourage of warriors hunted and acted as an armed escort for the

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[41] For the various feasts in which the Great Sun's largesse plays a role, see Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres*, Vol. II (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 363-81. The Harvest Feast exemplified the redistributive nature of the Great Sun's office. See Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane contenant ce qui y est arrivé de plus mémorable depuis l'année 1687*, Vol. I (Paris: J. B. Bauche, 1753) 195-208.

[42] Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 100.

Great Sun. According to le Page du Pratz, these men did their work on a purely voluntary basis to pay homage to their ruler.[43] Finally, a number of field laborers tilled the soil for the Suns. Though the exact nature of their relationship to the Suns is unclear. Charlevoix hinted that some form of coercion forced the populace to turn over "the best of their harvests, the products of their hunts and fishing."[44] The anonymous author of the Luxembourg Memoir characterized these workers as "voluntary slaves."[45] To European observers, these agricultural workers, guards, and lackeys appeared to reflect the Old World's social hierarchy.

Like Europeans, the nation also had a hereditary upper class. The Natchez system, however, defied simple analysis. The anthropologist John Swanton described it as a four-tiered system that began with commoners (the elites referred to them as *puants* or stinkards), honored men, nobles, and suns. European observations about marriage clouded parts of the picture.[46] According to several sources, commoners could marry any member of the nation. In contrast, the upper classes had to chose a mate from the commoner ranks.[47] Consequently, the Great Sun was the offspring of a stinkard father and a Sun mother. Complicating the matter further, the Natchez class structure possessed a regressive element; half of the children from these marriages lost status according to a pattern. The male child of a male sun lost one rank and became a noble although his daughter remained a sun. Thus, a noble could have been the child either of a Sun father and a stinkard mother or of a stinkard father and a noble mother. Honored

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[43] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 353.
[44] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. III, 420.
[45] Anonymous, *Memoire sur Louisiane*, 143.
[46] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 107.
[47] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. I, 178-80; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 393-96; Mathurin le Petit, "Lettre au d'Avaugour, Procureur des Missions de l'*Amérique* Septentrionale," July 12, 1730. *JR* 68: 135; Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 90.

people could come from an honored father and a stinkard mother or from a noble mother and a stinkard father.

The complexity of Swanton's schematic led to the "Natchez Paradox," a series of anthropological debates that continued for sixty years after he introduced his theory. Some historians reasoned that if Swanton's explanation was correct, the Théoloëls would have run out of commoner mates in a few generations.[48] A number of solutions to the "paradox" were put forth over the years. Among these was George I. Quimby's suggestion that the Natchez system perpetuated itself through a long-standing tradition of absorbing foreign elements through intermarriage. This practice would have increased the number of potential wives and husbands for the upper classes. Derogation of the offspring would also help return some people to the lower, marriageable ranks. These unions would also spread members of recently adopted groups throughout the entire polity, giving them a sense of acceptance. Jeffrey Brain agreed with the assimilation model but disputed Quimby's assertion that the Natchez had employed it for very long by the time the French arrived.[49] Nonetheless, the presence of several non-Théoloël towns that were politically dependent on the Grand Village helps to substantiate Quimby's theory.

Archeological and historical evidence also supports Brain's corollary that by the time of European contact, the People of the Sun had only recently adopted intermarriage

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[48] C.W.M. Hart, "A Reconsideration of the Natchez Social Structure," *American Anthropologist* 45, no. 3 (1943): 374-86.

[49] Jeffrey P. Brain, "The Natchez 'Paradox'," *Ethnology* 10, no. 2 (1971): 215-22; George. I Quimby, "Natchez Social Structure as an Instrument of Assimilation," *American Anthropologist* 48, no. 1 (1946): 134-37; Elizabeth Tooker, "Natchez Social Organization: Fact or Anthropological Folklore?" *Ethnohistory* 10, no. 3 (1963): 359-73; Douglas White, George P. Murdock, and Richard Scaglion, "Natchez Class and Rank Reconsidered," *Ethnology* 10, no. 4 (1971): 369-88. Patricia Woods adopted Brain's hypothesis. See Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier*, 26. See also Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," 152-58.

as a means of acculturation. They had no need for it until the Grand Village became the locus for the region's politics. The struggle for authority between the Suns of the Grand Village and the outlying towns during the 1710s and 1720s also lends credence to Brain's contention. The ruling family may have been in the process of consolidating its position over its rivals when d'Iberville, Penicault, and other European observers encountered the Natchez. The reaction of the marginalized leaders from the outer villages to the policies of the Grand Village suggests that their respect for the Great Sun's authority lacked deep roots.

Spiritual practices also played a role in quelling unrest among the Théoloëls' dependents. The Natchez shared a religious heritage that brought with it a modicum of unity. Antoine le Page du Pratz wrote that they believed in an omnipotent creator.[50] Several other European observers also wrote that the Natchez venerated the sun as a representation of the Supreme Being. According to the Jesuit, Father le Petit, who had lived with the Natchez for some time, the temple mound's height allowed the nation's leaders to converse more easily with the sun.[51] In the afterlife, the good were rewarded and the evil punished in places that resembled the Catholics' heaven and hell. "Those who are virtuous in life go to a delicious land after death" and those who "lived in the opposite manner go to a barren land…where they no longer eat meat and they will eat no other food except [the flesh of] crocodiles."[52] The Natchez had a moral code of divine origin that was not unlike that of the Old Testament; it prohibited theft, murder, and adultery. This last proscription especially pleased Christian missionaries when they

[50] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire De La Louisiane*, Vol. II, 126-27.
[51] le Pétit, *JR* 68: 126.
[52] *Les Sauvages Natchez*, BN Mss. n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 64. See also le Petit, *JR* 68: 129-130; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 181.

arrived in Natchez country. The People of the Sun also had priests who conducted ceremonies and provided access to the powers of the unseen world. Consequently, the Natchez belief system gave some of the French hope that they might make easy converts among the Théoloëls since their faith was so similar to their own.[53]

The claim of direct descent from the sun formed the basis of the Natchez leader's religious and political status.[54] Sometime in the distant past, a being named Thé and his wife, White Woman, appeared among the Natchez. They shone so brightly that they could have come only from the sun itself. Impressed with the authoritative manner with which the shining man spoke, the elders of the Natchez asked him to become their sovereign. At first Thé refused, but he relented on the condition that they follow him to a better land. He then gave them instructions on forming a government. They must agree to marry outside their caste and not allow the sons of the leader to become princes. Rather, these boys would lose a rank to become mere nobles but the girls would remain in the royal family. From that time until 1731, the first son born to the Great Sun's daughter became the leader of the nation. Thé told them not to kill except in self-defense, to avoid drunkenness, lies, and adultery, and to respect the property of others. He ordered them to share their food and goods with one another without envy. Finally, the Natchez had to promise to build a temple and maintain a sacred fire within it. Thé ignited the first sacred flame by means of his supernatural powers.[55] To fulfill their promise, the Théoloëls constructed a hallowed building in which to conduct their

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[53] For hopes that the Natchez would quickly convert to Catholicism, see du Ru, *Journal of Paul Du Ru*., 29.

[54] The Tattooed Arm, the mother of the last Great Sun, explained to the missionary Father St. Cosme that the Suns' claim of descent from a solar deity enhanced their authority over the commoners. See *Grand Soliel, files d'un francois en 1728*, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2550, fols. 115-16.

[55] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 326-34. See also *Les Sauvages Natchez*, BN Mss. n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 64; Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 90-92.

ceremonies. The temple stood atop an earthen mound together with the home of the paramount chief. Inside burned a fire of four logs arranged in the shape of a cross. Four men tended the fire at all times, periodically pushing the tree trunks into center of the blaze as the flames consumed them.[56] This practice evoked comparisons with classical antiquity. A Parisian newspaper described "a temple…erected from time immemorial, in which a perpetual flame is maintained, much as it as was in the Temple of Vesta in Rome."[57] In his 1724 book, Father Joseph-François Lafitau compared the Natchez's veneration of a solar deity to Greek, Parthian, as well as Latin forms of worship.[58]

The Great Sun's office included religious as well as political duties. Each morning, the chief emerged from the door of his home on the town's highest mound. From that vantage point, with his arms extended in the shape of a cross, he turned to the east to greet the rising sun. He then bowed three times from the waist and offered tobacco smoke drawn from a sacred calumet. The Great Sun and his wife also took part in daily evening worship services inside the temple. He presided over other celebrations as well, particularly the Green Corn festival in early autumn and the Deer Moon Festival in the spring.[59]

Other members of the nation besides the Great Sun possessed influence over the unseen forces. Most European observers referred to these men as *jongleurs*, a word that

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[56] Father Charlevoix counted three logs. See Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. III, 417.
[57] Anonymous, "Nouvelle Relation de la Louisiane," from the *Nouvelle Mercure*, September 1717, in *Le Plus Beau Païs du Monde* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1717; reprint, 2005), 41.
[58] Joseph-François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages ameriquains, comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps*, Vol. I (Paris: Saugrain l'aîne, 1724), 120, 153-55.
[59] *Les Sauvages Natchez*, BN Mss. n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 63. See also Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages ameriquains*, Vol. I, 153-54; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 118; le Petit, *JR* 68: 126-27.

is often translated into English as "jugglers." In old French, however, the word implied more than manual dexterity. In medieval Europe *jongleurs* sold medicinal herbs and unguents in addition to providing entertainment. One authority wrote that *jongleurs* "were universal artists embracing all branches of human knowledge."[60] When clerics employed the word to describe their opposite numbers in Natchez society, they meant to invoke images of charlatans and tricksters. Yet, the Catholic missionaries' choice of the word revealed that they regarded their indigenous counterparts as men with spiritual power, albeit of a darker sort, in the same way they often regarded the *jongleurs* of France as practitioners of witchcraft. Moreover, the word demonstrated an association with the healing arts, a branch of human knowledge that was just emerging from the realm of the supernatural at the dawn of the eighteenth century.[61]

The shamans of the Natchez employed a combination of herbal remedies and sympathetic magic. Although most Europeans doubted these native doctors' capabilities, Le Page du Pratz wrote about two successful treatments by Théoloël physicians.[62] Father le Petit, however, characterized them as "indolent old men, who,

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[60] Victor Fournel in *Dictionnaire alphabétique et anologique de la Langue Française: les mots et les associations d'idée*s Tome III. (Paris: Société du Noveau litré,1972). Church lawyers labeled *jongleurs*, along with magicians and prostitutes, as *infamia*, excluded from the sacraments or from bringing suits in ecclesiastical courts. To give money to a *jongleur* was equivalent to demonic worship. See John W. Baldwin, "The Image of the Jongluer in Northern France Around 1200," *Speculum* 72, no. 3 (1997).

[61] For pre-scientific views of natural phenomena, see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 7, 71-72. Hall's analysis of popular religious practice in New England provides insight into early modern European attitudes toward unexplained illness, bad weather, crop failures etc. For conflation of medicinal and occult knowledge in contemporaneous New England, see John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 80-84. According to Demos, those known as "cunning women," those familiar with the healing properties of plants, made up a good portion of witchcraft suspects. For views of witchcraft and state prosecution in early modern France, see Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII siécle, une analyse de psychologie historique*, *Civilisations et mentalités* (Paris: Plon, 1968), 75-94.

[62] Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres,* Vol. I (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 135-36, 207-8. Le Page du Pratz recalled a Natchez doctor curing a leg ailment and an eye infection. He devoted most of the fifteenth chapter of his first volume of the *Histoire de La Louisiane* to Natchez medicine. The Jesuits le

wishing to avoid the labor which is required in hunting, fishing, and cultivation of the fields, exercise this dangerous trade to gain a support for their families."[63] The cynicism of foreigners notwithstanding, these men must have effected some cures if the Natchez were willing to underwrite their status as fulltime practitioners.

Doctors in France were only beginning to abandon supernatural explanations for illness at the turn of the eighteenth century. Yet, many French people, particularly those lacking a formal education, still thought that witchcraft or spiritual beings caused sickness. Other characteristics of the two societies resembled each other. A hereditary monarch, assisted by attendants and supported by nobility, dominated the Théoloël polity. They maintained an elaborate system of inherited privilege. They paid taxes in kind in the form of tribute to the Great Sun. They had a religious tradition with a moral code, standardized rituals, a supreme being, and an afterlife. These attributes made it relatively easy for the upper-class French officials and missionaries who came to Natchez country to identify with the Théoloëls.

### *The Suns' Encounter*

In late March 1682, several canoes hove onto the shore of the Mississippi River. They carried an eclectic mix of twenty-three Europeans and over three-dozen Indians. The Native American contingent included ten women and three children.[64] The Europeans hailed from France, Italy, and Flanders. Except for two Chickasaw

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Petit and Charlevoix regarded all Natchez healers as charlatans and described their ruses in detail. See le Petit, *JR* 68: 151-53; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. III, 426-27.

[63] le Petit, *JR* 68: 151. See also Patricia Galloway, "Savage Medicine: Du Pratz and Eighteenth-Century French Medical Practice," in *France in the New World: Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society, 1996 Poiters, France*, ed. David Buisseret (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998): 107-118.

[64] Henri de Tonty, "Relation de Henri de Tonty," in *Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique septentrionale*, Vol. I, Pierre Margry, ed., (Paris: D. Jouast, 1876), 594-95.

interpreters and two Koroa slaves, the Indians came from the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River Valley. Henri Tonti, La Salle's second-in-command, had purchased a young Koroa boy for two knives and a small kettle at a Taensa village a few days earlier. A Loup Indian acquired the second Koroa, a prisoner of war, from a Taensa headman at the same place.[65]

Among this group were the first people from the Old World to record their visits to the Théoloëls since De Soto's conquistadors sailed by on their retreat to the Gulf of Mexico. This initial contact provided the foundation upon which the Natchez and French would build their relationship. The following section will recall La Salle's encounter with the People of the Sun, highlighting the characteristics of both groups that helped to build the illusion that the two shared parallel social and political practices. For instance, both La Salle's men and the Natchez held slaves, but the Frenchmen's power over their captives was so weak that there was little difference between the conditions endured by the Europeans' slaves and those held by the Indians. Both groups had a powerful male leader, and for both, the village formed a primary social unit. Religion also played a crucial role in this discourse; Natchez and French rituals and theologies bore some striking resemblances—at least enough to obscure the many differences between the two peoples. Therefore, La Salle's sojourn in Natchez country is essential for an understanding of the mistaken perceptions of similarity that would allow the two peoples to live in close proximity during the 1710s and 1720s.

La Salle and his people arrived at the waning of the first moon of the Natchez calendar, the Deer Moon. The Théoloëls marked their new year with an elaborate

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[65] "Relation de Henri de Tonty," 599; Nicolas de La Salle, "Récit de Nicholas de La Salle" in *Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique septentrionale*, Vol. I, Pierre Margry, ed., (Paris: D. Jouast, 1876), 557.

festival that included sham battles and the presentation of gifts to the Great Sun.[66] It was customary for the headman to invite honored visitors to take a meal with him at the close of these festivities.[67] The newcomers had arrived at the perfect time, and the Indians were eager to demonstrate their hospitality. The brother of the Great Sun escorted René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, seven miles inland to a hilltop village called Natché to be the guest of the nation's headmen.[68]

Afterwards, the Frenchmen raised the King's flag over the town and gave presents to the Natchez.[69] Sometime during their stay, Tonti's slave slipped away to his home village nearby.[70] The party left Natché on Good Friday, March 27. A Koroa leader, who had been summoned by the Great Sun after La Salle arrived, guided them downriver. It is highly likely the Indians had an opportunity to observe a Catholic Mass before the strangers departed.[71] The expedition's chaplain, Father Membré, wrote that they arrived at another town located on a "beautiful eminence" about twenty miles

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[66] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 354. The new moon appeared on March 9, the full moon appeared on March 23, 1682, as per Erling Poulsen's on-line moon calendar program http://www.rundetaarn.dk/engelsk/observatorium/nymeng.html, accessed April 18, 2006.

[67] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 361.

[68] The Europeans who left records of the visit called the village "Natché" or "Nachié;" they called the people of the region the Coroas or Courroas. See "The Minet Relation," reprinted in Robert S. Weddle, Mary Christine Morkovsky, and Patricia Kay Galloway, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf: Three Primary Documents*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 51; "The Relation of Nicolas de La Salle," 545-70. See also "Narrative of La Salle's Voyage Down the Mississippi by Father Zenobius Membré, Recollect," in *The Historical Collections of Louisiana*, Vol IV, ed. B. F. French, (New York: Redfield, 1852), 172. Tonty dated the party's arrival at the village on March 22, 1682. See "Memoir on La Salle's Discoveries, by Tonty, 1678-1690 [1693]": in Louise Phelps Kellogg, *Early Narratives of the Northwest, 1634-1699* (New York: C. Scribners's Sons, 1917), 301. Jeffrey Brain argued that these were the people later known as the Natchez, and that Natché was the Emerald Site (see Figure 2.1, page 103). See Jeffrey Brain, "La Salle at the Natchez, An Archaeological and Historical Perspective," in *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1982), 49-59.

[69] "Narrative of La Salle's Voyage Down the Mississippi," 173.

[70] "The Relation of Nicolas de La Salle," 559; "Relation de Henri de Tonty," 604.

[71] The celebration of the Mass was a long-standing tradition on the Feasts of Holy Thursday and Good Friday. These commemorated the Last Supper and the Crucifixion.

south of their starting point.[72] After a brief sojourn, they left two bags of corn at the home of the "chief" of the village with the understanding that they would come back to claim the food on their trip upriver.[73] La Salle and his party continued south to the mouth of the Mississippi, which they claimed for the Sun King in the first week of April 1682.[74]

La Salle's sojourn at the village of Natché marked the beginning of a dialogue between the world of the Sun King and the Great Sun. Although the meeting was brief and the numbers of the party small, certain aspects of the dialogue's syntax were already evident. The first of these aspects could be seen in the fact that those who entered Natchez country did so on Natchez terms. When La Salle's men returned to the village for their sacks of corn a few weeks later, they received a far less hospitable reception; only some fast talk from the Loup's Koroa slave saved them from annihilation by fifteen hundred Théoloël warriors.[75] Upon his return to the Lower Mississippi Valley in 1690, Henri Tonti found out that unbidden guests were still unwelcome. He sent two members of his party ahead to the main Natchez village only to find out a few days later that the Théoloëls had killed the pair.[76]

Slavery constituted the second characteristic of the developing conversation between the two worlds. The war chief of the French held a slave taken from a town dependent on the People of the Sun. In the years to come, Europeans would not only demonstrate their willingness to enslave Indian children, but would eventually threaten the Suns with the same treatment.

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[72] "Narrative of La Salle's Voyage Down the Mississippi," 173.
[73] "The Minet Relation," 52.
[74] Ibid.; "Memoir on La Salle's Discoveries, by Tonty," 302.
[75] "Récit de Nicholas de La Salle," 565-66; "The Minet Relation," 59.
[76] "Memoir on La Salle's Discoveries, by Tonty," 313-14.

Finally, the newcomers brought along one of their shamans on their trip to the Gulf of Mexico. The Natchez saw for the first time the elaborate rituals and heard the colorful stories of the Catholics. It is reasonable to assume that the Indians also viewed images and heard tales of the Europeans' "White Woman"—the Virgin Mary, the patron saint of France. For the next three decades, French missionaries would return to the land of the Théoloëls. When the men of the *Renommée* entered the Grand Village in March 1700, they found a letter waiting for them. The author, Father Montigny, who had departed only a few days earlier, claimed to have baptized 185 Théoloël children.[77] For nearly fifty years, Catholic priests traveled through Natchez country. Several missionaries ministered to the People of the Sun over the next three decades before the French built Fort Rosalie and established a permanent settlement. During the intervening years, one of the priests made the land of the Théoloëls his home.

The dialogue between the French and the Natchez that began with La Salle's visit continued with d'Iberville's expedition eighteen years later. The comments of those who came to the Théoloël villages in 1700 provided a perspective into the newcomers' perceptions of similarities between themselves and the Indians. The Europeans who recorded the encounter saw themselves in many of the ways that the People of the Sun governed themselves, organized their social life, interacted with the people who lived in their marchlands, and consorted with supernatural beings. This allowed the French to construct a reflexive vision of the Natchez based on suppositions about their own society as well as upon their observations of the Indians.

Anthropological and archaeological data help to correct some of the distortions in the French depictions of these Indians. The story that emerges in the following chapters

[77] D'Iberville, *Iberville's Gulf Journals*, 125.

is culled from European cultural productions, but it also retains some of the images left by the Théoloëls. These images will play a prominent role in later chapters as they reflect the Natchez's observations of the French people living among them.

Despite the confused European accounts of the Natchez, certain facts about the peoples of the Great Sun and the Sun King are clear. Both the Théoloëls and the French were people on the rise. When d'Iberville landed in the spring of 1700, he encountered a polity in the midst of assembling disparate peoples into a defensible union in much the same way that the king of France was doing on the marchlands of his realm. Both respected the appearance of order embodied in a single ruler. The French equated such respect with that paid to the king back home. Consequently, they assumed that the deference the Natchez accorded the Great Sun reflected that same kind of power. The Europeans believed they had come upon a state, or something that was on the way to becoming a state. The Natchez had a monarch, a noble class, political offices with standardized responsibilities, and an organized body of religious beliefs and practices—many of the hallmarks of statehood.

At the same time, the Indians saw spiritual practices among the Europeans that looked familiar. Catholicism's rites and symbolism resembled many forms of indigenous worship. Its priests' movements and utterances during their complex rituals were not entirely unintelligible to Native Americans. At the point during the Mass when a Jesuit or Capuchin consecrated bread and wine, thereby turning them into the body and blood of Christ, he performed a feat understandable to a Native American. The motions of elevating the Eucharist skyward and making the sign of the cross looked like the gestures of their own shamans and healers. Censers emitted purifying smoke,

as did calumets and the temple's sacred fire. Moreover, the idea of a special group of men imbued with power to influence the spirit world was a familiar concept in Native America. The Natchez priesthood worked closely with the political hierarchy of the Grand Village just as the "Grey Robes" and "Black Robes" worked alongside French officers at Mobile, Fort Rosalie, Yazoo, and New Orleans. Both sets of priests enjoyed the deference of their people and did not engage in physical labor. Both wore special garb when officiating at ceremonies.[78] As superficial as these likenesses may have been, they were enough for the Natchez to have permitted the Catholic shamans to operate in their villages for five decades.

In Native American mythology, holy men and spiritual beings frequently took on different forms to aid their people. The Indians had no reason to doubt that the strangers' gods had similar abilities.[79] Indigenous people living near Mobile or other French settlements must have observed Louisianans engaged in devotions and made inquiries about them. The explanations they heard about Catholicism's communion of saints may have seemed novel, but not incomprehensible. Invisible animals and people inhabited the Indians' world and played a part in their lives. Moreover, Native and Roman Catholic deities resembled each other in some very direct ways. For example, the Virgin Mary had a Natchez counterpart, the White Woman, the consort of the First Sun. In the same manner, the afterlife was a place of reward or punishment.

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[78] See John Reed Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Office, 1931).

[79] For a more complete discussion of the similarity between Native American and Roman Catholic spirituality, see James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), and Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001), 85-87.

Beyond the Théoloëls and Europeans' fascination with the "exotic" aspects of the others' society, the most pervasive similarity between their worlds was the social institution of the village. Like the vast majority of the French, the Natchez were village people. Although the main town captured the attention of European observers, the Grand Village constituted only one of nine settlements that made up the Natchez polity.

Criticisms that any of these similarities were at best ephemeral are undeniably correct. That is my point; the reason that the Natchez and French often misunderstood each other was because their ways of organizing themselves resembled one another on the surface. Once the Natchez realized that they were not dealing with a group seeking to aggregate with the Grand Village, the manner in which they dealt with the French changed. Similarly, when French officers started to see the Natchez as just another "tribe of savages," instead of as "proto-Europeans," the soldiers changed the way that they related to the Indians. Part of the reason that these revelations shocked both the Indians and the Europeans arose from their original assumptions of familiarity. They had constructed these assumptions from observations of what they took to be parallel forms of worship, government, and social hierarchy.

The first permanent French resident in Natchez country reinforced the connection between the two peoples when he fathered a child with the sister of the Great Sun. Strangely, another series of events, often termed "The First Natchez War," also strengthened perceptions of similarity. The manner in which the French and the Théoloëls resolved their problems during that conflict reinforced their misperceptions of the other. It was, however, the impressions garnered during these first contacts that gave both peoples the idea that they were gazing into a mirror that reflected their own

world. These impressions smoothed over problems long enough for the Europeans to build farmsteads and villages in Natchez country that allowed both peoples to observe one another on a daily basis from much closer vantage points.

## Chapter Two: Captive Suns

The first recorded Euro-Natchez couple challenged one another's religious beliefs several times throughout their relationship. Jean-François Buisson de St. Cosme, a Québécois in his early thirties, once asked his mate, the Tattooed Arm, if she really believed that she and her kinsmen had descended from the sun. The Indian admitted to the Frenchman that her ancestors had invented the story so that the Great Sun could exert "total authority" over the nation. Nonetheless, the Tattooed Arm had an interest in promulgating the myth since she was the sister of the Théoloëls' headmen and shared in her brother's prestige. More important, her male offspring were eligible to succeed the Great Sun and rule over the Natchez. Sometime between 1700 and 1706, she gave birth to St. Cosme's son. The boy was destined to become the last Great Sun of the Natchez.[1]

The Tattooed Arm's choice for the father of her child was rooted in Théoloël tradition. After relocating from Henri de Tonti's post on the Arkansas River, St. Cosme became the first permanent European resident in the region.[2] It was only natural that the sister of the Great Sun sought out St. Cosme as a mate since, in the past, such unions had been the first step in absorbing newcomers into the Natchez world. Their relationship began slowly; the Tattooed Arm pursued the Québécois for awhile before St. Cosme responded.[3]

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[1] *Grand Soleil, files d'un françois en 1728*, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2550, fol. 115.
[2] Another Francophone, Father Montigny, had ministered briefly to the Théoloëls during the late 1690s. See *Letter of Father St. Cosme of Québec, missionary*, January 2, 1699. Archives de Marine 2 JJ. Vol. 56; Penicault, *Relation, ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé dans le païs de la Louisiane*, manuscrit, Provient du Collège des Jésuites de Clermont à Paris, n° 828, 120.
[3] *Grand Soleil, files d'un françois*, 115.

During their time together, the Tattooed Arm sought to convert her consort to her faith. She finally managed to extract a grudging compliance from the Canadian. Nonetheless, he needed frequent promptings to keep his promise. She relented and then desisted when she realized that his allegiance to Catholicism was too great for her to overcome. His commitment was indeed powerful; St. Cosme had taken the vows of a Catholic priest a decade earlier at the Seminary of the Fathers of the Foreign Missions. The cleric's side of this story will never be known, he died before he could rebut the reports of his conversion to faith in Thé or his paternity of the Great Sun. In 1706, a band of Chitimacha warriors murdered him and several of his French companions as they camped along the Mississippi River.[4]

The union of the Tattooed Arm and St. Cosme conforms to the cultural parallels introduced in the previous chapter. The first part of this chapter recounts other French and Natchez contacts that demonstrate the relative ease with which each side accommodated the other because of perceived resemblances. These encounters took place during the initial years of the eighteenth century. The things that the newcomers sought and the manner in which they sought them made them appear to blend into the Mississippian order of things. This pattern did not last; a permanent trading post and frequent sojourns by *voyageurs* increased tensions between the Théoloëls and the Europeans. These developments also exacerbated internal rivalries among the People of the Sun. The second part of the chapter covers the First Natchez War. This, of course, was a far different mode of interaction. Yet, this conflict also conformed in many ways

[4] The first report of St. Cosme's murder placed the blame on the Natchez. Bienville to Minister, February 20, 1707, AC C13A, Vol. 2, fol. 11. The culprits were later determined to be Chitimachas, see Jean-Baptiste Bernard de La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*, trans. Joan Cain and Virginia Koenig, (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1971), 51; Penicault, *Relation, ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé,* 102.

to established Natchez epistemological and social categories. A relatively cordial Théoloël-French relationship—built upon understandings worked out during the war—endured for several more years. The final part of the chapter will analyze these events in the context of native cultural practices to illustrate the ways that the war and its resolution promoted the illusion of similarity for the Natchez.

*Strangers among the Suns*

The beginning of the eighteenth century brought a slow but steady trickle of Europeans and Canadians into Natchez country. During the first years of France's presence on the Gulf Coast, newcomers from the Old World stopped at the villages of the Théoloëls. Several priests and *voyageurs* wrote about their experiences among the People of the Sun during this time. The Natchez towns were natural waypoints on the Mississippi route from Canada to the settlements on the Gulf Coast. Their location helped to integrate the Théoloëls into the Mississippi Valley's economy as producers of foodstuffs and peltries and as consumers of European goods. More important, the requests and deportment of the French demonstrated their need for assistance from a more secure and prosperous Native American nation. This dependence conformed to the Théoloëls' practice of absorbing weaker peoples into their polity. The first French envoys, missionaries, and tradesmen cooperated by playing well the subordinate's role.

Father St. Cosme's relationship with the Tattooed Arm reinforced the illusion that the French had acknowledged the Natchez's political superiority. According to tradition, the sister of the Great Sun could only marry a "stinkard."[5] The priest's union

[5] Several decades later, Le Page du Pratz refused to marry the *femme chef*'s daughter because of his concern that the Natchez would perceive him as an underling. When she made her proposal, the Dutchman's first reaction was "'Do you take me for a Stinkard?' because the female Suns do not marry their own men." See Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce*

with her implied that he had accepted a lower status for himself and his people. The timing of St. Cosme's affair with the Tattooed Arm remains uncertain. During the autumn of 1700, Father Jacques Gravier, a Jesuit stationed at the Kaskaskias, stopped at the Tunica mission to minister to the ailing priest, Antoine Davion. St. Cosme arrived a few days later from his post among the Natchez. If he and the Tattooed Arm were married, he never mentioned it to the Jesuit. Instead, he complained that the Natchez "are polygamous, thievish, and very depraved — the girls and women being even more so than the men and boys, among whom a great reformation must be effected before anything can be expected from them."[6] Obviously, St. Cosme's attempts to win over the People of the Sun to his faith had met with resistance from more than just the Tattooed Arm.

Later, in November 1700, Father Gravier traveled to the Grand Village and met with the Tattooed Arm. In his words, "This woman Chief is very intelligent, and enjoys greater influence than one thinks."[7] In contrast, the Jesuit had little respect for the abilities of headmen of the Théoloëls. He wrote in his report that "her brother is not a great genius." The priest had arrived in time to witness the autumn harvest ceremonies when the Great Sun and his sister offered the first fruits of the field to the spirits of their ancestors. Unfortunately, he learned little about the theology behind their acts of worship; the Natchez rebuffed the missionary's inquiries about their rituals. Only later would Gravier's colleague learn more about their beliefs.

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*vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres*, Vol. II (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 403. See also Gordon Sayre, *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of America, from Moctezuma to Tecumseh* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 216.

[6] Jacques Graviers, "Relation ou Journal du voyage en 1700 depuis le Pays des Illinois Jusqu'a l'Embouchure du Fleuve Mississipi," February 16, 1701, *JR* 65: 133.

[7] Ibid., 142-43.

The colonists who followed in the priests' wake did little to disabuse the Natchez of the idea that the immigrants were going to submit to the Suns' authority. Almost as soon as they established themselves in Mobile, the French revealed their weakness when they came to the People of Sun to buy food. In July 1701, the first governor of Louisiana, De Sauvole de la Villantray, sent Father Limoges to the Théoloëls to purchase corn. The governor asked the priest to have the grain stored in a cabin in order that it could be picked up when Sauvole sent a canoe to bring it back to Biloxi. By leaving the food in Natchez country, Limoges followed the precedent set by La Salle's 1682 expedition. The earlier party left two sacks of grain at the Grand Village for their return voyage up the Mississippi. More important, Limoges's purchase followed a pattern of food redistribution practiced by a paramount chiefdom. The Natchez may have interpreted it as evidence that the French were too feeble to fend for themselves, much like other immigrants to the region. The colony's request for supplies implied its acknowledgment of the primacy of the Suns.[8]

During the first years of the eighteenth century, events elsewhere dominated the attention of Louisiana's government. The correspondence of French colonial officials contains few references to the Natchez. The War of Spanish Succession broke out in 1702 and involved most of Western Europe in a contest to prevent a union of the French and Spanish crowns. England allied itself with Austria, Prussia, Hanover, and the Netherlands in opposition to Louis XIV, Spain, Portugal, and Bavaria.[9] Although France fielded large armies on land, its maritime strength was found wanting. During the war, the Royal Navy swept French vessels from the high seas.

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[8] Sauvole to Minister, August 4, 1701, AC 13A, Vol. 1, fol. 318.
[9] For a comprehensive treatment of the war, see John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV, 1667-1714* (New York: Longman, 1999), 266-360.

An English blockade, together with the threat of attack by the Alabamas and other British-allied Indian nations, kept the French from expanding beyond their shallow cove on the Mobile River estuary. There were few presents to secure the assistance of the nations close to the colony's outposts on the Gulf Coast. For several years, no ships arrived from the homeland. Imported food and equipment ran out. As a partial remedy, Bienville, who had become the colony's governor upon Sauvole's death, dispersed his troops among the Mobile Indians' villages so their hosts could feed them. The commandant's decision to order his men to seek shelter among the indigenous people resembled the behavior of native refugee groups. One Choctaw leader asked Bienville if there were as many people in France as he had heard. The Indian commented, "You have been here for six years. Instead of increasing you are diminishing. The good men are dying and only children come in their places."[10] Until the end of the War of Spanish Succession, the French had too many problems of their own to worry about the impression that they were making among the Natchez of the Mississippi. France never fully redeemed its prestige with some Native Americans, who began to look toward the British for supplies.

Conversely, the English used the war to gain leverage among the Indian nations of the Southeast. The Royal Navy's successes allowed British vessels to carry cloth, tools, and weapons to the New World without interference. The appearance of Charles Town merchants in native villages along the Mississippi threatened the French colonial project. As early as 1698, rumors reached Paris that traders from Carolina were lurking

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[10] For the Choctaws' comments about the French in Mobile, see Bienville to Pontchartrain, February 20, 1707, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 40. For the quartering of troops among the Indians, see D'Artaguette to Pontchartrain, June 20, 1710, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 55. For the threat of attack, see Bienville to Pontchartrain, February 25, 1708, *MPAFD,* Vol. III, 111-116.

south of Illinois. That same year, Thomas Welch visited the Quapaws who lived along the Arkansas River. Daniel Coxe's well-publicized plans for an English settlement on the Mississippi had been the reason for Louis XIV to send d'Iberville there on a preemptive mission in 1699.[11]

Throughout the war, France's inability to meet the Natchez and other Indian nations' demand for trade goods created an economic vacuum that helped to attract more interlopers. During the first decade of the eighteenth century, the English continued their penetration of the region. Thomas Nairne traveled among the Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley to expand Charles Town's influence in the middle of the continent.[12] Voyageurs traveling between Illinois and Mobile brought word of Nairne's sojourn among the Natchez.[13] Slave raids conducted by the Chickasaws and Creeks on behalf of Charles Town traders disrupted the Choctaws and the *Petites Nations* on the Mobile River basin. A short break in this trend came when the Carolinians and their allies turned their attention toward the rich slaving grounds of Florida's Franciscan missions. Soon after they devastated the Spanish settlements, the English sent more traders into the western interior, much to the alarm of Mobile's commercial elite.[14] To

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[11] For the effects of Crozat's policies see Mathé Allain, *Not Worth a Straw: French Colonial Policy and the Early Years of Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1988), 61-66; Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana. The Reign of Louis XIV, 1698-1715*, trans. Joseph C. Lambert, Vol. I (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 249-302; Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier, 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 33-38.

[12] Pontchartrain to Dautin, September 2, 1698 AM, B2, Vol 136, fols. 159-160v; Thomas Nairne, *Nairne's Muskhogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1988), 4; Thomas Nairne to the Lords Proprietors, July 10, 1708 in A.S Salley, ed., *Records in the British Public Records Office Relating to South Carolina 1701-1710* (Columbia: The Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1947), 193-202. See also Verner Winslow Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1928), 89-96; Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana.* Vol. I, 80-101. For a more recent discussion of Nairne's travels among the Creeks, see Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: a Creek Indian Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 15-19.

[13] Bienville to Pontchartrain, October 12, 1708, *MPAFD*, Vol. II, 40.

[14] Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 47-70.

the French colonists, the presence of Anglos in the Mississippi Valley portended further incursions designed to eject the French from Louisiana.

The War of Spanish Succession also had an impact on France's southern colony in less direct ways. Fighting most of Europe for a dozen years cost the Sun King a huge amount of money. Louis XIV's limited ability to levy direct taxes meant that he needed to find other sources of income to service the nation's enormous debt. The dismal performance of the colony during its first years made it an unlikely place to aid him in his quest. Louisiana had yet to show a profit despite the assurances of the Le Moyne brothers of its potential. Strangely enough, the Gulf Coast settlements offered a glimmer of hope for the Sun King. The crown granted Antoine Crozat a fifteen-year concession in the colony in September 1712 in return for underwriting Louisiana's administrative and military expenses. As part of the deal, Crozat gained the right to nominate its officers as well as a monopoly over its trade. This removed at least one liability from Louis XIV's books. Unfortunately for the Louisianans, the new management did little to alleviate the bleak situation on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Crozat raised the prices of imported goods to ruinous levels, making French merchandise prohibitively expensive for Native Americans and colonists alike.

The high price of French goods gave British traders operating in the Southeast an even greater advantage. English activities among the Indians prompted Louisianan officials to secure the region by military means, particularly by building forts. As early as 1713, Crozat recognized that the land around the Natchez's Grand Village would make a superb location for a fortified warehouse.[15] The Ministry of Marine agreed with him and ordered the new governor, Antoine de Lamothe, sieur de Cadillac, to build Fort

[15] Crozat, 1713, *Memoire sur la Louisiane*, C13A, Vol. 3, fols. 367-69.

Rosalie in December 1714.[16] The post would ward off interlopers and redirect the commerce of the Yazoo basin into French hands. To provide economic support and to prepare the groundwork for this effort, the La Loire brothers established themselves at the Natchez as Crozat's commercial agents in 1714. Among their staff was André Penicault, a ship's carpenter who worked as a clerk and translator. Although the records are silent on the Natchez's attitudes toward the newcomers, at least some of them must have thought that the French were still incapable of meeting their needs. Consequently, several outlying Théoloël towns maintained their relationships with British traders.[17]

Demographic and political shifts among the Natchez also help to explain their decision to deal with the English. As noted earlier, the Emerald Mound was the Théoloël administrative center when La Salle arrived in 1682. By the mid-1710s, European observers wrote about the Grand Village on St. Catherine's Creek as the home of the Great Sun, the leader of the Natchez people. The relocation of the Théoloëls' ceremonial and political institutions deprived those still living around the site of the old "capital" of immediate contact with the nation's decision makers. It also deprived them of ready access to prestige goods and foodstuffs now redistributed in a location further south.

The appearance of English merchants further weakened the ties between the Grand Village and its satellite communities. John Worth's study of the Timucuans' complex chiefdoms in Spanish Florida provides some insight on the Théoloëls' dilemma. Worth argued that officials from St. Augustine used luxury items to reinforce the prestige of

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[16] Louis XIV to Cadillac, December 27, 1714, AC 13A, Vol. 3, fol. 684.
[17] For the founding of the Natchez post see Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana*, Vol. I, 305-06.

local *caciques*, or headmen, who supported colonial Spanish policy.[18] In this manner, the Europeans co-opted indigenous political structures to their own ends. The *caciques* supplied the missions and garrisons of Florida with food, laborers, and warriors. The Indian leaders used the gifts of clothing and tools in conspicuous displays to bolster the power that they had inherited. The proximity of St. Augustine and the steady supply of goods kept the Timucuans' old order intact. This arrangement did not hold for all of the nations that descended from complex chiefdoms. Groups like the Creeks, who lived closer to Charles Town merchants and further from St. Augustine, exchanged deer hides and slaves for manufactured goods. Because these items were gathered by individual warriors or by loosely organized bands under a war leader, cloth, tools, and weapons flowed into their polities through non-elites rather than as gifts redistributed by hereditary chiefs. The decision making process in these increasingly decentralized nations came under the influence of leaders who won battles, captured slaves, or secured favorable trade terms. Thus, the best fighters and hunters led the men of their villages and, even then, only as long as their prowess and luck held out. In contrast, the political structure of the Timucuans' paramount chiefdom, which enjoyed close contact with the Spanish, persisted well into the eighteenth century.[19]

During the most successful years of Spain's policy in Florida, the Natchez weathered the proto-historic era in relative isolation. This changed when the English-sponsored slave raiders appeared in the Lower Mississippi Valley at the end of the

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[18] John E. Worth, "Spanish Missions and the Persistence of Chiefly Power," in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, ed. Robbie Etheridge and Charles M. Hudson (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), 21-83.

[19] Worth recently posited that archaeological evidence supports the persistence of pre-contact social patterns into the late eighteenth century among the Creeks. See John E. Worth, "Bridging Prehistory and History in the Southeast: Evaluating the Utility of the Acculturation Concept," in *Light on the Path: the Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians*, ed. Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 196-206.

seventeenth century. The Théoloëls' social and political structures not only survived these incursions, but they profited from the disruption left in their wake. Refugee bands like the Koroas, Tioux, and Grigras moved into the Natchez's domain and took up subordinate roles, thus augmenting that polity's numbers. The sporadic visits of French traders during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, along with the opening of their first trading post in 1714 helped to strengthen the emerging Théoloël order. The La Loire brothers' store presented a new and steady source of prestige goods that most likely came under the Suns' control.[20] Conversely, the ruling family's control of food surpluses gave them significant leverage with the French during Louisiana's early years. If the Natchez followed patterns evident in some earlier Mississippian societies, the Suns exchanged corn and game for preciosities that they used in conspicuous displays or dispensed as gifts to loyal followers. Thus, it stands to reason that early economic contacts with the French reinforced the power of the Théoloëls' elites in a manner similar to the Spaniards' reinforcement of the Timucuans' caciques.

At the same time, there were economic forces at work against both the Suns and the La Loires. Archaeological data suggests that some of the Natchez purchased European manufactures from English merchants residing among the Chickasaws. This alternate source of goods counteracted the centripetal influence of the French-Sun exchange system. A series of excavations undertaken during the 1920s and 1930s identified Fatherland Site as the Grand Village of the 1700s. Robert Neitzel conducted further archaeological investigations in the early 1960s and again in the early 1970s, cataloging the European trade goods found in the Fatherland mounds. The graves at these sites

[20] Penicault placed the post at or near the Grand Village. See Penicault, *Relation, ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*, 248.

contained items such as iron axe heads and calumet pipes that conferred political authority. These graves also held flintlock pistols, cooking utensils, clothing, clasp knives, iron ornaments, farming tools, jewelry and other trinkets. Later digs uncovered significant caches of European glass beads in the Rice Site, the "subordinate" village of the Jenzenaques.[21] The Rice Site also yielded gunflints, musket parts, silver and brass bells, as well as iron axe heads and calumet pipes. More important, the quantity of European goods was significantly greater in the gravesites closer to the Chickasaws, and therefore, to British commerce. These goods were also more widely distributed among the population in the outer districts than in the Grand Village. The fact that these villages acquired European manufactures in significant quantities suggests that the Grand Village was not their only distribution point. From this data, the anthropologist Karl Lorenz extrapolated that peripheral settlements enjoyed some degree of autonomy since they too possessed objects that symbolized power, particularly those associated with war and peace.[22]

Several of the towns closest to the Chickasaws, an ally of South Carolina, were also involved in anti-French activities, supposedly at the behest of English traders. These

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[21] The event horizon for the interment of these items ended in 1730 when the French seized the area. For a full listing of grave goods see Robert S. Neitzel, *Archeology of the Fatherland Site: The Grand Village of the Natchez, Archaeological Report No. 28* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1997), 40-45, 50-51. For further analyses of Natchez archaeology see Ian W. Brown, "Historic Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley: An Archaeologist's View," in *Towns and Temples Along the Mississippi*, ed. David H. Dye and Cheryl Ann Cox (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 176-193; James A. Brown, "Archaeology Confronts History at the Natchez Temple," *Southeastern Archaeology* 9, no. 1 (1990): 1-10. See also Andrew C. Albrecht, "Indian-French Relations at Natchez," *American Anthropologist* 48, no. 3 (1946): 321-54; Jon Muller, *Mississippian Political Economy* (New York: Plenum Press, 1997), 63-69.

[22] Karl G. Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," in *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Pensacola: University Press of Florida, 2000), 163-73. Lorenz's work responds to Ian W. Brown's suggestion that adopted villages like the Grigras should yield different artifacts than "native" Natchez towns. See Ian W. Brown, "An Archaeological Study of Culture Contact and Change in the Natchez Bluffs Region," in *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1982), 49-59.

activities became particularly troublesome by the second decade of the eighteenth century. A ready supply of tools and weapons from non-French sources would have aided these outer villages in their quest for autonomy vis-à-vis the Suns of the Grand Village. Moreover, the conclusion of hostilities in Europe did not ease the economic and political competition in the Natchez country. The Théoloëls' marchland villages stood to benefit from the continuing Anglo-French rivaly when Charles Town merchants sought their business despite the opposition of the Grand Village. The Treaty of Utrecht ended the War of Spanish Succession, but it did little to discourage the English from expanding their influence in the Lower Mississippi Valley.[23]

French suspicions about British penetration into the region were confirmed when Marc Antoine de la Loire des Ursins, the eldest La Loire brother, captured Price Hughes, a Carolina agent. The Englishman had traveled among the Natchez and Yazoos during the winter of 1715. Later that spring, Bienville interrogated Hughes at Fort St. Louis in Mobile. After a stern warning, Bienville sent the interloper back to Carolina. The outbreak of the Yamasee War prevented the British from following through on Hughes's plan to settle five hundred families along the Mississippi. [24] Hughes never made it back home; a Tohome warrior killed him somewhere along the path to Charles Town. Hughes's presence deep in territory claimed by France underscored the urgency of fortifying the middle reaches of the Mississippi.

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[23] For a review of France's diplomatic strategy during the negotiations at the close of the war, see Dale Miquelon, "Envisioning the French Empire: Utrecht, 1711-1713," *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 4 (2001), 653-677.

[24] For Hughes's plans for colonizing the Mississippi, see Crane, *The Southern Frontier,* 100-08. For Bienville's perceptions of the Yamasee War and for Hughes's capture, see Bienville to Pontchartrain, June 15, 1715, *MPAFD,* Vol. III, 181-82.

Pontchartrain had ordered construction of a fort in Natchez country in 1714, but more then a year passed before the colony began to act.

The reason for the delay may have been the fact that the colony's new governor, Cadillac, was distracted by reports of silver mines near the mouth of the Missouri River. This left him little time to supervise the construction of forts. Without warning, the governor left Mobile late in the winter of 1715 to check on these reports. Cadillac's hasty voyage north provoked anger among those whom he ignored. In the words of the Jean-Baptiste Dubois Duclos, the colony's chief financial officer:

> Mr. de Lamothe [sieur de Cadillac] in his journey to the Illinois would not receive the calumet of the Natchez either when ascending or descending the St. Louis [Mississippi] River. Calumets are a sign of peace and it is the custom among the Indians not to refuse them from any nation except from those upon which they absolutely wish to make war. Thus they concluded from this refusal that Mr. de Lamothe wished to have them destroyed and they thought it advisable to begin to kill all Frenchmen who stopped among them, in order to pillage the arms, the powder, and bullets with which the *voyageurs* are ordinarily well provided and consequently by means of these pillagings to be in a position to defend themselves when anyone came to attack them.[25]

The tensions created by the governor's oversight were not immediately apparent when Cadillac returned in the autumn of 1715. Soon after the junket, however, leaders from communities to the east of the main Natchez town took action against French *coureurs de bois* traveling on the Mississippi. Hughes's appearance in the region suggested to some Théoloëls that they might procure trade goods from English merchants by way of the Chickasaws. The possibility of a new source of tools, cloth, and weapons made a close relationship with Louisiana expendable. Cadillac's *faux pas* only reinforced such a stance. The governor's diplomatic failure eroded the

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[25] Duclos to Pontchartrain, June 7, 1716, *MPAFD,* Vol. III, 208-209. Cadillac left for Illinois without leaving instructions for Bienville, the King's lieutenant and second-in-command and without revealing his destination. See Bienville to Pontchartrain, June 15, 1715, *MPAFD,* Vol. III, 181.

newcomers' position in the Natchez order of things. With Cadillac's snub, French behavior was beginning to depart from the paradigm of subordination to the Great Sun that they had seemingly adhered to during the previous three decades of contact. It would be up to his second-in-command to remedy the situation.

### *To Capture the Suns*

The next few months represented a milestone in Théoloël-French relations. The robbery of five *coureurs de bois* by men from several of the outlying towns started the First Natchez War. It ended with the deaths of several Théoloël leaders. The war also ended with the Natchez agreeing to build a fort for the French on the banks of the Mississippi a few miles from the Grand Village. The following section will recount the key events of the conflict. The divisions among both the Natchez and the French sparked the struggle. At the same time they allowed both sides to disavow the acts of those who did not support the old discourse. Most important for the Natchez, the way that the Indians and the Europeans fought and eventually resolved the war reinforced their impression that the two groups shared parallel institutions. The final part of the chapter will analyze the manner in which the war enhanced perceptions of similarity.

The preliminary phase of the conflict began in January 1716, with the governor's tardy compliance with an order issued in 1714 by the Minister of the Marine, Louis Phélypeaux, comte de Pontchartrain. In it, he commanded Cadillac to establish a military post among the Natchez. The governor directed Bienville, recently commissioned as a *lieutenant du roi*, to take a detachment north to build Fort Rosalie.[26]

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[26] The "Lieutenant of the king," was an officer appointed as the second-in-command to the governor of a post. This was a royal commission that put Bienville in charge of the military affairs of the colony. See Christopher Duffy, *Fire and Stone: the Science of Fortress Warfare, 1660-1860* (Edison: Castle Books, 2006 [1975]), 87.

To accomplish this task, Cadillac placed an under-strength company of forty soldiers under Bienville's command. Desertions and illness at Mobile quickly reduced their numbers to thirty-four. Despite the importance of the mission, Cadillac failed to provide a blacksmith or a surgeon—two occupations mandatory on extended journeys away from European settlements. Further delays in procuring supplies and boats held up the expedition's departure for a month.[27]

Before leaving for the Mississippi Valley, Cadillac received a message that changed the nature of Bienville's assignment from difficult to suicidal. The communiqué reported that late in 1715 some Théoloëls had robbed and murdered four traders on their way to Illinois. The *voyageurs* had stopped at the Grand Village to hire some rowers from among the townspeople. Four Théoloëls accompanied the traders as far as Petite Gulf. During the night, the Indians killed the *coureurs de bois* in their sleep and returned to Natchez territory with the dead men's merchandise.[28]

André Penicault, the clerk at La Loire's post in Natchez country, had an intimate venue from which to observe these troubles. His journal recounted his discovery of the murders soon after their commission. When Penicault noticed goods belonging to the departed traders among the villagers, he warned his employer that he suspected foul play. After hearing the news, the younger La Loire and his staff pretended not to notice

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[27] For the initial orders for the expedition, see Cadillac to Bienville, January 5, 1716, AC, F, Vol. 3, fol. 24. For problems with supplies and manpower, see Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana: Years of Transition, 1715-1717*, trans. Brian Pearce, Vol. II (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 79; Bienville to Raudout, January 20, 1716, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 199; Jean-Baptiste Bernard de La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*, trans. Joan Cain and Virginia Koenig, (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1971), 66. For reports of desertion, see Minutes of the Superior Council, January 23, 1716, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 212. In the January 20 letter, Bienville voiced his suspicion that the governor wanted the expedition to fail because Bienville refused to marry Cadillac's daughter.

[28] Penicault, *Relation, ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*, 242-246. See also Bienville to Raudout, January 20, 1716, AC C13, Vol. 4, fol. 775.

the stolen wares among the Indians. Soon after, the elder brother, Marc Antoine de la Loire, arrived with a convoy of fourteen men and three pirogues loaded with merchandise for Illinois. The traders realized that they were in danger and made plans to leave Théoloël country. To mask their intentions, the senior Frenchman told the Natchez that Cadillac had ordered all of the warehouse's staff to go north to Kaskaskia. For the next two weeks, the older La Loire and his employees procured supplies and loaded their pirogues. They also hired eight Natchez men to help row the craft against the current. Rumors circulating among the Indians that *coureurs* had been murdered confirmed the Europeans' suspicions. Penicault's references to these tales demonstrate that sensitive information flowed between the natives and newcomers.

The Great Sun provided help for the Frenchmen in their effort to reach Illinois and came to the waterfront to see them off. The Indian leader charged the native rowers not to stop even if they spotted signals from the riverbank because he feared the convoy might come under attack. The Natchez headman made sure that the French overheard his words. The Great Sun probably knew more than he said in front of the Europeans. The fact that the Sun permitted Natchez oarsmen to man the French boats and issued such a warning demonstrated the value he placed upon his people's relationship with the Louisianans, particularly with those who supplied his clique with trade goods. Perhaps the Sun wanted his caveat to serve as evidence of the good intentions of the pro-French party and to demonstrate that it still controlled the Théoloëls' relations with other powers.[29] Nonetheless, the murders of the *coureurs* by warriors from the outer villages and the Sun's open support of the La Loires marks the point when his struggle with the pro-British faction intruded into the conduct of Natchez-French relations.

[29] Penicault, *Relation, ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*, 244.

The plot that the Great Sun alluded to soon unraveled. The first night after the convoy left the village, one of the rowers confessed to Penicault that a Natchez leader named the Bearded One lay in ambush with one hundred and fifty warriors at Petite Gulf. The other seven confirmed the story when the Frenchmen promised to reward them if they told the truth. The party retraced its path and retrieved the younger La Loire, who had been persuaded by his brother to remain at the Grand Village to guard Crozat's warehouse.[30]

The La Loires and their employees then paddled south to the village of the Tunicas where they learned more about the Théoloëls' plans. During their stay, a three-man Natchez delegation arrived to secure the cooperation of their southern neighbors in a war against the French. The merchants stayed out of sight while the Indians parleyed. The Théoloël diplomats assured their Tunican listeners that the British would replace the Louisianans as trading partners. They wanted their hosts to help them prevent the French from strengthening their grip on the region. The La Loires's abandonment of their post lent weight to the Natchez envoys' proposal. The leader of the Tunicas, a staunch ally of the French, was shocked by the speech and wanted to kill the ambassadors. Father Davion, the Catholic missionary to the Tunicas, restrained him from executing the Indians. The priest then wrote a dispatch to Cadillac informing him of the events among the Natchez and the Tunicas. He sent it along with the refugees' convoy. The La Loire party reached Mobile sometime in early 1716 bearing tales of their experiences.[31]

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[30] Ibid., 246-250.
[31] Penicault, *Relation, ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*, 253-54; AC 13A, Vol. 4, fols. 785-87.

Despite the news of hostilities to the north, Cadillac refused to amend his orders to Bienville. He augmented the lieutenant's command with a mere fourteen sailors to help him navigate the Mississippi.[32] Upon his own initiative, Bienville later added to these numbers by hiring some Canadian *voyageurs*.

The small force left Mobile on February 15, 1716. Upon entering the Mississippi, Bienville commandeered a convoy of ten pirogues headed for the Illinois posts. He sent them ahead of the main body to await his arrival at the Tunicas. To alert northbound travelers of the danger, Father Davion had posted a sign on a tree near the banks of the Mississippi "for the first Frenchman who passes by." On their way upriver, Bienville's men retrieved the priest's notice. It warned that the Natchez and Tunicas had concluded an anti-French alliance, and told of an additional murder by the Natchez of a southbound *coureur de bois* named Robert.[33]

On April 23, 1716, Bienville arrived at a spot near the Tunicas' village at Grand Gulf. He kept most of his men out of sight to conceal their small number. The Canadian entered their town, smoked the calumet with the headmen, and notified them that due to sickness and fatigue among his men, he had encamped nearby. He then informed the Tunicas that his superior had charged him with setting up a warehouse at the Natchez. Bienville then requested that the Indians send a delegation to inform the Théoloëls of his impending arrival at the Grand Village.[34]

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[32] Anonymous, Memoire en la forme de ce qui est passé dans la premiere Expedition que Mr. Bienville fit aux Natchez en 1716…AC 13A, Vol. 4. fol. 787; Penicault, *Relation,ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*, 255-56.

[33] Memoire en forme de journal…AC 13A, Vol. 4, fol. 788; Penicault, *Relation,ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*, 255-56; La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 68.

[34] Memoire en forme de journal…AC 13A Vol. 4, fols. 788-90; Punition des Sauvages Natchez en 1716 et Etablissent d'un fort français chez eux, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 42.

Later that day, Bienville ordered his men to construct a fortified camp on an island in the Mississippi approximately a mile from the main village of the Tunicas. They built three huts, one to house Bienville, another for storage, and the last to serve as a guardhouse. The lieutenant also ordered his men to pitch as many tents as possible around the camp to create the illusion that it held an army of six hundred. During this bivouac, Davion confirmed Bienville's suspicions by telling him that the Tunicas had received presents as bribes to assassinate all the Frenchmen among them. According to the priest, the Natchez still believed that the news of the murders had not reached the authorities in Mobile and that Bienville was ignorant of their plans.[35]

Four days later, three Natchez ambassadors arrived to smoke the calumet. Bienville refused their offer, saying that they lacked the status to negotiate with the "chief of the French." He told them that only the Suns of the Natchez possessed authority equivalent to his and that he would negotiate only with them. Thus, Bienville placed himself in a position analogous to the Natchez's "royalty" and demanded a meeting with the Suns. He then engaged the Théoloëls in conversation, inquiring about the health of particular Suns. Bienville hinted that if the Natchez did not want France's business, he would set up a warehouse among the Tunicas. The next morning, the Théoloël envoys, accompanied by a Frenchman who spoke their language, returned to the Grand Village carrying the lieutenant's invitation.[36]

On May 4, 1716, while the French waited on their island, six *coureurs de bois* arrived from upriver. They had come from the Natchez bearing more news of divisions

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[35] Punition des Sauvages Natchez en 1716 et Etablissent d'un fort français chez eux, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 42.

[36] Memoire en forme de journal…AC 13A Vol. 4, fol. 790; Punition des Sauvages Natchez en 1716 et Etablissent d'un fort français chez eux, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 42.

among the polity's leadership. Unaware that the Théoloëls had assaulted other Frenchmen, the six Canadians made landfall at the Grand Village in late April 1716. A band of twenty warriors led by the Bearded One robbed and threatened to kill the *coureurs*. The men reported that the "great chiefs of the people" rescued them. After scolding the perpetrators, the Natchez chiefs restored to the Canadians as much of their stolen property as they could recover. The Suns then sent the *coureurs* on their way, informing them that Bienville was at the Tunicas and that the Natchez would soon arrive with their most important men.[37]

Four days after the appearance of the Canadians, sentries sighted pirogues containing Théoloël diplomats as well as the Great Sun, his brother, the Tattooed Serpent, and the Little Sun. Once they landed, the French commander, following Natchez protocol, invited them to his tent.[38] The Indians asked Bienville to smoke the calumet with them and were startled when he refused. The high priest who accompanied the Indian delegation invoked the sun's help to soften Bienville's attitude. The Canadian brushed the pipe aside when the Indians offered it to him a second time. He told them that he was tired of their rituals and demanded satisfaction for the five murders committed by their people. The revelation that the French knew of the killings stunned the Suns. At that point, Bienville ordered his men to seize the Natchez leaders

[37] Memoire en forme de journal…AC 13A Vol. 4, fols. 790, 790-91; La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 68-69.

[38] The records are unclear regarding their means of communication. According to Le Page du Pratz, "most of the Natchez [men] could speak the 'vulgar language' pretty well." Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 321. Bienville was noted for his fluency in several Indian languages, Mobilian (the "vulgar language") among them. Thus all parties could negotiate without translators.

and take them to the prison hut. Once inside the makeshift jail, the Indians began singing their death songs. [39]

Over the next two weeks, Bienville and the three captive Suns conducted several rounds of negotiations. The initial talk took place on the evening of May 8, the first night of the Natchez's captivity. Bienville met with the three headmen in his tent. He explained that he meant them no harm; he simply wanted the heads of the murderers.[40] In particular, he demanded that of the Oyelape, the Sun of the White Earth Village.[41] Bienville continued by providing numerous examples of his ability to rally the nations of the region to the French cause. In each of these instances, Indian groups who had injured or killed Louisianans suffered severe consequences. He made it a point to recount the vengeance he took upon the Chitimachas for the murder of Father St. Cosme, a man familiar to them. Bienville promised the same fate would befall the Natchez if they did not cooperate. This initial interview produced no resolution; the Suns refused to speak.[42]

The next morning, the Great Sun, the Tattooed Serpent, and the Little Sun sought another audience. They informed Bienville that nobody in the villages had sufficient authority to arrest those responsible for the deaths of the *coureurs*. They suggested that he release the Great Sun to return home to capture the culprits. Bienville rejected the

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[39] Memoire présenté à Lamothe Cadillac, gouveneur, par de Richebourg…avec observations de Lamothe Cadillac, May 10, 1716, AC F3, fols. 76v-77; Memoire en forme de journal…AC 13A Vol. 4, fol. 791; Penicault, Penicault, *Relation,ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*, 258-59; La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 69-70.

[40] Bienville demanded the entire head in order to identify the deceased by their tattoos.

[41] Penicault and other French observers referred to this town as the White Earth Village (*terre blanche*), Penicault, "*Relation,ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*," 259; Punition des Sauvages Natchez en 1716 et Etablissent d'un fort françois chez eux, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 45. Karl G. Lorenz argued that the White Earth Village and the White Apple Village were different names for the same town. See Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," 161.

[42] Punition des Sauvages Natchez en 1716 et Etablissent d'un fort françois chez eux, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fols. 43-44.

suggestion and instead set free the Little Sun to accomplish the task. The junior leader might succeed where the Great Sun could not since the latter was too closely identified with the French.

Five days later the Little Sun returned with three heads. One of them, however, did not come from the shoulders of a murderer.[43] Bienville chided the Théoloëls for killing an innocent man to perpetrate the fraud. The young Natchez headman replied that his brother, the Great Sun, would rather see the entire village perish than give up his nephew, the Sun of the White Earth Village. He also said that the pro-British faction of his people had obstructed the apprehension of the culprit. The Little Sun also brought along two Frenchmen and two Illinois Indians whom he had rescued a few days earlier from the execution rack. Despite saving those lives, the Little Sun found himself once again clamped in irons at Bienville's order. On the following day, May 15, Bienville sent two "chiefs" and the high priest of the temple to bring back the head of Oyelape.[44]

The Little Sun's attempt to substitute the sacrifice of a man unconnected with the killings of the *coureurs de bois* for one of the actual murderers bespoke the misunderstandings that lurked close to the surface of the Natchez-French discourse. The Indian leader may have hoped to fool the lieutenant with the bogus head, but he also may have hoped that the death of one of his people, although innocent, would compensate for the death of one of Bienville's. If the latter were the case, perhaps perceptions of similarity misled the Sun to assume that the traditions of reciprocal

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[43] Penicault identified the third victim as the "most feeble-minded person who resided in the village…" Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet,* 177. La Harpe reported that the head belonged to a man who offered to die in the place of the Sun of the White Earth. La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 69.
[44] *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol. 4, fol. 796.

killing that worked among the Native Americans of the region also operated among the Europeans. Bienville quickly disabused him of that notion.

Several factors began to work against the Canadian officer's plans to force a resolution. During the next ten days, spring floods pushed the Mississippi over its banks, inundating the encampment with six inches of water. Dysentery broke out, afflicting both the Natchez and the French. Bienville moved from his tent to a wooden hut to keep dry. He released the Tattooed Serpent from his cell and allowed him to reside in his quarters while the Indian recuperated from his illness.[45]

Bienville and the Tattooed Serpent apparently gained each other's confidence during this time. The latter revealed that the French already held four of the offenders in their guardhouse. These included the Bearded One and Alahofléchia, both high-status men, and two warriors. The Natchez headman also confessed that the English traders had been among Théoloël villages during the preceding year (a fact that Bienville was well aware of). The Indian war leader said that the Natchez had ejected the Anglo merchants when the foreigners suggested that they kill the Frenchmen living in the village and make war on Louisiana. The captive Suns corroborated the Tattooed Serpent's story. They claimed that they never attended any of the councils that ordered the murders of the *coureurs* and that they heard of the crimes only after their commission. According to them, the Jenzenaque, White Earth, and Grigras' Villagers were behind the unrest.[46] The Suns of these towns hosted the English and ordered the

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[45] *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol. 4, fol. 797.

[46] *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol. 4, fols. 798-99; *Punition des Sauvages Natchez*….BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 45. The French text uses the term *les noyers* or "the Walnuts." Swanton suggested Jenzenaques and Walnut Villagers were the same people. See John Reed Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 47-48.

deaths of the Frenchmen. Bienville expressed satisfaction with the three Suns' revelations.

On May 25, 1716, two of the Natchez leaders dispatched by Bienville a few days earlier returned without the head of Oleyape. They reported that he had fled the region and could not be found. The two Indians, however, came back with a number of slaves and possessions that had belonged to the slain Frenchmen. The return of this valuable chattel appears to have further assuaged Bienville.[47]

Although the main culprit remained unpunished, the Louisianan commander revised his strategy. With disease wasting his men, it became apparent to Bienville that waiting on the island for the Natchez to capture Oleyape might cost him more than it was worth. Moreover, with illness already killing Frenchmen, inadvertent deaths among his hostages might destroy the emerging rapport. Bienville brought most of the prisoners to his tent to join the three Suns. Only the four accused of murder remained in irons. When all of the Natchez captives were assembled, the lieutenant dictated his peace terms. Those who were guilty of murder would die for their crimes. If Oyelape, the Sun of the White Earth Village, came back, his head was to be sent to Bienville to show that he had paid for his crimes. The Théoloëls would also restore all of the merchandise that they had stolen from the warehouse or from French subjects. Finally, the Indians were to provide the materials and labor to build Fort Rosalie. The Théoloëls present in Bienville's tent agreed to these provisions and pledged to live in peace with

[47] *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol, 4, fol. 799.

the French. They also thanked the lieutenant for removing members of a faction that had undermined their power among the Natchez villages.[48]

After the parley, the Tattooed Serpent quietly asked for one modification of the terms. At this point, the special status of the Natchez Suns came into play. The Tattooed Serpent feared that a public execution of high-ranking prisoners would provoke a violent reaction among his countrymen. The Natchez leader requested that the four be sent to Mobile for the governor to determine their punishment. Bienville agreed.[49]

Bienville's change of tactics soon bore fruit. On June 3, the lieutenant sent Sergeant Pailloux and two soldiers to escort three of the Suns and the other hostages back home; only the Tattooed Serpent and the Little Sun remained behind at the camp. Pailloux arrived at the Grand Village and wrote back that the Natchez had accepted all of the peace terms. An enlisted man, accompanied by nine elders of the nation, carried the sergeant's letter to Bienville. He included a description of a small hillock near the village that would make a good site for the new post. Upon reading of the Théoloëls' response, the lieutenant finally smoked the calumet, this time proffered by the nine diplomats. The Little Sun returned home accompanied by a detachment of soldiers assigned to bring tools and materials to construct Fort Rosalie. The Tattooed Serpent stayed on the island along with the four murderers.[50]

The lieutenant discharged his Canadian irregulars in the second week of June. He ordered them to take the condemned Natchez some distance away from the camp and

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[48] *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol 4, fol. 800; *Punition des Sauvages Natchez*… BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 46.
[49] *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol 4, fol. 802; *Punition des Sauvages Natchez*… BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fol. 46.
[50] *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol 4, fol. 802.

"break their heads." As the Bearded One marched toward the boat that was to take him to his end, he chanted his death song. Just before his execution, he switched to a war song, during which he listed the five Frenchmen whose lives he had taken. The Bearded One died saying that he only wished he could have killed more. Upon hearing this news, the Tattooed Serpent responded, "he is my brother, but I no longer regret [his death]. You are releasing us from a wicked man."[51]

The First Natchez War was a short-lived affair that cost both sides only a handful of lives. The speedy resolution of the conflict and its low casualties helped to mitigate its negative impact on relations between the Théoloëls and Louisiana. Its violence was muted; no European soldiers met Natchez warriors in open combat, and only Canadian traders and their murderers died. Moreover, these men perished beyond the sight of their countrymen; the *coureurs de bois* met their fate in Natchez country with no European witnesses. The Natchez killed several of the Indian murderers themselves and brought them downriver to exchange for the captive Suns. Bienville took care that no Théoloëls saw their leaders die at the hands of Frenchmen. The Suns expressed little regret for the passing of men who had challenged their authority at home. Thus, one of the most traumatic aspects of war, the spectacle of the enemy killing one's fellows, was absent from this conflict. More important, the fact that the social and political structures of the two peoples had facilitated negotiations further reinforced perceptions of similarity. The leaders of both sides supported the "police action" against wrongdoers who violated the terms upon which the two peoples interacted.

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[51] *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol 4, fol. 804; *Punition des Sauvages Natchez*… BN Mss n.a. fr. 2549, fols. 46-7.

*Reading the First Natchez War*

The First Natchez War did not demolish Théoloëls' assumptions that the French were possible inductees into their Mississippian polity. The rest of this chapter examines the ways that the discourse of perceived similarities survived the conflict. The manner in which the French conducted hostilities, particularly the capture of the Suns and their subsequent release, mimicked the Théoloëls' ritual abduction of the leader during one of their festivals. Each side shared a number of social and political attributes that the war, and the negotiations that ended it, revealed for all to see. These included the conspicuous ownership of slaves, diplomatic rank based on matrilineal kinship, and the acceptance of reciprocal killings to satisfy blood debts. Finally, the construction of a small settlement, undertaken with Natchez labor, suggested that the newcomers planned to settle down and act respectably. These similarities allowed enough of the old discourse to survive for at least some of the Natchez to continue to work with the French as potential adjuncts to their polity.

The words spoken by the Tattooed Serpent, "You are releasing us from a wicked man,"[52] gives us one of the first clues to the manner in which he perceived his captor. The Natchez leader's syntax hinted that he thought that Bienville's rank was not very different from his own. The Tattooed Serpent's identification with Bienville comes across in the use of the familiar *tu*. The texts do not reveal whether he uttered that pronoun in French or in his own tongue. It is clear, however, that the author of the passage wished to convey that a close relationship had developed between the Tattooed Serpent and the king's lieutenant. The Tattooed Serpent's willingness to treat Bienville as an equal was emblematic of other parallels that the Natchez saw in the French.

[52] "Tu nous defais d'un mechant homme." *Memoire en forme de journal*…AC 13A, Vol 4. fol. 804.

One of the most sublime parallels was inherited status. Although European societies traced succession through the father's side, the case of Bienville and the Suns suggests a need for an analysis of authority originating through matrilineal descent. The negotiators on both sides of the First Natchez War gained their status through their relationships with their brothers. The Great Sun and the Tattooed Serpent were brothers; the Little Sun and the Tattooed Serpent were also brothers. The Tattooed Serpent told Bienville that the Bearded One was his mother's son. While it is unclear whether all of these leaders shared fathers—they might have been half-brothers—the French recorded the Indians as using the word *frères* to describe their relationship. They had inherited their ranks through their mother according to the well-documented Natchez kinship system.[53]

Detecting the similarity on the European side of the equation presents a problem when analyzed under the rules of patrilineal succession. Viewed through the lens of matrilineal succession, however, it made perfect sense that Bienville derived his authority through his mother, as did the Great Sun. To the Théoloëls, the Le Moynes looked much like French versions of the Suns. The Natchez's system of descent did not place Bienville in line to take over his brother's gubernatorial office. Instead, it put the lieutenant in the same position as the Tattooed Serpent, the brother of the Great Sun. Both men played prominent roles as war leaders and negotiators for their peoples. Although the primary chief held titular command over the Théoloëls' warriors, second-tier elites, like the Canadian lieutenant and his reluctant houseguest, did the actual fighting and peacemaking. Bienville's decision to share his lodgings with the Tattooed

[53] Patricia Galloway argues that much of what Le Page du Pratz knew about Natchez kinship and social practices came from his Chitimacha slave informant. Patricia Galloway and Jason Baird Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," in *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 603.

Serpent and later with the other Suns, reinforced the apparent parity between the upper ranks of the French and Natchez.[54]

For the Natchez, this tradition dated back at least to the 1680s when the Great Sun's brother greeted La Salle and escorted him to the polity's administrative center. For the French, a *lieutenant du roi* directed a post's military affairs and was the governor's second-in-command. Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, sieur de Bienville, possessed obvious leadership abilities, but his brother, Pierre Le Moyne, sieur d'Iberville, had launched his career. The elder Le Moyne commissioned his brother as a midshipman in the 1690s. When d'Iberville stopped at the Natchez's Grand Village in March 1700, his position as the leader of the Europeans was apparent. After d'Iberville died in 1706, several of his brothers played crucial roles in Louisiana's government for nearly forty years.[55]

The fact that Cadillac was not related by blood to the founder of the colony may have weakened his prestige. According to Natchez rules of descent, he would have been outside the line of succession to rule Louisiana. Nonetheless, the Théoloëls realized that Bienville was not the ultimate political power in the colony, despite his claims to be the "chief of the French." The Tattooed Serpent's request that Bienville remand the Natchez murder suspects to the governor in Mobile demonstrated that he understood that Cadillac held final authority. Nonetheless, the region's native peoples also knew that d'Iberville's brother, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, sieur de Bienville, still

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[54] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 87.

[55] Pierre Le Moyne died from yellow fever in Havana in 1706 while organizing an invasion of Carolina. Jay Higginbotham, *Old Mobile: Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711* (Mobile: Museum of the City of Mobile, 1977), 284-85. Charles Le Moyne, Bienville and D'Iberville's father had twelve sons and two daughters. See Jean Jacques Lefebvre, "Charles Le Moyne de Longueuil et Châteauguay," *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume 1, (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1970).

lived and commanded great respect among the colonists and Indians alike as a war leader and diplomat.

The Suns and Bienville shared another trait: they both held slaves. French witnesses frequently mentioned that the Suns commanded the labor of Natchez commoners without remuneration.[56] From their first contacts, the Théoloëls could see that the newcomers valued human property. La Salle's party brought several captive laborers with them when they visited Natchez country. One of them escaped to his home among the Koroas, providing the People of the Sun with a witness to the Europeans' treatment of slaves. Eighteenth-century observers also wrote that slaves of the Natchez Suns worked in the fields as agricultural laborers—the same way the slaves of the French toiled on the farms of Louisiana.[57] While serving as commandant of Fort St. Louis in Mobile, Bienville owned seventeen Indian slaves as well as four African slaves.[58] Bienville's slaves included important individuals such as Framboise, the "chief" of the Chitimachas, whose captivity further increased the lieutenant's prestige.[59]

The manpower shortage that afflicted Bienville's small army mandated that he mobilize every available worker or soldier. Although the records of the French expedition of 1716 do not mention whether slaves made up part of the contingent, some probably accompanied the expedition as camp servants, laborers, and rowers. During their imprisonment, it is highly likely that the Suns watched slaves wait upon Bienville and his fellow officers in much the same way that low-status Théoloëls waited upon

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[56] Anonymous, *Memoire sur Louisiana*, *NYPL*, 143.
[57] Anonymous, *Memoire sur Louisiana*, 43. See also Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France avec le Journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionnale*, Vol. III (Paris: Chez Nyon Fils, 1744), 420; Grand Soliel, files d'un francois en 1728, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2550, fol. 116.
[58] Higginbotham, *Old Mobile*, 359.
[59] Paul du Poisson [Father Poisson] aux Akensas, October 3, 1727, *JR* 67: 299.

them in the Grand Village. The fact that Bienville relaxed some of his demands when the two Natchez war leaders arrived with slaves belonging to the dead *coureurs de bois* suggests that he placed a high value on human property.[60]

On the little island in the Mississippi, the leaders of the two warring parties may have recognized a commonality in terms of status and slaveholding, but their respective societies enjoyed less unity. Factionalism was a constant factor in both the Louisianan and the Natchez polities. Leaders from the borderlands challenged the Grand Village Suns' authority. Louisiana was rent by similar tensions. The split between Bienville and Cadillac filled pages of correspondence to and from the Ministry of Marine. Both men clamored for the other's ouster and both had solid reasons for their entreaties. Cadillac's diplomatic and administrative incompetence brought war to the colony according to many witnesses. Bienville's insolence, together with his influence with the Indians and colonists, irritated the governor. Moreover, Bienville's commercial dealings had already aroused the suspicions of Pontchartrain and the *intendants* in charge of Louisiana's account books. After a lengthy investigation, the king's commissioner failed to prove anything, but it appeared that Bienville might have tampered with the witnesses.[61]

Bienville's long tenure as the leader of Louisiana made for a difficult situation when Cadillac arrived in 1713. The new governor's dyspeptic remarks equating this

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[60] Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 100-01. For a view of slavery's role in Native American-French diplomacy in Canada and the *pays d'en haut* see Brett Rushforth, "'A Little Flesh We Offer You': The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2003): 743-76 and "Slavery, the Fox Wars, and the Limits of Alliance," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2006): 53-80.

[61] Louis XIV to D'Artaguette, June 30, 1707, *MPAFD,* Vol. III, 61; Pontchartrain to Boisbriant, June 30, 1707, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 72; Abstract of Testimony against Bienville, taken by D'Artaguette February 24-28, 1708, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 78-110; Higginbotham, *Old Mobile*, 315-39.

"bad country" with "bad people" did not help his image.[62] Relations between Cadillac and his second-in-command deteriorated quickly. Factions quickly formed around each of the two strong personalities. Arguments over the colony's commercial assets, Indian policy, and internal politics fueled the schism. By the time news of the murders of the five *coureurs* reached Mobile in the winter of 1716, the rift between the two men had widened significantly.

With the frequent travel along the Mississippi by native and European soldiers, merchants, and river men, word of the disputes among the leadership of the French probably reached the Grand Village, particularly after the La Loire brothers set up their post. Canadians traveling up and down the river would have been privy to information about Cadillac's career in the Great Lakes region. His behavior in Mobile provoked the *habitants* of that town to disparage their new leader. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the *coureurs* spread this gossip to the staff at the post of the Natchez. The river men probably shared their thoughts on Cadillac with the Théoloëls due to their propensity to visit the Grand Village. In the words of Le Page du Pratz, "all of the *voyageurs* who passed and stopped at this place came to see the Natchez Naturals, the road, a league in length, was so beautiful and the countryside so good, the Naturals were so helpful and so familiar, the women there were so amiable that they never grew tired

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[62] Cadillac wrote about his fellow colonists, "According to the proverb 'Bad country, bad people' one can say that they are a heap of the dregs of Canada, jailbirds without subordination for religion and for government, addicted to vice principally with Indian women who they prefer to French women. It is very difficult to remedy it when his Majesty desires that they be governed mildly and wishes that a governor conduct himself in such a way that the inhabitants may make no complaints against him." Cadillac to Pontchartrain, October 26, 1713, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 167-68. The new governor quickly drew the critcicism of his charges: "The arrival of M. de Lamothe Cadillac could have produced a good effect on the settlement of Louisiana had he wished to act in harmony with M. de Bienville; but, jealous of the affection which the troops and Indian tribes had for M. de Bienville, M. de Lamothe tried to hinder him on every occasion. Altercations arose between them which give rise to two factions in the colony that have persisted until this day." La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 63.

of praising the Canton and the Naturals who lived there."[63] It is easy to imagine the ready exchange of information in such a situation.

The Suns who lived in the Grand Village also endured challenges to their rule during the same period. Much like their counterparts in France and Louisiana, the leaders of the town sought to maintain hegemony over the margins of their polity. Anglo traders made inroads with the Natchez who lived in the outlying villages. Those towns furthest from the French on the Mississippi treated with the British from the east who supplied them with manufactured goods. These refractory towns sat astride the route that led from the Grand Village northeast through Chickasaw country. Archaeological excavations performed at one of these villages uncovered graves filled with goods of European manufacture. These items were similar in quality to those found during excavations of the Grand Village temple mound, but the graves in the outlying villages contained more of them than the main town's burial sites. The Jenzenaque and White Earth towns had found their relationship with the English quite lucrative. The lack of powerful neighbors in the marchlands between the Natchez and the Chickasaws allowed this trade to continue for several years despite Mobile's protests. Consequently, if word of the long-running dispute between Bienville and the *arriviste* governor reached the Grand Village, it may have resonated with the Indian leadership's experiences with it own political rivals (see Figure 2.1, page 103).

The manner in which the dispute between the Europeans and the Native Americans unfolded also echoed indigenous practices. Bienville's capture of the Great Sun followed a pattern familiar to the Natchez. Le Page du Pratz wrote that the Théoloëls reenacted a legend of an abduction of Thé, the first Great Sun, by enemy warriors and

[63] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 280.

his subsequent rescue. This sham battle took place in early spring, during the Deer Moon in the month of March. Much like the conflict with the French, the "battle" ended with the leader's return to the Grand Village.[64]

The *fête* began with the men of the village dividing into two groups. The one that represented the "enemy" wore red plumes, and those who played the Sun's warriors wore white ones. The enemy, led by the Natchez "war chief," approached the cabin of the leader, who emerged acting as if he had just awoken. The red faction seized the Great Sun and attempted to carry him off. The chief defended himself with a "war club of the old design" in mock combat.[65] His men rallied to drive off the foreigners. The Natchez then brought their Sun back to his home on the temple mound while the entire population shouted with joy. Restored to his cabin, the leader "recuperated" for a short time and then reappeared to close the ceremony with a series of invocations. During the finale, he stood motionless facing the temple with his arms extended in the shape of a cross. The Sun then donned his finest robes and officiated at the feast that terminated the proceedings.

One May morning in 1716, French warriors seized the Great Sun in much the same way that the participants in the sham battle had done during the Deer Moon festival. The sequence of events surrounding the Sun's imprisonment mimicked the spring ritual. Nonetheless, the leader's capture by the Europeans was not an act, nor were the results foreordained. Although the Natchez considered an outright assault on the island prison, they relented and yielded to the majority of Bienville's demands. The records do not reveal the Théoloëls' reasons for rejecting a military solution despite their

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[64] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 355-360.
[65] For a detailed examination of the ritual use of war clubs, see Wayne William Van Horne, "The War Club: Weapon and Symbol in Southeastern Indian Societies" (Dissertation, University of Georgia, 1993).

overwhelming numbers. Perhaps they feared for the lives of the hostages. They also might have recognized the parallels between their festival and the state of affairs downriver and hoped that the Sun would be released unharmed. If the Natchez acted on the belief that their ruler would be set free if they waited, they were not disappointed. In this scenario, Bienville and his men played the role of the "red" faction, and they played it according to the script even as far as their hesitation to harm the Suns or their retainers.[66]

This sole incidence of violence—the execution of the Bearded One and his co-conspirators—solved problems for those on both sides of the conflict. The manner in which the French benefited was obvious: they avenged the death of their countrymen and asserted their power in the region. When Bienville took action against the leaders of the outer Théoloël villages, he presented the Suns of the Grand Village an opportunity to suppress their domestic rivals without personally shedding the blood of the Suns who ruled the rebellious towns.

Another aspect of the conflict that reinforced the illusion of similarity concerned the fate of the other murderers of the *coureurs de bois*. Their end suggested that the French had accepted indigenous justice in the form of retaliatory killings. In June 1716, Bienville settled for a rough parity between the number of murder victims and those executed. This implies the opening of a "middle ground" that accommodated Native

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[66] Marshall Sahlins wrote extensively on a similar convergence of indigenous religious/cultural reenactments and the timing of a European leader's appearance. In the late 1770s, Captain Cook arrived in Hawaii at the same time its inhabitants were celebrating the festival commemorating the appearance of their diety *Lono*. The Hawaiians welcomed the Englishman with great ceremony. When Cook unexpectedly returned to the islands a few weeks later, he disturbed the calendar cycle and the Hawaiians redressed the imbalance by killing him. See Marshall David Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think: about Captain Cook, for Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 17-83.

American notions of blood debt.[67] Six of those who died had played a direct role in the murders—the Bearded One, Alahofléchia, the two warriors on the island, and the two culprits brought in by the Little Sun—while one of the dead had not been involved in the killings. Although Bienville publicly refused to accept the head of an innocent man as a substitute for Oyelape, his ardor slackened when the number of dead Natchez surpassed that of the five murdered Frenchmen. Whatever his intentions, Bienville's actions were consistent with indigenous practices of reciprocal killings. This apparent adoption of "native justice" was reinforced by the termination of hostilities.

Nonetheless, the Canadian officer inserted a provision into the peace agreement of June 1716 that the Natchez bring back Oyelape, the Sun of the White Earth Village, dead or alive. The Natchez heartily agreed to the conditions of peace and promised to look for the fugitive Sun. He may have escaped permanently since no records after that date mention his capture.

What motives caused Bienville to release his hostages before the Théoloël handed over all of the leaders responsible for the murders? Did the lieutenant expect the Natchez to honor the Oleyape clause of the treaty? Richeboug wrote that the spring floods triggered an epidemic that deprived Bienville of all but a handful of soldiers. The lieutenant no longer had the means to force the issue. With disease wasting his men and his base of operations underwater, he decided it was time to "bring an end to

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[67] Richard White's formulation of European and Indian accommodation in cases of murder works well in this instance. See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 76-82. See also Patricia K. Galloway, "The Barthelemy Murders: Bienville's Establishment of the Lex Talonis as a Principle of Indian Diplomacy," *Proceedings of the Eighth Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* (1985): 91-103. For a contrasting view of Native American justice, see Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1976), 97.

this little war."[68] The extraction of the Natchez's commitment to turn over the last suspect allowed him to save face and the Indians to retrieve their leaders.

There is another possible reason for Bienville's willingness to overlook the escape of Oyelape. It also relates to Native American patterns of retributive killing. The agreement between the Tattooed Serpent and Bienville came about after the French had lost five men. The Théoloëls had lost only three warriors up until the evacuation of the Mississippi island fort—the three individuals brought in by the Little Sun. The other four culprits, including the Bearded One, would die soon enough. This would happen, however, beyond public view. When the Natchez returned to the Grand Village, they could claim a double victory: the release of the Great Sun and his cohort as well as having inflicted more casualties than they suffered. This, of course, involved the French adhering to the stipulation that they would bring the four murderers to Mobile to face the governor. The Bearded One and his companions never made it to the colonial capital. The Tattooed Serpent was the only Théoloël who knew about their executions; the records are silent about whether he told any of his countrymen. If he kept the murderers' death sentences secret, his fellows could celebrate their triumph over the French ignorant of the real score.

When the French returned to Mobile, they could claim to have punished the Natchez for their transgressions and to have inflicted more casualties than they sustained: seven Indians compared to five *coureurs de bois*. To push the Théoloëls to track down Oleyape would force them to send a Sun to his death, a serious problem for those Natchez who held special reverence for their leaders. The death of a Sun was a major loss for the Natchez that required the sacrifice of his or her spouse and retainers

[68] Memoire en forme de journal…AC 13A, Vol 4. fol. 800

as well as the death of several infants.[69] Thus, the killing of a Sun might also upset the parity between both sides.

Whatever his personal thoughts may have been, Bienville appeared satisfied and passed the remainder of the summer among the People of the Sun. During his stay, the Théoloëls complied fully with one of the treaty's provisions by providing wooden pilings and bark planks for Fort Rosalie's construction. The building of the post also played into the rubric of similarities: the newcomers required the Théoloëls' assistance. This resembled the pattern established by La Salle in 1682 and Limoges in 1701—the newcomers needed help from the People of the Sun. More important, the French were building something resembling a village in Natchez country. The men who garrisoned the post would soon marry Théoloël women and thereby enter into the Natchez order of things as the newest influx of "stinkards."

The conflict of 1716 brought together two sets of warriors and diplomats. Their interaction, although often hostile, reinforced the illusion of similarity between the French and the Natchez. It also provided some elements of continuity with established forms of intercultural relations. At first glance, the collection of Canadian backwoodsmen, French conscripts, and impressed oarsmen amounted to little more than a strong war party by the standards of Southeastern nations. They organized themselves in ways analogous to a Théoloël war party; the Louisianan army's hierarchy included a "war chief," officers, soldiers, and slaves. The Natchez ranked themselves as "chiefs,"

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[69] The French took special notice of the elaborate funerary rites of the Natchez. Swanton complied and translated accounts of these rites. See Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 138-157. These accounts included Penicault, *Relation, ou annale véritable de ce qui s'est passé*, 134-140 (Swanton used Margry's version of Penicault's Relation), as well as observations by Le Page du Pratz, Dumont de Montigny, Fathers Gravier, Charlevoix, and Le Petit. See also Patricia Galloway and Jason Baird Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," in *HBNAI* 15, 606-607.

"true warriors," "ordinary warriors, " and "apprentice warriors." They also divided the French into "true warriors" and "youngsters."[70] Thus, in some ways, the European expedition resembled previous bands that traveled into the Great Sun's realm, especially after they stayed to build a permanent settlement.

After Fort Rosalie was finished, Bienville returned to Mobile. He arrived there in the autumn of 1716 to discover that Versailles had ordered Cadillac's recall. Bienville's success earned him accolades from everybody except the outgoing governor (who would soon find himself imprisoned in the Bastille). The Natchez and the small garrison enjoyed several years of tranquility.

The First Natchez War played out according to familiar patterns that mimicked aspects of the Deer Moon Festival. Other similarities emerged during the negotiations that ended the conflict. The war leaders, brothers of the primary figures in their polities—the Tattooed Serpent was the brother of the Great Sun, Bienville was the brother of Louisiana's first governor—resolved the dispute. Thus, rather than driving a wedge between the French and the Théoloëls, the First Natchez War reinforced the illusion that the two groups shared similar institutions. Events underway in France would soon dispel this illusion. In early 1717, Crozat petitioned the King to release him from his obligations in Louisiana because the territory had not returned a profit.[71] Over the course of a few years, Crozat discovered that the costs of maintaining the concession far exceeded his projections. Paris complied with his request the following year.[72] The retrocession cleared the way for a Scottish émigré banker named John Law

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[70] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, II, 418-19. See also Father Le Petit, *JR* 68: 142-151.
[71] *Memoire*, January11, 1717, AC 13A Vol. 5, fol. 231v.
[72] Law promised a return of 4 percent per annum to investors. Profits from Guinea slavers, the Canadian beaver pelts, and the projected growth of Louisiana were to underwrite the paper. Marcel Giraud, "La

to finance France's huge national debt through the sale of land along the Mississippi now owned by the newly formed "*Compagnie d'Occident.*" Law embarked on a public information campaign to lure settlers to the shores of the Gulf Coast. Many of these immigrants from the *metropole* wound up at a new concession a few miles from the temple mound of the Great Sun. During the next three years, attracted by reports of the region's fertility, a steady stream of French, Dutch, and German civilians, as well as enslaved Africans, moved into the wedge of land between the Mississippi and St. Catherine's Creek.[73] The trickle of soldiers and traders who visited the Natchez soon became a flood of permanent settlers. The Natchez would discover that these newcomers acted in ways quite unlike the French warriors of Bienville.

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Compagnie d'Occident, 1717-1718," *Revue Historique* 226, no. 3 (1961): 23-56. *Lettres patentes*, August 26, 1717, AC A Vol. 22, fols. 69-71; see also Allain, *Not Worth a Straw*, 64-67.

[73] Marcel Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane française*, Vol. IV, 259-63.

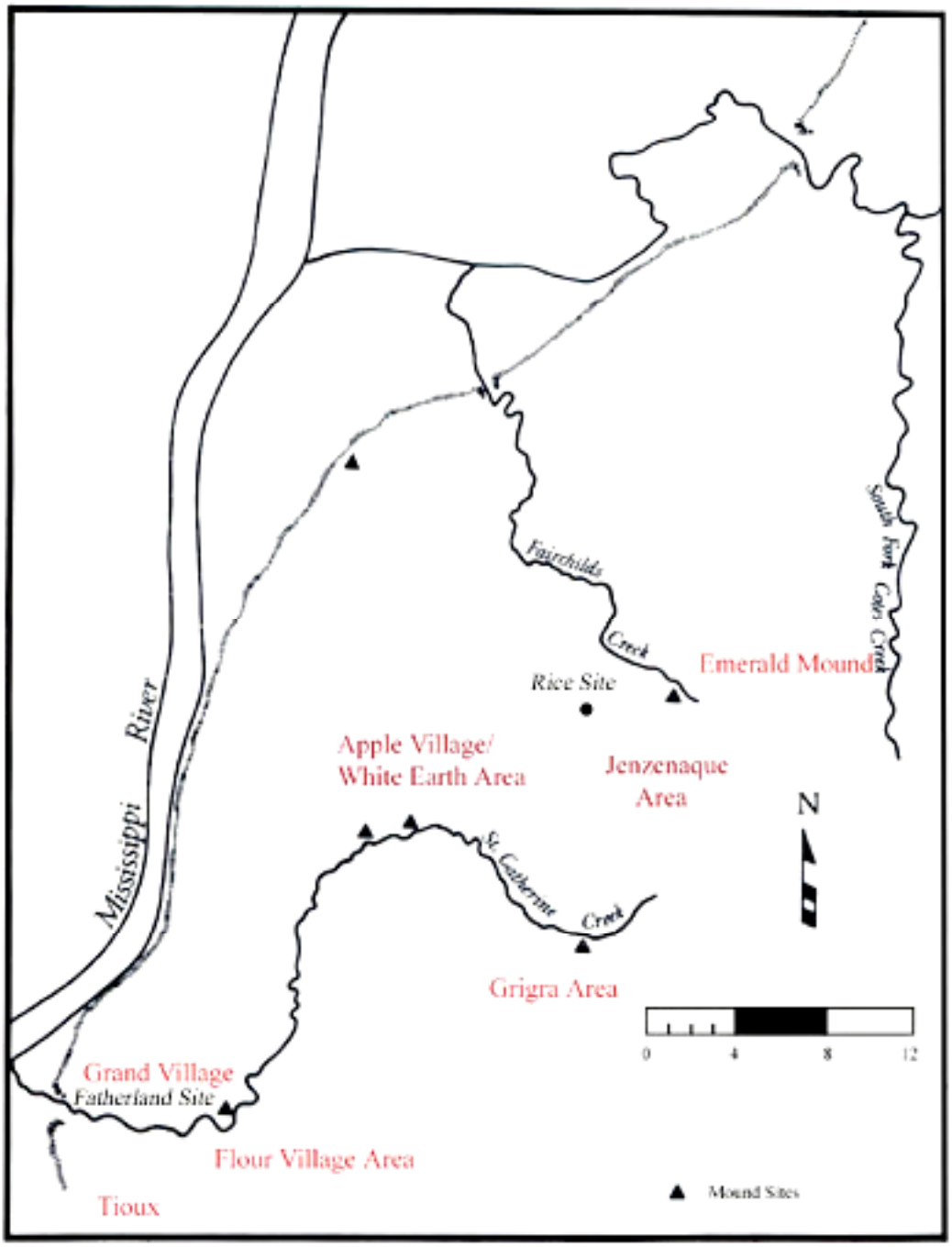


**Figure 2.1, Natchez Country in 1716**

Adapted from Ian W. Brown, "An Archaeological Study of Culture Contact and Change in the Natchez Bluff Region," in *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1982).

## Chapter Three: Impudent Immigrants

At the close of the First Natchez War, Bienville and the Tattooed Serpent recognized each other's status and worked out an understanding regarding the murders of several Canadians. Their resolution of that conflict allowed the People of the Sun to retain some of their perceptions of the French as possible inductees into their polity. At the very least, the newcomers served as useful adjuncts to the Théoloël leadership. They supplied goods to the Suns who redistributed them to their supporters to reinforce their authority, thus preserving an established Mississippian source of legitimacy. The Europeans' small numbers and deferential affect permitted the Natchez to act as if they had absorbed yet another set of immigrants. Thus, despite the war, many of the ancient ways survived.

This chapter examines the pervasive changes in the Théoloëls' discourse with their new neighbors that took place between 1716 and 1725. These changes, spurred by the violence of the Second and Third Natchez Wars, goaded even the most pro-French Suns to abandon the illusion that the newcomers from overseas would submit to the old order. Moreover, the Suns once again had to deal with rivals from within their own world. Challenges came from outlying towns that had retained some measure of autonomy. One of these groups, the people from the Apple Village, built a settlement between a French plantation and the Grand Village. This move generated tensions with the *habitants* of St. Catherine's Concession who grazed their cattle and cultivated tobacco in the same fields, mounds, and scrublands in which the newly arrived Indians grew their corn and buried their dead. The Apple Villagers and the other Natchez settlements that supported them launched a series of attacks, each more aggressive than

the previous one, to force the concessionaires off the contested ground. These attacks ran counter to the main town's pro-French policies. Consequently, the Suns of the Grand Village had to deal with two sets of impudent "immigrants," one from the Old World and the other from the New. Once again, elites from both sides had to restore the balance between the Théoloëls and the outsiders.

The Second Natchez War witnessed the persistence of some of the old Théoloël ways of relating to outsiders. These included Indian women acting in an official capacity with the French. The manner in which the Apple Villagers chose their targets from among the *habitants* of St. Catherine's Concession also suggests that the Native Americans still perceived similarities between themselves and the foreigners. Their selective and limited attacks also implied that the Natchez had hoped to modify the French villagers' behavior, thus bringing it in line with other subordinate groups within the Théoloël polity. By the close of the third conflict, however, the old discourse lay in shambles. The Tattooed Serpent and Bienville eventually negotiated another peace, but only after the Théoloël leaders had brought the Canadian the head of the Sun of the Apple Village and allowed an army of French soldiers and Indian warriors to destroy the offending towns. The Great Sun's rivals had been crushed in a way that made membership in the Théoloël polity a dubious privilege. Even the Tattooed Serpent could no longer harbor any illusion that the French would fall in line with the Natchez order of things. Worse, the wars strained the Grand Village's hegemony over the Théoloël polity; the glue that held together their corner of the Mississippian world was dissolving.

*Settlers among the Suns*

Between St. Catherine's Creek and the bluffs along the Mississippi River lies a plain now occupied by the City of Natchez. In the early 1700s, the broken scrubland and prairie contained remarkably fertile soil that attracted the attention of Native Americans and Europeans alike. After the decades of violence generated by the slave trade, the land east of the Grand Village must have looked like a safe haven to the Apple People who dwelled astride the route from Chickasaw country to the great river. It stood in the shadow of the Natchez's most powerful town, one that could act as glacis against danger. Sometime between 1716 and early 1723, the Apple Villagers built a new town a few miles west of St. Catherine's Creek, not far from the French post.[1] This district became the focal point of the colonists, and the Indians' first struggle for control over the region.

The trouble began when two Parisian bankers sent several dozen settlers into the same area. After the disappointments and privations wrought by the War of Spanish Succession, the land just east of Fort Rosalie beckoned to Europeans in search of profits so long denied them in this most promising colony. A well-financed team of managers led a contingent of French *engagés* and African slaves to build a new plantation a mile or two northwest of the Grand Village near a mound named the Motte de Madame (see Figure 3.1, page 144). As the two settlements matured, they needed more room for tobacco and corn plots, and in the case of the Europeans, pastures to graze their livestock. Neither side gave ground as both villages vied for the same real estate.

[1] Longrais's Journal, June 15, 1723, AC 13A Vol. 7, fol. 302.

The close of the First Natchez War foreshadowed some of the problems that later confronted the Théoloëls when the Apple Villagers moved into the plain east of Fort Rosalie. Besides being a conflict with Louisiana, the war started in part over tensions between the Suns of the main Théoloël town and the leaders of outlying settlements such as the White Earth Village.[2] Indeed, all of the murderers of the *coureurs* had hailed from rival towns. The tensions that sparked the original conflict still operated close to the surface.

The elimination of Oleyape and the Bearded One in 1716 removed some of the organizers of the pro-British faction, but it did not eradicate the economic foundations of their dissent. The "White Earth" or "White Apple Village" and the Jenzenaques were close to the Chickasaws, and although this location rendered them vulnerable to slavers, it also placed them in a favorable position to trade with the English merchants who resided among the raiders. Once the Apple People built their new town west of Saint Catherine's Concession, they made sure that they maintained control of the high ground of the Motte de Madame because the road to Chickasaw country led over this small mound. This route allowed them to trade with the English to the northeast unimpeded by either the French or the Grand Villagers. This unmediated supply of trade goods from Britain undermined the established patterns of redistribution that bolstered the prestige of the Great Sun and his cohort. Consequently, the Apple Villagers, by virtue of their location, had the requisite connections to steer a course

[2] The White Earth, White Apple, and Apple Villages were different names for the same community given by various French observers. See Ian W. Brown, "Historic Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley: An Archaeologist's View," in *Towns and Temples Along the Mississippi*, ed. David H. Dye and Cheryl Ann Cox (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 180, 184-86.

independent of the Grand Village and the latter's ties with the immigrants from France.[3] When the Apple Natchez chose to expand, they took on yet another set of problems; the place they selected to build their new town put them in direct competition with the French.

On the other side of the issue, Louisiana's expansion in the land of Suns arose from the *metropole's* desire to capitalize on the emerging world economy. France's inability to compete effectively with Great Britain in the global market stemmed from its relative disadvantages in industrial production and its smaller merchant fleet. These shortcomings made it difficult for her to reward her allies in the hinterlands of North America with manufactured goods. This economic weakness placed France's colonial project on that continent on an uneasy footing. To counter this trend, after the War of Spanish Succession, Paris made plans to improve the nation's international trade. The Council of the Regency recognized that Britain's trans-Atlantic possessions provided the kingdom's chief rival with agricultural products like sugar and tobacco that underwrote its prosperity.[4] England's example encouraged French officials to transform Louisiana into a commodity-producing colony like Virginia or South Carolina.

Financing the revitalization of France's colonies posed another, more daunting challenge—a century of conflict had left France's treasury depleted and wrecked her credit. Moreover, the state was short of funds for its day-to-day operations; it had none to spare for developing a distant colony or for subsidizing the price of Indian trade

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[3] Karl G. Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," in *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory* ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Pensacola: University Press of Florida, 2000), 163-73.

[4] The Council of the Regency, a group of fourteen nobles, under the control of Phillipe, Duc d'Orléans, ruled France during Louis XV's minority from the death of Louis XIV on September 1, 1715, until André-Hercule de Fleury became chief minister to the king in 1726. Thereafter, the Cardinal played a crucial role in French government until his death in 1748. James Breck Perkins, *France Under Louis XV* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1897), 49-53.

goods. To remedy the situation, the Duc d'Orléans turned to the émigré banker John Law. The Scot devised a solution that propelled a wave of settlers across the ocean into the heart of Théoloël territory.

Law looked to the Bank of England as a model for righting France's fiscal affairs.[5] In 1716, the government opened the *Bank Générale* under his direction to issue paper currency backed by the state's gold and silver reserves. He intended for the infusion of banknotes to stimulate the kingdom's stagnant markets. In short order, Law organized the *Compagnie d'Occident*, which he later merged with several firms and renamed the *Compagnie des Indes*.[6] Through this corporation, he sold company shares and government bonds. The paper that he floated on the rue Quincampoix (Paris's open-air stock exchange) sold rapidly and soon became the darling of speculators. Encouraged by the initial success of his banks and the "Mississippi Company," the Regent turned over control of France's overseas trade to Law and appointed him Minister of Finance.[7]

Law's accomplishments were short-lived. He ordered his bank to issue new paper to cover the interest on its initial public offering. As each subsequent payment came due, he sold more bonds. One historian summed up the situation, "The stock rose to giddy heights, with profits available to anyone, especially insiders, who bought early and sold in time—the same sort of chain letter operation that characterized the South

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[5] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime: A History of France, 1610-1774* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 206, 288.

[6] For a detailed account of the first two years of Law's Company of the West, see Marcel Giraud, "La Compagnie d'Occident, 1717-1718," *Revue Historique* 226, no. 3 (1961): 23-56. Giraud wrote that some of France's most influential subjects bought into the company, initially providing it with a solid base. For a contemporary assessment of Law's System see James B. Collins, *The State in Early Modern France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170-72.

[7] Charles Poor Kindleberger, *A Financial History of Western Europe*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 100.

Sea Bubble by which it was infected—but no possibility for all to win."[8] The first rumblings of the crash sounded in April 1720 after the pool of investors dried up and rumors of fiscal improprieties circulated among the public. In response, shareholders dumped their stock onto the market. By September 1720, the "Mississippi Company's" notes had sunk to their original value, ruining hundreds of shareholders.[9]

Nonetheless, Law's "system" had a lasting impact on Louisiana. At first, his scheme focused attention and capital on the Gulf Coast as an ideal location for colonization. His *Compagnie des Indes* sold tracts called concessions to investors who pledged to send settlers to populate them.[10] To meet the demand for workers, the French government emptied its *hôpitaux* and prisons of orphans, prostitutes, petty thieves, and salt smugglers. The low character of the immigrants, rumors of the hot climate, incidence of disease, and Louisiana's high mortality rate dissuaded the more promising candidates from leaving home. To overcome the reluctance of its subjects, the government created a special police force in 1719 to round up more of the unemployed and undesirable and bring them to staging ports for shipment overseas. The public despised these "bandoliers," named for the belts that they wore over their

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[8] Ibid., 99.

[9] Historians' views of Law's "system" and its collapse varies. Charles Gayarré castigated the Scot as a "stock-jobber" who carried out a confidence scheme on a grand scale. See Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana: The French Domination* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 1866; reprint, 1998), 193-203. See also Mathé Allain*, Not Worth a Straw: French Colonial Policy and the Early Years of Louisiana (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1988)*, 67-68; Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier, 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 62. Kindleberger characterized the lasting imprint on French financial policy in the following manner: "French experience with John Law was such that there was hesitation in even pronouncing the word bank for 150 years—a classic case of collective financial memory….banking institutions were typically called *caisse*, *crédit*, *société*, or *comptoir*, and not bank." See Kindleberger, *A Financial History of Western Europe*, 100. For Law's ouster, see Le Roy Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime*, 294.

[10] …the concessionaires are, therefore, the gentlemen of this country. The greater part of them were people who would not leave France; but they equipped vessels and filled them with superintendents, stewards, storekeepers, clerks, and workmen of various trades, with provisions and all kinds of goods.", Paul du Poisson [Father Poisson] aux Akensas, October 3, 1727, *JR* 67: 281-82.

shoulders. Riots broke out as over-zealous constables hauled in not only the unemployed and undesirable, but ordinary folk going about their daily business for export to "le Mississippi." The disorder reached a fevered pitch as stories of bandoliers kidnapping children circulated throughout France. When a few of the émigrés who survived the colonial ordeal returned to the homeland, they brought with them tales of disease and starvation. Because of their stories, Louisiana quickly entered the French popular imagination as a place of sorrow and exile, typified by the Abbé Prevost's novel, *Manon Lescaut*.[11]

The experience of the newcomers to Dauphin Island, Louisiana's main staging port, in the years between 1718 and 1721, gave substance to the colony's miserable image. By the end of that time, the immigrant population had climbed to 7,020. Their numbers included 2,462 indentured laborers, many of whom had been impressed by the bandoliers, and 1,278 convicts.[12] Officials on either side of the ocean had made few arrangements for the horde of immigrants disgorged from the transports' holds. A lack of small boats prevented the colonists from traveling inland to their assignments at the concessions.[13] Lieutenant Jean-François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny recounted the

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[11] For France's emigration policies during this era, see Carl A. Brasseaux, "The Image of Louisiana and the Failure of Voluntary French Emigration 1683-1731," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 153-62; Glenn R. Conrad, "*Emigration Forcée*: A French Attempt to Populate Louisiana 1716-1720," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 125-135. For the recruitment of women, see Allain, *Not Worth a Straw*, 83-87. For the transport of convicts, see James D. Hardy, "The Transportation of Convicts to Colonial Louisiana," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995). For Prévost's novel, see Antoine François Prévost, *Histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (Paris: A. Perche, 1920 [1731]). For popular images of Louisiana, see Pierre H. Boulle, "Some Eighteenth-Century French Views on Louisiana," in *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley*, ed. John Francis McDermott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), 15-27.

[12] *Memoir de l'Etat Actuel ou est La Colonie de la Louisiane pour juger de ce que l'on peut En Espérer*, undated, 1721, AC C13 C1 fols. 319-331v. The census is on fols. 319-320v.

[13] Glenn R. Conrad, *Immigration and War: Louisiana 1718-1721: From Memoir of Charles Le Gac*, trans. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1970), 11.

disaster: "At last, the famine was so severe that a great number died, some from eating herbs they did not know, and which, instead of prolonging life, produced death, and others from eating oysters, which they went and gathered on the seashore. "[14]

Despite the chaos on the Gulf Coast, some previously established colonists hoped to capitalize on the influx of manpower. Marc-Antoine Hubert, Louisiana's *commissaire-ordinateur* (comptroller), was one of those who envisioned profits in the wilderness. He also sought to take advantage of the colony's dire straits when he offered to transport and provide provisions for the new settlers in return for government land grants. Hubert acquired a tract northeast of Fort Rosalie, about two miles from the Grand Village, where he constructed a mill on the banks of the *petite riviere du Natchez*, also known as St. Catherine's Creek. His enterprise soon employed nearly a hundred workers and slaves to tend his crops.

Other entrepreneurs soon joined the quest for wealth by investing in Louisiana. A Parisian banker named Jean Deucher and his partner, Swiss-born Jean-Daniel Kolly, saw the rich soil around Fort Rosalie as a potential source of riches. The two created the Associates of the Concession of St. Catherine and negotiated with the *Compagnie des Indes* to set up a plantation near the Natchez villages. Almost immediately, Deucher petitioned the parent corporation for the right to send 1,500 African slaves to the colony and to import livestock from St. Domingue to round out the corporation's holdings. The Directors responded favorably by dispatching ships to the coast of

[14] Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, "Historical Memoirs of Louisiana," in *Historical Collection of Louisiana Embracing Translations of Many Rare and Valuable Documents Relating to the History of that State*, ed. Benjamin Franklin French (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1851), 21.

Guinea to trade for slaves. In the meantime, the *Compagnie* set up its own plantation between Fort Rosalie and Kolly and Deucher's newly acquired farmstead.[15]

The two bankers sent Jean-Baptiste Fauçon, sieur Dumanoir, to oversee the development of the enterprise. Deucher and Kolly gave him authority over the plantation and its workers, and ordered him to keep accurate records of expenditures.[16] Through the winter of 1719-1720, Dumanoir scoured France's Atlantic ports for recruits. Among the emigrants, Dumanoir's clerks listed carpenters, masons, cooks, vintners, and bakers—but day laborers far outnumbered them all.[17] In August 1720, 198 of them departed Lorient bound for Natchez territory aboard the *Compagnie* ship, the *La Loire*. They landed in Biloxi that autumn only to languish at the port due to a lack of small craft to transport them up the Mississippi. During that time, disease winnowed their numbers. Eventually, they made it to their destination, but more than a year passed between their departure from France and their arrival at St. Catherine's Creek. Upon reaching Natchez country, Dumanoir bought Hubert's farm as a site for the new concession to save his depleted workforce the trouble of clearing land for crops (see Figure 3.2, page 145).[18]

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[15] *Extrait de l'acte de Société entre la Cie des Indes et les associés en la Concession de Ste. Catherine*, September 4, 1719, AC G1 Vol. 465 n.p. Deucher to the Directors, February 6, 1720, AC G1 Vol. 465, n.p.,; André Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Penicualt Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana*, trans. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 237-39. See also Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres*, Vol. I (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 173.

[16] *Procuration de Kolly et Deucher au Sieur Faucon Dumanoir*, December 29, 1719, AC G1, Vol. 465, n.p.

[17] *Etat des Passagers embarqués sur "La Loire" pour la Concession de Sainte-Catherine*, August 20, 1720, AC G1 Vol. 464, n.p.

[18] Dawson Phelps, "Narrative of the Hostilities Committed by the Natchez Against the Concession of St. Catherine's," *The Journal of Mississippi History* 7, no. 1 (1945): 3-10. See also Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 249-56.

This brought two groups of newcomers into close proximity during the closing days of 1721. The fertile soil of the plains east of Fort Rosalie beckoned to both groups. The Apple Villagers had moved in from the territory that they had occupied to the north. Dumanior and his charges came upriver after their sojourn on the Gulf Coast. Within a short time, they came to blows.

*The Villagers Clash*

The conflict known as the Second Natchez War demonstrated that some peculiar connections still persisted between the Théoloëls and Europeans living among them. Although the Apple Villagers shed the blood of several French and African residents of St. Catherine's Concession, they aimed most of their assaults at particular individuals or at the plantation's livestock. The Indians' selectivity suggests that they did not intend to destroy the French village. Instead, it appears as if they wanted to use these attacks to convince the Europeans to amend their behavior and act like civilized members of the Théoloël polity.[19]

The Natchez left no written accounts of their perspectives on the conflict. The French records, however, do give some idea of what the Théoloëls thought and why they chose certain methods. The People of the Sun who lived at the Apple Village acted according to intelligible patterns. Through a close reading of European documents, particularly those of the concessionaires, some components of the Indians' political and diplomatic practices also emerge, particularly the role of women as envoys and the willingness of the Suns of the Grand Village to support the French against the

[19] Frederic Gleach's argument that the Powhatan Indians' selective attacks to convince the English in Virginia to adhere to Native American social and political practices influenced my analayis of Natchez diplomatic and military practices. See Frederic Gleach, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 148-58, 184.

Apple People. The most important component of those practices involved geographic and political limits: to the Indians the war was a struggle between two villages. The Théoloël warriors acted in a manner that suggests that they still thought that the village was the elemental political unit among the French immigrants.

The documents penned by the *habitants* of the concession reveal a great deal of information about the authors, particularly about their concern for property. They chronicled the damage that the concessionaires suffered during the war. These included slaves killed or incapacitated, supplies consumed, ammunition expended, and man-hours lost during the sniping incidents. At the same time, the *rapporteurs* repeatedly blamed the aggressiveness of the Natchez and the soldiers stationed at Fort Rosalie for their troubles. Thus, the managers of the plantations directed attention away from themselves as they assumed the role of victims.

Within a few months of their appearance in Natchez territory, Dumanoir's colonists began to write about trouble with their neighbors. The first sign of problems came during the night of February 9, 1722. According to one account, a number of "savages of the environs of the concession gathered and came armed with the design to defeat the French of this concession."[20] The Théoloëls approached under the cover of darkness. Once in place, they fired several musket shots at a cabin inhabited by four farm workers. None of the hut's occupants were hurt, but the director of the plantation perceived the attack as a declaration of war against the French. The document mentioned a "savage chief who had desired to kill the French for a long time."

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[20] *Recit du premier attentat des Natchez contre la Concession de St. Catherine*, March 9, 1722, AC G1, Vol. 465 n.p. See also La Harpe, *Historical Journal*, 157. For Berneval's career, see *France's Forgotten Legion: Service Records of French Military and Administrative personnel Stationed in the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast Region*, 1699-1769 (CD-ROM), Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge.

Dumanoir wrote that several local Indians told him, "Old Hair led the party to avenge the death of his brother." When or where the headman's sibling died remains a mystery. He might have been one of those from the White Earth Village executed by Bienville at the conclusion of the First Natchez War. The concession's manager insisted that the matter merited a "decisive response."[21] The Superior Council complied by authorizing the officials at the fort and settlements to arrest the chief and bring him to justice. The orders went unheeded, and Old Hair of the Apple Village remained free. Fortunately for the *habitants*, the situation around the settlements calmed down during the spring and summer; Louisianan records barely mention St. Catherine's Concession during that time.

The wording of Dumanoir's complaints reveals an emerging pattern. The author singled out Old Hair, the Sun of the nearest Natchez town, as the instigator of the unrest. At first glance, the European's accusations against the leader of an anti-French conspiracy seem quite plausible. It was simply a case of an Indian and his followers seeking revenge for an earlier killing. Moreover, according to Dumanoir, the concessionaires furnished no provocation for the incident. None of the Europeans' communications suggest that the Apple Villagers may have had more immediate reasons for the attacks. Nonetheless, the Natchez's tactics hint at a focused strategy; they operated against the Europeans in a selective manner. In the next round of the conflict, the Apple Villagers carefully singled out their opposite numbers from among the French.

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[21] *Recit du premier attentat des Natchez contre la Concession de St. Catherine*, March 9, 1722, AC G1, Vol. 465 n.p.

In the late afternoon of October 21, 1722, Mr. Guenot, one of the directors of Saint Catherine's, rode from Fort Rosalie to the concession. A warrior, hidden in the canes alongside the path, put a bullet in the Frenchman's right shoulder. Guenot clung to his saddle and spurred his horse to the plantation to raise an alarm. The *habitants* spent the night on their guard against further attacks. The besieged Frenchmen kept a journal for the next two weeks in which they documented further Natchez raids.[22]

According to a petition written by Dumanior urging the Superior Council to attack the Natchez, the shooting of Monsieur Guenot was unprovoked. A different story came to light over the course of the next year. The minutes of the Superior Council for August 3, 1723 noted:

> We have however been pained to learn that this village [the Apple Village] was continuing to disturb the concession of St. Catherine against which they have seemed to be particularly angry since Sieur Guenot put an Honored Man in chains even before there was any quarrel between the French and the Indians.[23]

The target that the Natchez warriors chose also provides insight into their logic. The Apple People focused upon an honored man of their neighbors' village who had insulted one of their own. They directed their later attacks toward other specific individuals who challenged their order of things. Guenot, who later died of gangrene, played a part in his own demise by his impudent behavior toward an important member of the Apple Village. The Indians' choice to shoot the homestead's director

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[22] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez contre la Concession de St. Catherine*, November 4, 1722, AC G1 Vol. 465, n.p. The following individuals signed this report: Broutin, Cazeneuve, Le Page du Pratz, Papin, Hardy de Villeneuve, Lorenso, Bingant, Dufaur, de la Loere Flacour, Guenot, Jacque Blouvin, and Malo. See also the *Journal de Diron D'Artaguette*, October 26, 1722, AC B, Vol. 2 fol. 187; Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane contenant ce qui y est arrivé de plus mémorable depuis l'année 1687*, Vol. II (Paris: J. B. Bauche, 1753), 95-96; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 182.

[23] Minutes of the Superior Council of Louisiana, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 360; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 94.

demonstrated some recognition of similarity with the Europeans. Much like Old Hair, Guenot was a headman of the concession.

Another incident that occurred earlier the same day at Fort Rosalie underscored this Natchez selectivity. That morning, Sergeant Fontaine confronted an old Natchez warrior. The soldier demanded that the elderly man repay a loan. The Indian replied that he could not comply because his wife was too sick to help him process the corn that he owed the trooper. (The Jesuit chronicler, Father Charlevoix, wrote that an epidemic had struck the Natchez earlier in the year.)[24] Fontaine threatened the man, who then turned his back on the Frenchman and began to walk away. The sergeant called out the post guard, and one of the troopers shot the elder in the back and then bayoneted a younger man who came to his aid. Other Natchez arrived and carried off the pair. The old man died a few days later. The perpetrators suffered almost no consequences; the commandant let them go with only a reprimand.[25] The Théoloëls, however, never attacked the fort or individual soldiers even though they vastly outnumbered the garrison. All of the other Natchez-French confrontations took place in the disputed zone to the east of St. Catherine's plantation. Conversely, the Europeans accused only the Apple and Jenzenaque people for the violence despite Dumanoir's allegation that Fontaine's impatience had caused the war.[26]

Economics may have driven some of the concession's directors to emphasize Fontaine as the provocateur. The old Natchez warrior owed the sergeant corn as

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[24] Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France avec le Journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionnale*, Vol. II (Paris: Chez Nyon Fils, 1744), 420.
[25] Jean-Baptiste Bernard de La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*, trans. Joan Cain and Virginia Koenig, (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1971), 157; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 179-83.
[26] *Requête présentée par Faucon Dumanoir au Conseil Supérieur au sujet de la Concession de St. Catherine*, May 20, 1723, AC G1 465, n.p.

payment for an unspecified transaction. St. Catherine's farmers grew wheat, peas, and corn. Unregulated trade between Europeans and Indians interfered with the directors' commercial interests when they sold the same foodstuffs to the same customers—the garrison at the post. By blaming Fontaine and his violent behavior, the concessionaires obscured their intentions to eliminate individual Natchez farmers as commercial competitors. Edicts from the Superior Council fulfilled such desires when they forbade unauthorized trading with the Natchez since this caused "quarrels and disputes that have dangerous consequences." They also proscribed the *habitants* or soldiers from extending credit to the Indians.[27]

The day after Guenot's shooting, a detachment of *habitants* escorted the concession's cart to the fort to pick up ammunition and clothing. On the return journey, a warrior stopped them to warn of an ambush on the road ahead. The cart and its guard hurried back to the fort. In another incident the same morning, Natchez warriors fired upon six African slaves belonging to St. Catherine's. One of the slaves, an African named Bougou died, and his brother suffered a wound to the leg. The attackers made off with "five axes and six iron wedges." That night, the concessionaires heard several gunshots "in the area halfway to the fort." The Natchez had killed a settler named la Rochelle, a former concession employee. They cut off his head and took it with them, leaving his body behind.[28]

The geographic focus of the attacks provides further evidence for the Apple Villager's motives. A map drawn in 1723 by Ignace François Broutin, a co-signatory of

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[27] Ordinance of the Superior Council, June 21, 1723, AC, A, Vols. 23, fol. 41.
[28] Phelps, "Narrative of the Hostilities Committed by the Natchez," 6; *Requête présentée par Faucon Dumanoir au Conseil Supérieur au sujet de la Concession de St. Catherine*, May 20, 1723, AC G1 465, n.p. Dumont wrote that La Rochelle was a soldier who lived off base from the fort. See Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 95.

Dumanoir's account of November 1722, shows a mound under cultivation a few hundred yards to the south of the concession (see Figure 3.2, page 145). Patricia Wood suggested that the French inadvertently settled on an abandoned temple or gravesite, citing this as one possible reason that the Apple Villagers reacted so violently.[29]

Broutin's map also provides another clue, not only for what it depicted, but for what it left out. The Apple Village does not appear on his chart. Instead, he included homesteads "dependent on St. Catherine's" situated squarely in the disputed territory on the trail that ran from Fort Rosalie to the concession. It was here that La Rochelle had made his home. This helps to explain La Rochelle's murder by the Théoloëls on the first day of the war; he lived in the area both groups wanted to use for their growing communities. More information comes from a map drafted by J.B. Michel Le Bouteux. This chart showed the Apple Village in a location east of St. Catherine's (see Figure 3.3, page 145). Le Bouteux's placement of the Native American settlement suggests that the Indians built it after Broutin drew his chart. This meant that both the Apple Village and St. Catherine's Concession were towns on the rise. Both groups wanted to expand into the same place. To the Apple Village, set on expansion, La Rochelle and his fellow Europeans represented the first wave of interlopers in real estate destined to become the site of their new town.

The Théoloëls continued sniping at the concession's inhabitants throughout October 23. The records note that the Indians used the *Motte de Madame*, a flat-topped hill to the east of St. Catherine's Creek, as their vantage point.[30] Once again, they chose African slaves as their target, shooting at them as they worked in the garden inside the

[29] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 78.
[30] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722, AC G1 Vol. 465, n.p.

farmstead. The Apple Villagers also attacked the concession's livestock as the animals grazed in the scrubland between the farm and the Mississippi River. Warriors on top of the *motte* taunted the French, demanding bread since "they already had enough meat" from slaughtered cattle and pigs.

The fate of the livestock also reflected the competition for planting grounds in Natchez country.[31] This scrubland provided the Indians with space for their garden plots and game parks. Eleven cattle, two horses, and six pigs belonging to St. Catherine's died during the conflict.[32] These animals often grazed in Théoloël cornfields and competed with the deer living nearby. Consequently, the livestock literally became fair game.[33] Yet, the selectivity exhibited by the warriors when they chose which cows, horses, and pigs to kill reveals the village-to-village aspect of the conflict—the records mention no attacks on livestock owned by any other French settlement in the region. The Indians killed only animals belonging to the offending concession. In other words, they took vengeance upon particular horses, pigs, and cattle—only those that threatened the Apple Village's gardens and cornfields.

The Natchez's theft of axes and hatchets from the site where the African slave died demonstrates some recognition of similarity between themselves and the Europeans. Axes, as noted by Karl Lorenz, denoted political authority in Natchez material culture.

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[31] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 128-30; Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 72, 78-79; James Hart Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 174-75. Daniel Usner deals directly with the transformation of the environment and economic relations in the Lower Mississippi Valley and attributes the Second and Third Natchez Wars to disputes over livestock grazing. See Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 181-89.

[32] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez,* November 4, 1722.

[33] For problems with unfenced Indian planting grounds see Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 16-40.

One of these implements along with several calumets was unearthed at the Rice Site, a place that Lorenz connected with the rebellious Jenzenaques. If their allies had axes and used them as symbols of political power, it is reasonable to assume that the Apple Villagers were confiscating items they associated with the concessionaires' authority. Perhaps they were trying to obtain their own accoutrements of authority that would allow them a greater degree of autonomy within the Natchez polity.[34]

The raids on livestock also indicated that the Natchez were slowly beginning to abandon the idea that every aspect of French colonial society mirrored their own. Four-footed animals, unlike chickens, had not yet become part of Théoloël husbandry. The concessionaires did not mention the theft of poultry in their detailed inventory of losses.[35] Chickens would have been easy to absorb into the Apple Village economy and would have been difficult to identify as stolen property by Frenchmen intent on recovering them. Why, then, did the Natchez fail to target these small birds in their raids? It is possible that they took action against horses, cattle, and pigs because they were unique to the French world and alien to their own. In this manner, the Natchez struck at the markers of difference between themselves and the Europeans.[36]

Animals were not the only objects held by the French that were foreign to the Natchez way of life. African slaves, although "owned" by European "headmen" who held ranks analogous to their own Suns, belonged to a social category unlike those found among the Indians. Théoloël Suns commanded the uncompensated labor of others, but the Europeans recorded this system as a voluntary arrangement. The Suns

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[34] Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," 163-171.
[35] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722.
[36] The Wampanoags employed similar tactics against the English in Massachusetts. See Lepore, *The Name of War*, 96.

also absorbed rather than enslaved indigenous non-Natchez groups. Africans remained a permanently marginalized people in French Louisiana, and seldom gained their freedom or social equality. None of the seven Native American slaves at St. Catherine's suffered harm during the war.[37] In contrast, the Natchez killed one African man, severely wounded his kinsman, and shot at others as they worked in the fields. In this manner, the Théoloëls struck against the cultural and economic institution of chattel slavery, one that they did not share with the Europeans.[38]

Despite the ongoing thefts and violence, hostilities were limited to two villages: the Concession of St. Catherine and the Apple Town. This permitted some of the old relationships among the Europeans and Natchez to remain intact. The French were able to use people from Théoloël communities to collect information and act as go-betweens. These relationships aided Lieutenant Bernaval, the commandant of Fort Rosalie, who was unsure of events beyond the sight of the post. He sent the war chief of the Flour Village along with another warrior to determine the status of the concession. Dumanoir sent the Indians back to Bernaval with a note requesting help from the garrison.

During the night, the concessionaires of St. Catherine's heard more gunshots coming from the direction of the pastures.[39] The morning light revealed four livestock carcasses left by raiders from the Apple Village. During the remainder of October 24,

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[37] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War*, 96.

[38] The enumeration of slaves at the plantation can be found in the Census of St. Catherine's Concession, June 19, 1723, AC, G, Vol. 1, 464. One historian observed that attacks on slaves showed that "…Indians were cognizant of the variations in skin color, labor, and caste that structured colonial society and could single out slaves, the most valuable and vulnerable of assets." See Hal Langfur, "Moved by Terror: Frontier Violence as Cultural Exchange in Late-Colonial Brazil," *Ethnohistory* 52, no. 2 (2005): 266. Langfur's work focuses on Brazil, but there are parallels between the strategies of the Botocuodos of Minas Gerais and the Natchez of the Mississippi Valley. Both native groups found themselves under increasing pressure from European slave-holding colonial projects that threatened to transform the ecosystem by means of Western agricultural practices, deforestation, and over-hunting.

[39] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722, AC G1 Vol. 465, n.p. *Journal de Diron D'Artaguette*, October 28, 1722, AC C B Vol. 2. fol. 187.

two Frenchmen from St. Catherine's lost their lives to the snipers. At sunset, several more shots rang out in the distance. The concessionaires managed to fire a few rounds at fleeting targets in the fading light.

The following day, Guenot traveled to the Apple Village to treat with Old Hair. In the meantime, a relief force of sixteen armed *habitants* arrived under the command of Antoine Le Page du Pratz.[40] The colonists also learned from a native informant that five of the Apple Village warriors had been wounded by French musketry during the course of the previous days' fighting. The same informant warned them to take caution when approaching the concession because the Apple Villagers had set up an ambush in the pastures. To reassure his listeners, the pro-French Indian pledged his own town's loyalty. His warnings proved to be true; the sound of musketry once again broke the silence of the night as the conflict continued.[41]

Despite the sniping, the pro-French faction among the Natchez was already at work formulating a peaceful solution. Apparently, the other Théoloël communities desired an end to the Apple Village's war against the St. Catherine's Concession. On October 29, 1722, a delegation from several Natchez towns brought word to the plantation that the Sun of the Apple Village wished to make peace. The diplomats who carried the news included the Sun of the Flour Village, the "female chief," and the wife of the Tattooed Serpent. One of the delegates from the Apple Village offered to smoke the calumet with Le Page du Pratz. The Dutchman refused the pipe, telling the Indian that he lacked the authority to negotiate. Le Page du Pratz told the villager to present the pipe to the commandant at Fort Rosalie, the leader of the French. Unbeknownst to the

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[40] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722, AC G1 Vol. 465, n.p. Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 183.
[41] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722, AC G1 Vol. 465, n.p.

concessionaire, the Tattooed Serpent had already sung the calumet with Lieutenant Bernaval. Within a few days, the Tattooed Serpent and his entourage came to St. Catherine's to sing the calumet. The Sun of the Grigras also accompanied the group and offered his people's assurances to the officials at the concession. These rituals concluded the war on the evening of November 4, 1722.[42]

The composition of the Natchez peace delegation also revealed continuity in their diplomatic practices. Longrais mentioned women playing a role in the autumn negotiations.[43] The reference to these women's participation in his account raises a number of questions. First, the author failed to give details on the services rendered by these women. Were they active negotiators? Did they formulate policy or were they substitutes for their husbands, acting as couriers rather than diplomats? Second, the term "*femme chef*" is imprecise. Was she the wife of the Great Sun? Was she the spouse of a leader from a subordinate village? Was she the Tattooed Arm? The records are silent. If the White Woman did take part in the peace negotiations, her presence in the delegation discredits Father Charlevoix's statement that the Great Sun's wife "ordinarily…does not meddle with the government…"[44]

Subsequent accounts provide some clues for the roles played by female diplomats after the Third Natchez War. Two and a half years later, the wife of the Tattooed Serpent made several speeches during her husband's funeral directed toward the French.

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[42] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722; *Requête présentée par Faucon Dumanoir*, May 20, 1723, *Journal de Diron D'Artaguette*, October 26, 1722; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 184-85. See also La Harpe, *Historical Journal*, 157.
[43] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722.
[44] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. II, 420. The Jesuit spent only a few days around Christmas 1721. Perhaps he did not see enough during his short stay to make an accurate assessment of Natchez politics. There is other evidence in archaeological data that women shared power with men in other Mississippian chiefdoms. See Charles R. Cobb, "Mississippian Chiefdoms: How Complex?" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 82 (2003): 63-84.

Other Natchez women brought the colonists news of policy changes. For instance, Le Page du Pratz wrote about the female Great Sun's attempt to convince him to marry her daughter. She and her brothers wanted to arrange the union in order to bring about a reform of the Natchez's funerary practices.[45] The Dutchman also recorded the Tattooed Arm's attempts in 1729 to upset the Théoloël elders' plans to attack the French. Dumont de Montigny noted the part played by the White Woman in the last Natchez War.

The part played by the Great Sun's brother is clearer. As in the previous conflict, the Tattooed Serpent took an important role in assuaging the French when the violence threatened to get out of control. During the war, Old Hair directed his efforts against his opposite number, Guenot, and his hometown's chief rival, the Concession of St. Catherine. To end the war, the Tattooed Serpent first sought out the nearest "Sun"—Lieutenant Berneval—at the most prestigious local French settlement, Fort Rosalie, before he sent delegates to the directors of the concession. He dispatched the Sun of the Flour Village and his wife to St. Catherine's while he treated with the French "Sun" at the fort. Le Page du Pratz reinforced this protocol when, on October 29, he told the peace delegation that had come to the plantation to bring their calumet to the "commander-in-chief," meaning Berneval.

The Tattooed Serpent must have recognized the seriousness of open war with the Louisianans. Immediately after he made peace at Fort Rosalie, he departed for New Orleans to treat with his French counterpart, the war-leader Bienville.[46] The Natchez

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[45] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 398-403.
[46] Minutes of the Superior Council of Louisiana, August 3, 1723, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 75-76, 359; Bienville to the Minister of Marine, *Present pour les Sauvages de la Nation des Natchez*, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fols.

leader's mission followed on the heels of a previous embassy sent by the Great Sun a few days earlier. The Tattooed Sun's delegation sang the calumet with Bienville at the provincial capital on November 6, 1722. The Natchez agreed to make reparations for the damages to St. Catherine's Concession with regular payments of chickens. To cement the deal, the Canadian gave the Théoloëls 800 *livres* worth of gifts in return for their pledge to refrain from hostilities. Bienville also dispatched Barbazant de Pailloux, one of the negotiators during the First Natchez War, along with sixty recruits to reinforce the garrison at Fort Rosalie.[47]

The willingness of several Indian leaders to resolve the crisis with the French also reveals some of the factionalism that persisted within the Natchez polity. Obviously, the Suns of the Grand Villages did not support Old Hair's continued harassment of the French. The Tattooed Serpent secured the assistance of the Flour Village, and possibly the Tioux, to secure Old Hair's compliance.[48] The goods sent by Bienville would allow the Suns to reward those who supported them in their machinations against the refractory villages.

Although the war between the villages of the Apple People and St. Catherine's Concession strained the bonds between the Natchez and French, it did not break them. The two men who negotiated the end of the First Natchez War, the Tattooed Serpent and Bienville, had once more resolved the conflict with a minimum of bloodshed. Moreover, the Canadian subsidized the established order when he sent the Tattooed

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200, 300-301; Le Blond de la Tour to the Minister, February 22, 1723, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fols. 207- 209v. See also Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 75.

[47] *De la Tour a les Commissioners des le Compagnie des Indes*, June 16, 1723, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fols. 206-207v.

[48] Woods suggested that relatives of Old Hair died at the hands of the French during the 1716 war. See Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 74, 76.

Serpent home with substantial gifts. The Suns of the Grand Village could continue to offer tools and weapons to those who paid deference to them. Bienville's decision to send Pailloux to Fort Rosalie repeated a posting that had proved successful six and half years earlier. The old order, however, soon proved insufficient to deal with the tensions generated by the new residents to the west of St. Catherine's Creek.

### *The Third Natchez War*

The peace worked out in November 1722 did not last long. In less than a month, warriors from the Apple Village joined with men from the Jenzenaques in a series of attacks on the livestock owned by St. Catherine's Concession. The anti-French faction once again followed an intelligible pattern; hoping to force the colonists from the disputed lands, the Indians made sure that their victims knew their attackers' identities. Although no Europeans died in these incidents, the concessionaires and soldiers correctly perceived them as warnings.[49] This time, the conflict spread beyond the two villages to involve the entire Natchez and Louisianan polities. The latest round of disturbances continued through the spring and summer of 1723, culminating in a massive armed response led by Bienville against the Apple Village and its supporters. This time the governor destroyed the offending towns, leaving the old Mississippian discourse of redistribution, deference, and mutual defense in shambles. Consequently, the Third Natchez War came very close to being a civil war among the People of the Sun as well as a struggle between cultures. After the hostilities, the Tattooed Serpent, who had worked for peaceful coexistence, expressed doubt that the two peoples could

[49] *Journal de Diron D'Artaguette*, October 31, 1722; Extracts of letters from Longrais to Dumanoir, presented to the Council, May 11, 1723, AC G1, Vol. 465, n.p.

live in the same land. The newest immigrants to Natchez country had shown him that they would never assimilate into the Théoloël order of things.

The fragile peace worked out in November 1722 began to fray. Dumanoir reported more than a dozen thefts and attacks during the winter and spring of 1722-23. The plantation manager complained that Apple warriors had stolen a horse from St. Catherine's and led it to their new village. This time, the culprits demonstrated a brazenness that disturbed the concession's directors; the thieves did not attempt to conceal the location of the animal. They injured the beast so badly that it could no longer work. In a more ominous gesture, they displayed the head of the murdered settler, La Rochelle, in their temple. In other instances, some Indians mutilated the concession's livestock while they grazed within sight of the settlement's cabins. They left distinctive wounds, such as scarring the animals' cheeks and cutting off their tails, to identify themselves as the assailants.[50]

Worse, personal connections between the French leadership and their Natchez counterparts failed to remedy the situation. Neither the Tattooed Serpent nor Pailloux were able to put a stop to the raids. For example, on December 16, 1722, the Apple Villagers chanted the calumet with Pailloux only to continue their depredations a few months later.[51] The concessionaires found the Tattooed Serpent's influence equally limited. The Natchez leader's numerous visits to the combatants' towns failed to stem the attacks although he often managed to recover the stolen livestock. Dumanoir argued that only an aggressively prosecuted war would settle the issue. The concession manager recounted all of the attacks, the murder of La Rochelle, the provocations of

[50] Extracts of letters from Longrais… May 11, 1723, AC G, Vol 465, n.p.
[51] Longrais's Relation of the War, June 15, 1723, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fols. 303v-304. See also Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 98-99.

Sergeant Fontaine, and, finally, the tepid response of Bienville. He also wrote about an incident in which an African slave witnessed Apple Village warriors killing a steer on April 3. On another occasion, the Indians stole a horse. Once again, the Tattooed Serpent quickly arranged the animal's return, but the Indian leader could not negotiate an end to the thefts. On May 1, herdsmen found another mount with a deep wound on its cheek. A few days later, the French found a mare with similar wounds.[52] On May 9, the Apple Villagers absconded with another horse, which they crippled.

Dumanoir's third petition highlighted some of the tensions within Louisiana's hierarchy. Once more, he wrote about Pailloux and Berneval's powerlessness in the face of the Native Americans' aggression. The Apple Villagers' behavior demanded a dramatic and violent response, he argued. Aside from declaring war against the Apple Village, Dumanoir suggested that a relaxation of certain statutes would permit an influx of non-French immigrants who had previously demonstrated their bravery.[53] His proposal to allow more "foreigners" into the colony sprang from his obvious dissatisfaction with Bienville's clique. Le Page du Pratz's leadership during the autumn of 1722 supported Dumanior's reference to the immigrants' courage. Finally, the details contained in his report, as well as its length, made the dispatch conspicuous and therefore more likely to receive attention from officials at the Ministry of Marine and the *Compagnie des Indes*. The concessionaire may have been trying to garner assistance directly from Europe, bypassing the less tractable colonial government in New Orleans.[54]

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[52] Dumanoir to the Council, May 20, 1723, AC, G, Vol. 1, 464, n.p.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Dumanoir to the Council, May 11, 1723, AC, G, Vol. 1, 464, n.p.

Dumanoir's petition, however, provoked only a tepid response from the authorities in New Orleans. The Council continued to deliberate while the Apple Villagers' gestures grew more brazen. On June 15, 1723, the Indians stole three more horses. Monsieur Longrais, a concession director, sent some workers to look for the beasts in the new Apple Village. The workers caught up with the animals as the Indians were riding them toward a French lumber camp in the cypress forests. Two warriors rode on the back of each horse "shouting out fierce cries and screaming" at the French and Africans who watched the spectacle.[55]

Over the course of the summer, several ominous stories drifted into St. Catherine's Concession. Most of them emanated from pro-French Grand and Flour Villages. One of the informants reported that a Natchez spokesman had passed around the war calumet at meetings attended by the leader of the Yazoos, a nation that would later join the Théoloëls in a general war against Louisiana. These meetings took place at the Grand Village in the presence of the Great Sun and at the Apple Village with the participation of Old Hair. Some of the speakers referred to the French as "dogs" and called for their extermination. At one point during the conferences, Old Hair gathered eighty warriors and threatened to march immediately against the French. Although the Indians did not attack, when the Sun of the Flour Village brought news of these events to St. Catherine's, such stirrings among the Native Americans terrified the Europeans.[56]

Faced with this upsurge of attacks on horses and thefts of pigs and cattle, the settlers began to panic. The concessionaires stood little chance of defending themselves against a determined assault by Old Hair's faction since most of the Frenchmen living

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[55] Longrais's Relation of the War, June 15, 1723, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fol. 302v.
[56] Longrais's Relation of the War, June 15, 1723, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fols. 303v-304. See also Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 98-99.

there lacked firearms. Although an all-out attack never materialized, sniping incidents continued throughout the summer. The Sun of the Flour Village, the Tattooed Serpent, and the Great Sun sounded several more alarms during the hot months. All of them proved to be groundless. The repeated warnings only served to increase the nervousness of the plantation's inhabitants.[57] The concession's tobacco went untended at the height of the growing season because it had become too dangerous to send slaves and indentured servants into the fields. Without relief, the plantation stood little chance of harvesting the crop. Unfortunately for the concessionaires, the Superior Council still refused to act with force. It limited its response to issuing proclamations, one of which "forbids all Frenchmen to go to trade at the village of the Natchez under any pretext whatsoever without the permission of the commandant of the place, under penalty for disobedience and of imprisonment and of a greater penalty in case of repetition of the offense."[58] The next day, the Council proscribed the sale of muskets equipped with bayonets under pain of corporal punishment.[59] These latest ordinances underscored the problems wrought by unregulated trade between the two peoples, but the restrictions proved to be tardy and insufficient remedies.

At the height of these tensions, another series of events threatened to deprive the *habitants* of the assistance of the Tattooed Serpent and the pro-French faction. In late August 1723, the Natchez sent 160 men against the Tunicas to avenge the killing of some of their kinsmen. A few days later, two Choctaw warriors arrived at St.

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[57] Longrais's Relation of the War, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fols. 304-304v. The Council's decree reflects a preoccupation with the Fontaine incident of November 1722. The proclamation also hints at an economic motivation. The Bienville clique controlled the Council and wanted to curtail commercial competition in the Natchez region.

[58] Decrees of the Superior Council, June 21, 1723, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, p. 292; *Arrêt du Conseil Superieur*, C A23, Vol 23, fol. 41.

[59] Decrees of the Superior Council, June 22, 1723, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, p. 292.

Catherine's on a reconnaissance mission. Several of the concession managers met with the Choctaws and provided them with food. According to the envoys, rumors had reached their villages that the Natchez had "destroyed all of the French."[60] Théoloël warriors observed the visitors from their vantage point on the Motte de Madame and sent word of it to the Tattooed Serpent. The message to the Grand Village contained an important error: the Indian observers mistook the travelers from the east to be Tunicas. Fortunately for the concessionaires, the Tattooed Serpent traveled to the plantation to ascertain whether the visitors were enemies. A small delegation from the concession confirmed the identity and nature of the Choctaws' mission. That information satisfied the Natchez headman and may have prevented more serious problems for St. Catherine's. While events at the Motte de Madame and among the Tunicas diverted the Natchez attention, another set of actors prepared for a more forceful intervention.[61]

At the same time that the Apple Villagers raided the plantation, Bienville quietly gathered troops at New Orleans. To support his efforts, the Superior Council decreed that warriors who aided the French in the coming expedition against the Natchez would receive the same compensation for slaves and scalps paid to those who fought against the Chickasaws, another nation at war with the colony.[62] Bienville slipped out of the provincial capital on September 29 with fifty-two soldiers and seventeen Canadians. Another two hundred allied warriors from the *petites nations* who lived along the Gulf Coast also began to march toward Fort Rosalie.[63] On his journey up the Mississippi, the governor stopped at various Native towns to recruit more volunteers for his impending

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[60] Longrais's Relation of the War, fol. 309.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Deliberations of the Superior Council, September 18, 1723, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fols. 143-43v.
[63] *Punition des Natchés en 1723*, BN Mss fr. n.a. 2550, fol. 3.

campaign. Bienville arrived unannounced at the docks below Fort Rosalie on October 23.[64] Over the next two weeks, men from the Houmas, Tunicas, Choctaws, and other nations arrived to offer their services.

As the Franco-Indian army assembled, the Tattooed Serpent and the Great Sun made several trips to Bienville's camp. They succeeded in diverting the French toward the Théoloël faction that contested their authority, repeating a pattern established during the First Natchez War of 1716.[65] The Tattooed Serpent argued that the culprits behind the attacks on St. Catherine's came from the Jenzenaque, Grigras, and Apple Villages. He and the Suns who accompanied him promised Bienville that they would bring the heads of Old Hair and the "other Little Sun of the Apple Village."[66] The governor agreed with their plans and said that he would spare the main towns.

For the next several days, the Suns of the Grand Village made good on their pledges. On November 7, the Great Sun brought the head of a rebel warrior to Bienville's camp. That evening, the Tattooed Serpent presented the Canadian leader with the head of La Rochelle's murderer. Two days later, he presented the French with "the head of the great mutineer of the Apple [Village]." He also promised guides to help the Louisianans find their enemy's hiding places. Over the course of a week, the Suns showed further proof that they had eliminated three more leaders of what they called a "mutiny." In the meantime, French-allied Native Americans captured several dozen inhabitants from the offending towns.[67]

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[64] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 198-99; Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 76. See also Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 102. For the date of Bienville's arrival see *Punition des Natchés en 1723*, fol. 3.
[65] Longrais's Relation of the War, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fol. 310v.
[66] *Punition des Natchés en 1723*, fols. 3-4.
[67] Ibid. fol. 311 and *Punition des Natchés en 1723*, fols. 6-7.

While the Suns of the Grand Village destroyed their rivals, Bienville bided his time until more reinforcements arrived. Additional warriors from the Yazoos, Quapaws, Chacichumas, Acolapissas, Taposas, Natchitoches, and Tunicas gathered under the *fleur de lys* that fluttered above Fort Rosalie.[68] France's conflict with the Apple Village gave the Tunicas an opportunity to avenge the previous summer's war with the Natchez.[69] A band of Choctaws under Red Shoe also arrived to lend their assistance to the impending offensive.[70]

The French and their Native American allies then followed up with a series of attacks during the second and third weeks of November that destroyed the Apple, Grigras, and the Jenzenaque towns. In the first operation, Bienville split his forces in an attempt to surround Old Hair's camp. The strategy failed when women working in the field detected the approach of the main force. The workers ran to a small mud-walled hut from which three Natchez men fired through loopholes at the soldiers. A *habitant* named Mesplet stormed the cabin in hopes of seizing one of the women to take as a slave only to be shot dead as he pulled the cane door off its hinges. Despite the loss, the French quickly took the outpost. They advanced into the main part of the town to find it deserted; the inhabitant*s* had escaped into the forests and swamps.[71]

Red Shoe and his Choctaw warriors captured four women at the Apple Village before they could flee. The prisoners revealed that the Jenzanaque village contained fifty warriors who swore to defend the place to the death. The Franco-Indian army marched to that town with the Tunica contingent in the vanguard. They encountered a

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[68] Minutes of the Council of War assembled on the order of M. de Bienville. See January 7, 1724, AC. C13A, Vol. 7, fol. 173v.
[69] Longrais's Relation of the War, fol. 309.
[70] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 108-109.
[71] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 102-106.

strongly built house on top of a mound. With drums beating, the French formed a battalion square and advanced toward the height with the Tunicas in front as skirmishers. The leader of the Tunicas reached the summit before the rest of the force and found the hut deserted. As he circled the cabin, the chief caught sight of a man "the enemy called the Little Sun."[72] Both warriors took aim at each other and fired simultaneously. The Little Sun died on the spot, but his bullet smashed into the Tunica's musket and ricocheted into his jaw. A search of the village revealed an arms cache but none of its inhabitants. The townspeople had taken flight into the woods nearby. The soldiers destroyed the food stores that they found and torched the huts. The troops and their allies then retired to Fort Rosalie and St. Catherine's Concession carrying the wounded Tunica chief with them.[73]

At this point Bienville "thought, however, to end to this war but not without costing the savages more than poultry as he when he came here the first time, but with blood worth being spilled."[74] In a conference with the Great Sun and the Tattooed Serpent, Le Moyne dictated the terms of peace: the head of Old Hair and that of a free African who played a leading role in fomenting the attacks on the French. The Tattooed Serpent agreed to these conditions and returned with the heads of the two offenders a few days later.[75] The Great Sun's faction was quick to take advantage of French support to eliminate its rivals—Old Hair of the Apple Village, the Little Sun, and the unnamed African warrior among them. Thus, the Third Natchez War of 1723 put an end to a divisive element from another outlying town. The conflict also served to quell those

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[72] See *Punition des Natchés en 1723*, fol. 3 and Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 110-12.
[73] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 110.
[74] Ibid., 111-12.
[75] Ibid., 112-13.

who may have thought that the presence of the Franco-Indian army in the midst of Théoloël territory subverted the sanctity of the ruling class. To a native observer living in one of the outer towns, the execution of the "mutineers" and the destruction of non-compliant settlements by Bienville's troops showed that the European immigrants still worked for the Grand Village's Suns.

Not all of the French activities suited the Natchez hierarchy. The anonymous author of the *Punition des Natchés en 1723* provided a detailed list of the grievances presented by the Théoloël leadership. One of the most serious complaints in the document stated "that some Frenchmen were imprudent enough to make at the time insults against them despite the prohibitions that they [the French leadership] had made."[76] Bienville promised that if the Natchez brought these offenses to the attention of the commandant of the fort, justice would be done. The governor's promise demonstrated his recognition of the Suns' status. It also demonstrated that he understood that the Natchez tradition of deference to the ruling family might help to quell the tensions that plagued the region. Bienville therefore pinned his hopes on the Mississippian chiefdoms' foundations of political power that had proved effective in the past.

In return, the governor demanded another promise from the Natchez: they must agree to compensate the plantation of St. Catherine's with payments of bear's oil, grain, poultry, beans, and game.[77] The Théoloëls concurred with this condition since it did not stray too far from conventional patterns of food redistribution, a concession with which

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[76] *Punition des Natchés en 1723*, fol. 8.

[77] Both Native Americans and Europeans used bear's oil as a substitute for butter and cooking fat. It was an important trade commodity in the Mississippi Valley throughout the French colonial period. For the preparation of bear oil, see Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 89. For its role in commerce, see Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy*, 36, 100.

the Indians could live with. At the close of the meeting, the assembled Suns raised their hands above their heads to show their approval. Bienville, "following their custom asked permission to depart after the Great Sun and his brother, the Tattooed Serpent."[78]

As in the Second Natchez War, the discourse that ended the third conflict demonstrated some continuity in the practices that underwrote the relationship between the French and the Théoloëls. The personal bond between the Tattooed Serpent and Bienville still worked to secure peace. Both men possessed sufficient prestige to speak for their people. The speech and performances executed by the two diplomatic virtuosos created an accord beyond the reach of lesser men like Guenot, Old Hair, Dumanoir, or the Little Sun. Bienville and the Tattooed Serpents' parallel status as war leaders lent further weight to the outcome. At the same time, their association exemplified the old style of interaction with its face-to-face negotiations between men of equivalent status.

The agreement between the Tattooed Serpent and Bienville, however, masked the deepening fissures within the Natchez-French relationship. The developments that led to the hostilities had significantly altered other modes of interaction between the Europeans and the Théoloëls. The location of the conflicts constituted the most obvious difference between the First and the Second and Third Natchez Wars. The last two struggles took place in the towns and planting grounds of the combatants rather than on a neutral island in the Mississippi. This change of venue incited a desperation that contributed to the higher number of casualties and greater material costs of the wars.

The shift in the location of the last two conflicts signified another difference: the nature of the terrain on which the two peoples met had changed. A sprawl of poorly

[78] *Punition des Natchés en 1723*, fol. 8.

regulated European communities had grown up around Fort Rosalie. These settlements were interspersed among Native American villages. This allowed the two groups to interact without the supervision of high status individuals who could mediate disputes. Moreover, the concept of personal property among the newcomers was radically different from that of the Théoloëls. The French believed that they held their newly acquired acreage in fee simple, in contravention to the indigenous practice of usufruct and communal tenure.[79]

Nor were these problems limited to the strangers from overseas. The same land that had attracted Dumanoir and his charges attracted expansionists from the outer Natchez towns. The Apple Villagers sought to colonize the region west of St. Catherine's Concession. These Native American *arrivistes* resisted the authority of the Suns of the Grand Village. In this case, the Indians were also impudent "immigrants" who did not behave with sufficient respect toward the dominant Natchez town. Unauthorized trade between Natchez and French villagers furthered weakened the Indians' ties to the central town.

The economics of the region changed in other ways. The refractory Natchez's unmediated access to European goods disrupted the old order. The hierarchy of the Grand Village wished to control mercantile traffic with Europeans to maintain political hegemony within the nation. The Apple Village stood athwart the trade route to the Choctaws to the east and the Chickasaws to the northeast. Elite males from this border town had the opportunity to acquire manufactured items that they could use to

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[79] Dumont de Montigny introduced his account of the Second and Third Natchez War with a description of unauthorized land purchases made by Europeans from the Indians and from each other. This resulted in unclear title to a good deal of the land around the settlements. "Things were in this state when inconsistency and malignity of the Barbarians gave rise to the events that followed…" Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 94.

undermine the Suns' faction. Consequently, Old Hair's access to English merchants among the Chickasaws threatened the commercial foundation of the Great Sun and his family's authority. In this light, we can see that Bienville's gift to the Tattooed Serpent of 800 *livres* worth of goods in November 1722 was an attempt to subsidize the Suns' prestige. It allowed the Grand Village to reward clients who supported a pro-French policy.

Nonetheless, the Indian leaders' prestige only went so far. The bonds between the colonists around Fort Rosalie and the Théoloëls had often failed under the strain. As the Suns' complaints about "insults" from the settlers and soldiers demonstrated, the Louisianans held little regard for Natchez leaders. Their impertinent appropriation of Indian land, Guenot's imprisonment of a Théoloël honored man, and Fontaine's shooting of a Natchez elder showed that the newcomers would not take up the role of subordinate villagers in the Natchez polity. Regardless of the Tattooed Arm and Bienville's treaty, the implementation of the terms of the peace would be difficult to enforce among such unruly immigrants.

After the Third Natchez War, even the most accommodating Théoloël leader, the Tattooed Serpent, could no longer pretend that the French were like his own people. During a dialogue between Le Page du Pratz and the Tattooed Serpent, the Dutchman invoked cultural parallels between the two peoples to explain Bienville and his subordinates' actions during the war. This came at a point of the conversation when the Tattooed Serpent expressed surprise that Le Page du Pratz had led French militia against his friends among the Natchez. Le Page du Pratz responded, "You wound me…Mr. Bienville was our war chief, we must obey him, as you must [obey] all of the

Suns you have, you are obliged to kill or facilitate the killing of those that your brother the Great Sun orders to be killed."[80]

The Tattooed Serpent stated his opposition to the war, and reminded his listener that he had sung the calumet of peace with the French the year before. He asked Le Page du Pratz,

> Is it that the French have two hearts, a good one today and tomorrow a bad one? 'Why,' he continued with chagrin, 'why do the French come into our land? They no longer come merely to look, they have asked for our land because their land was too small, because of all of the people who were there. We have said to them that they can take the land where they would like, there is enough for them and for us, that the same sun shines on us and that we walk the same road, that we shared our food, that we helped them build their homes and clear their fields, is it not true?[81]

The Tattooed Serpent's diatribe alluded to the old model of aggregation that worked for the Natchez polity in the past. He also invoked the symbology of solar worship, implying that a universal moral code held for newcomers and natives alike. The Europeans, like the Indian groups who migrated to the region, sought land from the Suns. Unlike the earlier migrant groups, the Europeans did not respect the authority of the Suns, nor would they wait for the Tattooed Serpent and his colleagues to fulfill their promises to track down and eliminate the anti-French leaders in the Apple Village. Instead, Bienville destroyed that town and two others that had harbored Old Hair and his supporters.

Moreover, the Tattooed Serpent rejected any economic motivation for allowing the French to settle among them:

> What need have we for the French? We presented them with the best of our seasons, since we deprived ourselves of a part of our corn, of our game, of the fish we caught on their behalf. What need have we of them? Is it for their

[80] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 203.
[81] Ibid., 202-04.

> muskets? Our bows and arrows were sufficient to provide us with food. Was it for their white, blue, and red blankets? We passed the coldest nights with the skins of buffalos; our women made cloaks of feathers for winter and bark cloth for summer, they were not so beautiful, but our women were more industrious and less prideful. Finally before these things arrived with the French, we lived as men who knew how to be content with what we had; instead, today we walk as slaves who do not have what they want.[82]

The Tattooed Serpent's dialogue marked a further decline in the accommodations worked out by the Natchez and their European neighbors. France's foremost advocate among the Théoloëls had lost hope in a mutually beneficial coexistence. This decline continued over the next few years as the Suns' grip on the reigns of power slackened. The death of the Tattooed Serpent in 1725 and the passing of his brother, the Great Sun, in 1728, left a political vacuum.[83] The Sun of the Flour Village was the only practiced male diplomat remaining. The Great Sun's nephew, the offspring of the Tattooed Arm and the Jesuit missionary St. Cosme, became the paramount chief.[84] The new leader was young and lacked experience.

A diminution in the quality of leadership soon affected the French as well. Bienville's departure to France in late 1725 left a void in the top ranks of the colony's government.[85] On August 8, 1726, the *Compagnie des Indes* appointed Étienne Périer governor of Louisiana. Périer came from a family of naval officers, but he had no experience in colonial affairs or knowledge of Native American diplomacy. The new

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[82] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 204.
[83] "The Great Sun of the Natchés who is the chief of the nation is the bastard of Father M. de S. Cosme of Canada…"*Grand Soleil, fil d'un François en 1728*, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2550, fol. 115. According to Le Page du Pratz, the Tattooed Arm maintained that a Frenchmen had sired the new Great Sun. He did not, however, identify St. Cosme as the father. See Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 247.
[84] Ibid., 243.
[85] See also Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 70-71.

governor named Lieutenant de Chépart, a reported drunkard who wounded a fellow officer in a duel, to command Fort Rosalie.[86]

In the next round of land grabs, both sides lacked competent leadership. The devastation produced by the subsequent conflict dwarfed that of the previous wars. The absence of diplomatic experts like the Tattooed Serpent and Bienville would be sorely felt.

[86] For a report on his duel, see De La Chaise to the Directors of the *Compagnie des Indes*, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 358. Dumont de Montigny characterized him as "a proud tyrant." See Dumont de Montigny, "L'etablissement de la province de la Louisiana, poème composé de 1728 à 1742." *Société des Américanistes* XXIII, no. 2 (1931): 314.




**Figure 3.1 Natchez Country circa 1723**

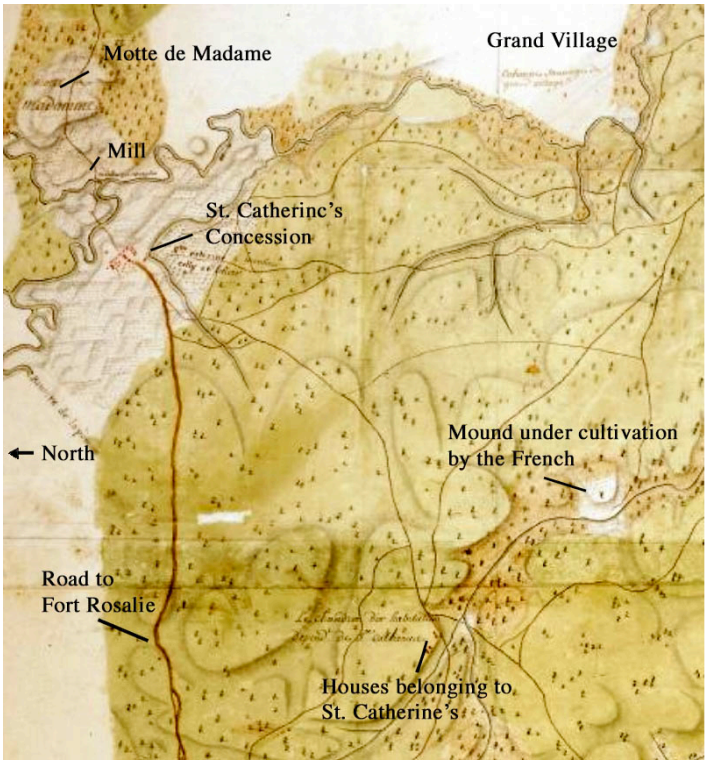


**Figure 3.2 Environs of St. Catherine's Concession,** Ge DD 2987 (8834) B BN C. Pl. *Carte des environs du fort Rosalie aux Natchez*, 1723 Ignace-François Broutin désigné par le Sr Gonichon en 1727, Bibliothèque National de France, Paris, Cabinet des Cartes et Plans

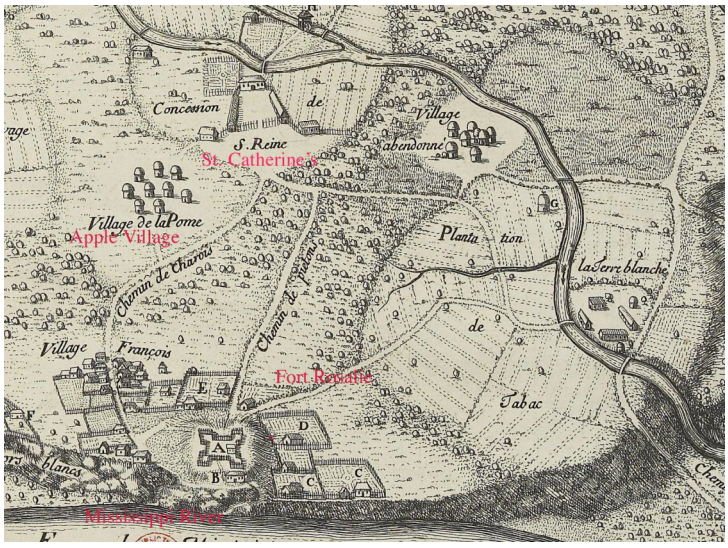


**Figure 3.3: St. Catherine's Concession and the Apple Village**

Les Natchez [Material cartográfico / B. Michel Le Bouteux] Biblioteca Nacional, C.C. 55 P2, Lisbon por Le Bouteux, J. B. Michel, fl. 1748,

## Chapter Four: People Who Call Each Other Red Men

"And you, Frenchmen," she said, addressing all those who were present, "you should always be good and comrades of the red men; trade with them, do not be thankless for their merchandise.

— Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoire Historique sur la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 221.

When the Natchez settled in that part of America where I saw them, they found several Peoples who subsisted there scattered about, some of them in the East, the others West of S. Louis River. These are peoples who call each other Red Men…"

—Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III, 87.

The first reference above came from a funeral speech given by the Tattooed Serpent's favorite wife just before she was ritually strangled so she could join her husband in "the Land of the Spirits." She fulfilled her role as a diplomat to the Europeans for the last time. Her choice of words is of particular interest. She called her people "red men" to distinguish them from the French. The second quote came from Antoine Simone Le Page du Pratz's three-volume history of the colony. He heard this story from the chief guardian of the Natchez temple who provided the Dutchman with this and several other origin legends.

In these two passages, the term "red men" denoted Native Americans in general and the Natchez in particular. In this chapter, I argue that references such as these mark a critical milestone in the creation of a new racial category. During a relatively short period—between 1723 and 1729—the Théoloëls and other Native American communities co-opted the European epistemological concept of race for their own purposes. During these years, Indian communities in the Southeast started to refer to indigenous peoples as "red men" as a way to maintain social and diplomatic equality with the "whites" from overseas. The Théoloëls took hold of this discourse and developed it further as a means to power. In contrast to the Europeans, who ranked

human beings by biological characteristics to control their labor, the People of the Sun appealed to a shared identity, also based upon biological characteristics, to build consensus among the factions within their own polity. Furthermore, they employed this identity to secure the cooperation of other native groups against the impudent immigrants from the Old World. The relative abundance of records left by the colonists in Natchez country offer unique insights into this process as it unfolded.

A convergence of circumstances in the Lower Mississippi Valley during the 1720s facilitated the Indians' production of a red ideology. The Natchez continued to search for an accord with the French living among them. The first part of the chapter reviews the Théoloëls' last attempts to treat with a people whom they no longer saw as potential recruits to their polity. To keep the peace, the Théoloëls employed established practices grounded in the primacy of the Suns of the Grand Village, intermarriage with influential immigrants, and the diplomatic acumen of its elite women. It was after the French rebuffed the Natchez's advances and made increasingly onerous demands upon them that their elders began to shape a discourse of redness.

The second part of the chapter examines the colonists' motivation for rejecting the Théoloëls' overture: profits from an expanding tobacco industry. French operatives, often without regard for Native American protocol, demanded more territory to enlarge their plantations. The next section looks at a crucial aspect of commercial agriculture in Natchez country. These new farms gave the Natchez many opportunities to see Europeans dominate a permanent underclass by their practice of chattel slavery. As more African slaves arrived, the Natchez felt the full impact of a legal and social system that had already begun to marginalize the Indians as "racial others." The dual pressures

of colonial land seizures for tobacco production and the relegation to an inferior status associated with chattel slavery demanded a response from the Théoloëls.

The last part of the chapter explores the Théoloëls' search for an effective alternative to the old ways of keeping the peace. To do this, the People of the Sun took the appellation "red men" then in use among the native peoples of Lower Mississippi Valley, and plotted it as a separate category, equal to "white" and superior to "black," within the color ranking devised by the Europeans. The Natchez employed this rubric of color to unite their villages and eject the impertinent newcomers.[1]

[1] For further perspectives on the Fourth Natchez War and its causes, see Andrew C. Albrecht, "Indian-French Relations at Natchez," *American Anthropologist* 48, no. 3 (1946): 321-54; Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France avec le Journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionnale*, Vol. III (Paris: Chez Nyon Fils, 1744), 466-69; Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane contenant ce qui y est arrivé de plus mémorable depuis l'année 1687*, Vol. II (Paris: J. B. Bauche, 1753), 123-60; Patricia Galloway and Jason Baird Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," *HBNAI* Vol. 15: 609; Patricia K. Galloway, "Colonial Period Transformations in the Mississippi Valley: Disintegration, Alliance, Confederation, Playoff," in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, ed. Robbie Etheridge and Charles M. Hudson (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), 225-48; Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana: The French Domination* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 1866; [1998]), 397-417; Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana: The Company of the Indies, 1723-1731*, Vol. V, trans. Brian Pearce, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 388-403; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 102-07; Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres*, Vol. III (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 230-61; Karl G. Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," in *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Pensacola: University Press of Florida, 2000), 162-3; Gordon Sayre, "Plotting the Natchez Massacre: Le Page du Pratz, Dumont de Montigny, Chateaubriand," *Early American Literature* 37, no. 3 (2002): 381-413; *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of America, from Moctezuma to Tecumseh* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 216-40; John Reed Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911); Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 65-72; Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier, 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 80-96; Joseph Zitomersky, *French Americans--Native Americans in Eighteenth-century French colonial Louisiana: the Population Geography of the Illinois Indians, 1670s-1760s: the Form and Function of French-native Settlement Relations in Righteenth-Century Louisiana* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1994), 382-85. For the racialization of the Indians by French colonists, see Guillaume Aubert, "'Français, negres et sauvages': Constructing Race in Colonial Louisiana" (PhD diss., Tulane, 2002), 133-188.

*Keeping the Peace*

The following section looks at some of the strategies employed by the People of the Sun during the 1720s to reestablish social and political balance in the region. After the Third Natchez War, the Théoloël leadership acted to maintain amicable relations with the Europeans who lived in the environs of Fort Rosalie and the Grand Village. At least one of these attempts at keeping the peace succeeded. Nonetheless, the influx of French and Africans into Natchez Country made it increasingly difficult to arrive at such arrangements. Two deaths, those of the Tattooed Serpent in 1725 and the Great Sun in 1728, deprived the Théoloëls of their most experienced negotiators. Yet, other diplomats carried on their work. On at least two occasions, the Natchez employed high-status women as advocates for good relations between the colonists and themselves. The Théoloëls undertook their last efforts in the spring of 1729 when Captain De Chépart, a man unconcerned with the protocols that had kept the peace, demanded that the Apple Villagers evacuate their town to make way for a tobacco plantation. When the Natchez asked him to reconsider, the captain refused and threatened one of the Suns with imprisonment if he failed to comply. De Chépart's rigidity demonstrated to the Natchez leadership the futility of treating with the colonists. Once convinced that the old methods of dealing with newcomers no longer worked, the People of the Sun began to shape their policies to capitalize on similarities among indigenous communities and the differences between themselves and the newcomers from the Old World.

The first of the incidents that threatened the peace of the region happened soon after the end of the Third Natchez War. Cooler heads on both sides prevailed and together reached an accord before open warfare broke out. The affair bore some resemblance to the competition between the Apple Village and St. Catherine's

Concession. Lieutenant Dumont de Montigny left an account of an Indian's attack on a horse belonging to the White Earth Concession:

> …one day a Savage gave a blow with a *fleur de lys*-shaped weapon to the flank of a brood mare…and not content to wounding it, he also cut off its tail; which the Savages of this place have regarded as a grand act of bravery and courage, as if one had taken a scalp, and by consequence the same as a declaration of war.[2]

The shape of the weapon was particularly troublesome for the colonists who saw the mark it left. The Indian had appropriated the punitive symbology of chattel slavery and used it against the French. The *Code Noir*'s Article 38 mandated that a fugitive slave "will have his ears cut off and will be marked with the *fleur-de-lys* on one shoulder."[3] It is highly improbable that the Indians knew about or understood the minutiae of French colonial law, but a warrior living in Natchez Country would have had many opportunities to see slaves who had been mutilated in that manner. The exact message the warrior intended to transmit is unclear. Was he "punishing" a beast that had "run away" from its owners and strayed into a local planting ground? Was he striking out against a creature that the Fr*Histoire et Description Generale de la nouvelle France*ench treated in much the same way they treated Africans? The answers to these questions are lost to us, but we do know that the *habitants* of the concession also recognized the assault as an act of belligerence and notified Monsieur Broutin, the plantation's director. Broutin sent for the Tattooed Serpent, who quickly came to the farm. The Théoloël leader inspected the wound and told the Frenchman that none of the people in his town possessed a weapon that left such a mark. He blamed instead the

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[2] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 118.
[3] *Code Noir ou Recueil d'edits, declarations et arrets Concernant la Discipline & Commerces des Esclaves Négres des Isles de l'Amérique Française*, in *Recueil d'edits, declarations et arrests de sa majesté concernant l'Administration de la Justice&Police des Colonies Françaises de l'Amérique, & les Engagés* (Paris: Chez les Librairies Associez, 1744), March 1685, 93.

Tioux, a non-Natchez group subordinate to the Grand Village that lived in scattered settlements close to White Earth Concession.

Upon hearing this, Broutin summoned Bambouche, the leader of the Tioux, who was a "rascal" according to Dumont de Montigny. The Tioux headman denied his villagers' culpability because none of his men owned a *fleur de lys*-shaped club. He then cast the blame back upon the Natchez of the Grand Village. The charge stung the Great Sun who, when he heard it, "brusquely responded, 'I see what is [needed] and hereby order it to be done."[4]

In the meantime, Broutin warned the *habitants* to prepare for another war by firing a shot from the plantation's cannon. The blast led the Tattooed Serpent to conclude that the French were already destroying the Natchez towns. The Théoloël leader gathered the "honored men" of his nation and led them to the White Earth Concession to present the calumet to its director. After accepting the offering, the Frenchman inquired, "Is it right that the concession should lose this brood mare?" The Tattooed Serpent responded, "No," and imposed a tax of one basket of corn from each household in Natchez country, including those of the Tioux. The reparations were worth enough money "to pay an entire cavalry regiment."[5]

The incident demonstrated the sensitivity that both the French and the Natchez had acquired in gauging each other's intentions. The wounding of the horse was by this time a sign understood by all of the inhabitants of the region. It also revealed the fact that the outlying villages continued to resist the pro-French policy of the Grand Village's Suns. In this instance, the offense came from a subordinate group of non-

[4] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 119.
[5] Ibid., 120-22.

Natchez living to the southwest of the Grand Village furthest from the pro-British towns on the northeast edge of the polity. Economics were less of a motive for the Tioux than they were for the Apple Villagers, since the former did not have an unobstructed route to the Anglo-Celtic traders residing among the Chickasaws. More important, anti-French sentiment had spread to at least some members of a community that had supported the Tattooed Serpent when he allowed the French to crush the Apple Village. The refractory towns of Natchez country now flanked the concessions, the fort, and the Grand Village on the nation's northern and southern borders.

Some of the old personalities and diplomatic strategies proved effective despite the spread of anti-French incidents. Despite opposition from some quarters, there is evidence that the Great Sun still possessed a significant amount of political capital. Headmen who had stood against the Sun's pro-Louisianan policies attended the council that he convened. His brother, the Tattooed Serpent, still wielded enough authority to organize at very short notice a peace delegation made up of his nation's most prominent members. His timely actions quashed further provocations from the Tioux while satisfying the French. Moreover, he placated the Europeans by means of an established Mississippian practice: a corn tax. The main departure from the past was the fact that the grain collected in this levy went to the White Earth Concession rather than to the polity's main village. Furthermore, a policy of peaceful coexistence with the Europeans still enjoyed the support of the hierarchy of the main settlements even though it had become less popular among the outlying towns.

A map drafted by Dumont de Montigny delimiting the environs of Fort Rosalie at about the same time showed another Théoloël peace strategy at work. To the west of

the White Earth Concession, between the Flour Village and the plantation, he drew a small homestead of six huts and a European frame house labeled "*Maison de la femme chef*" (see Figure 4.1 on page 191). An earlier map, drafted by Ignace Françios Broutin in 1723, did not contain the homestead. From this venue, the Female Great Sun was in a position to monitor the area between the Tioux and the French settlement. She may have been the Natchez's best hope for preventing future incidents. Her status among the Théoloëls and the respect that some Europeans had for the Suns would have contributed to her ability to mediate conflicts over the use of the fields in the southern part of Natchez country.

The next waypoint in Natchez-French affairs saw a different strategy at work, once again under the direction of high-status Théoloël women. The death and elaborate funeral of the Tattooed Serpent in June 1725 provided rich material for both Le Page du Pratz and Dumont de Montigny's narratives.[6] During the service, two of the Tattooed Serpent's wives, his lackey, pipe-bearer, doctor, and spokesman were publicly strangled and interred with the deceased Sun. One of the victims, the favorite wife of the Tattooed Serpent, took the opportunity to act as a peacemaker.

In her first performance, the Tattooed Serpent's mate spoke to several of the French elites during one of the memorial dances that took place a few days before the funeral. Among her listeners were Le Page du Pratz, Dumont de Montigny, Broutin, and Dumanior. She told them not to regret her impending death because she would soon join her husband in the Land of the Spirits. She said to the "*chefs and nobles François*" that her husband's passing "is as very regrettable for the French as it is for our Nation

[6] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 17. Swanton translated and edited their observations as well as those of European informants who had witnessed previous Natchez burial rites. See Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 139-57.

because he carried both in his heart, his ears were always full of the words of the French chiefs. He walked the same road as the French; and he loved them more than himself…"[7]

Two days later, the favorite wife of the Tattooed Serpent addressed the crowd attending the funeral. She exhorted the young people of her nation to "walk in peace with the French like their father and her" and to "never tell lies about them." She turned to the "French chiefs" and told them "be friends always with the Natchez." She reminded them of the affection that she and her husband had shown them, and admonished them to trade fairly with the Théoloëls. After her speech, her relatives placed a deerskin over her head and strangled her.[8]

The name of the Tattooed Serpent's wife is lost to us. None of the informants recorded it, but her performances tell us many things about Natchez diplomacy. She had accompanied the dead leader on his missions to end the Second Natchez War.[9] From the evening of the Tattooed Serpent's death until the close of the ceremonies, this high-status woman was the only Théoloël who spoke directly to the French leaders in attendance. Although several private dialogues took place between the colonial elites and the Great Sun and other Théoloël notables, only the wife of the Tattooed Serpent aimed her words at the European listeners during the public events. Until her dying

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[7] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 37-39.
[8] Ibid., 51-52. Dumont de Montigny's account of the funeral closely resembles Le Page du Pratz's narrative. See Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. I, 208-239. Nearly all of the longer speeches addressed to the Europeans witnessing the funeral were delivered by Théoloël women, including The Glorious Woman. "The French had named her la Glorieuse because of her majestic bearing, her proud demeanor, and because she associated only with distinguished Frenchmen." See Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 36.
[9] See above 124-25 and *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722, AC G1 Vol. 465, n.p.

day, she stayed true to the responsibilities of her office, advocating for peace between the People of the Sun and the French.

The words that she chose to convey her intentions also warrant examination. In Le Page du Pratz's accounts of the funeral, the favorite wife of the Tattooed Serpent called them "the French chiefs and nobles." At the end of her last speech, she said that she looked forward to the afterlife, a land "where finally she could eat with the French chiefs," since Natchez traditions forbade her from taking meals with foreigners.[10] Her rhetoric suggests that she recognized the parallels between her status and those of men like Dumanoir, Broutin, Le Page du Pratz, and Dumont de Montigny, all of whom held positions of authority among the Europeans. For the wife of the Tattooed Serpent, this syncretism persisted beyond the grave.

The elaborate rites that took her life required the sacrifices of other Théoloëls besides the spouses and servants of the Tattooed Serpent. Parents from the lower ranks suffocated their infants and tossed the bodies under the feet of the pallbearers as an offering to the departed. After the procession reached the top of the temple mound, the Natchez buried the Tattooed Serpent near one of the walls inside the shrine. The status of the members of his retinue determined the locations of their tombs on the area immediately outside the holy place.

According to Le Page du Pratz, some of the Natchez hierarchs were tiring of the bloody nature of their funerals. They had worked out a plan that involved him and some of the highest-ranking Théoloëls. One morning, sometime after the interment of the Tattooed Serpent, the *Grande Soliele*, or Female Great Sun, came to call on him. The Dutchman had not yet risen from his bed, and although he was not in the habit of

[10] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Lousiane*, Vol. III, 52.

receiving visitors in this way, he told his slave to admit her. To his surprise, she entered the room with her fifteen year-old daughter. The two arranged themselves around Le Page du Pratz's bed; the mother sat in a chair. The girl sat on the floor.[11]

The *Grande Soliele* began by complimenting Le Page du Pratz on his command of the Natchez's language and his understanding of their way of life. The Female Great Sun then said that she "was too old to bear children… There were no more than two young suns left to speak (to succeed them) for her brothers because the third had only one leg…because of this, the warriors will not obey him nor will the entire Natchez nation."[12] After these pleasantries, she came to the point: she wanted Le Page du Pratz to marry her daughter. She and her brothers, the Suns, came to this decision after assessing the "Beautiful Head's" cultural acumen, intelligence, and leadership.[13] They reasoned that the *Grande Soliele*'s daughter, once married to the Dutchman, would come under the protection of the French.

Upon hearing this, Le Page du Pratz exclaimed, "Do you take me for a 'stinkard?' because the daughters of the female Suns marry only the men of the People, and I pretended not to have the sense of what she had said to me."[14]

"She responded, no, to the contrary, it was because they wanted to extinguish this practice that I had been brought to their attention, that it was, in effect, to establish among them our [French] practice which was much better."[15] The European had cause for concern because the spouse of any Sun, male or female, followed their mate to the

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[11]Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres*, Vol. II (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 398.
[12] Ibid., 398. The healthy Sun was most likely the child fathered by St. Cosme.
[13] Le Page du Pratz explained the reason why the Indians called him this: "They named me this because I was the Chief or Commandant of the Habitants of the Post of the Natchez and because of my hair." ibid., 400.
[14] Ibid., 402-403.
[15] Ibid.

"Land of the Spirits." If he married the girl and she expired before him, Le Page du Pratz stood a very good chance of being strangled at her funeral. The Suns and the *Grande Soliele* were banking on the idea that the Europeans would not permit the other Natchez leaders to sacrifice the plantation manager as if he were a Théoloël commoner.

Despite her listener's reluctance to accept her offer, the Female Great Sun's discussion with Le Page du Pratz conformed to her role as a spokesperson for her nation. While the proposal corresponded with the established pattern of marriage, it also revealed a significant departure from past practices. After a month of deliberation, in which at least one woman took part, the Suns had turned to a European to amend the custom of spousal sacrifice. The noble woman also divulged that the younger suns "did not have enough sense to listen to reason on this important affair" and wanted the custom to continue. Nor could they count on "any of the other female Suns to stand against this [practice] to which they consent voluntarily."[16]

The exact role that Le Page du Pratz was to play within the Natchez polity if he married the girl is uncertain. The only clue to his prospective status comes from the Female Great Sun's response to Le Page du Pratz's question about being mistaken for a "stinkard." She stated clearly that she recognized him as prestigious individual, but gave no hint whether he would make policy. She quickly moved on to the motives of the headmen of the Grand Village: they wanted to "extinguish" the nation's bloody funeral custom and desired French aid. The *Grande Soleile*'s offer implied that the Suns recognized Louisiana's clout, and were indeed willing to take advantage of the fact the Europeans could directly intervene in the Théoloël order of things. Bienville's campaigns of 1723 proved beyond doubt that the colony was a power to be reckoned

[16]Ibid., 402.

with. In this instance, the Suns tried to maneuver an influential Louisianan into a position that would benefit the policies of the Grand Village's leadership.[17]

The next Frenchman who interceded in the Théoloël order of things did so with no intention of furthering the fortunes of anybody but himself. Nor did he see any role for the Natchez hierarchy in his plans. In this final incident, the efforts of the Suns to keep the peace came to naught. Captain De Chépart, the commandant of Fort Rosalie, played the antagonist when he sought to acquire real estate east of the post to build a plantation. By this time, the best land already belonged to other Europeans who had influence at the capital. In the spring of 1729, the captain moved instead against the Apple Village. The town's leader was a partisan of Old Hair, the Sun Bienville had executed in 1723 for leading the war against St. Catherine's Concession.[18] As a prelude to an even larger seizure, De Chépart evicted an Apple Villager from his homestead and replaced him with several African slaves and a Frenchwoman to oversee them.[19]

Captain De Chépart then summoned the Sun of the Apple Village "without any of the compliments." The officer's lack of attention to protocol exemplified the decline in

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[17] Le Page du Pratz did not marry the young female Sun.

[18] Dumont de Montigny cited the Grand Village as the object of De Chépart's desire. He also conflated the Tattooed Serpent with former Great Sun: "The Tattooed Serpent was no longer the Grand Chief of the nation of the Natchez, the one who succeeded him was allied to the Chief of the Apple Village named Old Hair, whose head the French had demanded during the last war." See Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 129. Le Page du Pratz, however, wrote that De Chépart was interested in the Apple Village, which was near the Grand Village, and that De Chépart dealt with the leader of the Apple Village, not the Great Sun. See Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 232-33. Both of these authors wrote several decades after the event when their memories may have dimmed. Although both men lived in Natchez Country for some time, I chose to accept Le Page du Pratz's locale because of his attention to ethnological details, his description of the area in question, his greater sensitivity for Théoloël culture, and because he garnered his information from Natchez informants, the Tattooed Arm among them. For an overview of Le Page du Pratz's life and oeuvre see Shannon Lee Dawdy, "Enlightenment from the Ground: *Le Page du Pratz Histoire de la Louisane*," *French Colonial History* 3 (2003); For Dumont de Montigny's career, see Jean Delanglez, "A Louisiana Poet-Historian: Dumont *dit* Montigny," *Mid-America* 19, no. 1 (1937). For disputes between the two colonists over their versions of Louisiana history, see Sayre, "Plotting the Natchez Massacre," 381-413.

[19] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 129.

French diplomatic acumen from that demonstrated by Bienville. The latter, at the close of the negotiations that ended the Third Natchez War, followed "their custom [and] asked permission to depart after the Great Sun and his brother, the Tattooed Serpent."[20] The captain could not have cared less for such formalities.

During their first meeting, De Chépart demanded that the Sun of the Apple Village move his town so the captain could continue his project.[21] Speaking through an interpreter named Papin, De Chépart informed the Sun "that the Grand Chief of the French who lived in New Orleans, that is to say, Périer, had written an order that his village be abandoned because it was needed for as the construction of a large building."[22] The Sun responded, "believing that he would be heard if he spoke reasonably… that his ancestors had lived there for as many years as there were hairs in his topknot, and that it was best that they remain there still."[23] When Papin rendered the Sun's words into French, De Chépart exploded into a rage and told the Sun that within a few days, he would regret not leaving his village. The Indian leader replied, "When the French came to ask for land, they [the Natchez] said there is plenty that no person occupies, that they could take it, that the same sun shines on us all and they all walk the same path." De Chépart interrupted the Natchez and said, "He was to be obeyed without contradiction." According to Le Page du Pratz, "The Commandant imagined

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[20] *Punition des Natchés en 1723*, fol. 8.
[21] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 232.
[22]Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 128-130; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 231-34. Diron D'Artaguette agreed that De Chépart's demand for the evacuation of the village triggered the war, Diron to the Minister, AC 13A, Vol. 12, fol. 362. Périer's participation in the scheme remains a matter of speculation. Le Page du Pratz and Dumont de Montigny both mention the governor's order to vacate the Apple Village. An anonymous contemporary document placed part of the blame on Périer: "The reason which has been determined for the Natchez to strike was that Périer had designs to make a habitation in their lands." See *Coup de Sauvages Natchez sur le François*, BN. Mss. n. a. 2551, fol. 23. See also Jean Delanglez, "The Natchez Massacre and Governor Perrier," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 17 (1934): 631-41; Sayre, "Plotting the Natchez Massacre," 381-413.
[23] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 233.

himself, no doubt, to be speaking to a Slave which one commands with an absolute tone; but he ignored the fact that the *Naturals* are such enemies of slavery that they prefer death to it." After witnessing the captain's final outburst, the Sun of the Apple Village returned home with his composure intact.[24]

This final incident demonstrated that, over the course of the six short years since the peace arranged by Bienville and the Tattooed Serpent, the practices that had enabled the Europeans and the People of the Sun to negotiate ceased working. Economic considerations among the French had propelled inferior men like De Chépart to the forefront of intercultural politics. At the same time, the Natchez lacked a strong Great Sun who might have rebuffed the captain's bullying. As the plantations and their slave populations grew, the Natchez began to recognize that their days in their homeland were numbered unless they took action.

*Tobacco*

After 1723, tobacco cultivation rapidly transformed the area around Fort Rosalie in ways that facilitated the Natchez's formation of a racial category of their own. Two attributes of this transformation—commercial farming and chattel slavery—had an enormous impact upon the Natchez. It was during this time of agrarian expansion that the Natchez began to refer to skin color, rather than cultural characteristics, to differentiate themselves from "whites" and "blacks." As colonial plantations spread across the landscape, they put pressure on individual Théoloëls and, eventually, on entire villages. The lure of potential wealth motivated men like De Chépart to abandon all pretense of civility and to reject the Natchez's compromises.

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[24] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 233-34.

For more than a decade, the fertile land around the Grand Village attracted European entrepreneurs who wanted to grow tobacco. Although Law's "Mississippi Company" collapsed in 1720, his plans to transform Louisiana into an agricultural colony similar to Great Britain's North American provinces remained a part of France's plans for the region. Experiments had shown that flax, sugar, and wheat would not do well in the hot damp summers. Tobacco, however, flourished in the fields near Fort Rosalie. The great river and its tributaries permitted ocean-going vessels to travel as far as the docks below the post, making for easy carriage of the bulky leaf to European markets. Kolly and Duecher's investment in St. Catherine's Concession, despite its troubles with the original inhabitants, showed great promise of capitalizing on these factors.

During the mid-1720s, Paris and New Orleans embarked on a number of reforms to reinvigorate the colony's anemic commercial and agricultural sectors. They aimed one of these reforms at the Natchez's favorite means of discomforting their European neighbors. To discourage further raids on Louisianan farms, the King issued an edict that promised that those who wounded or killed domestic animals would be subject to the "full force of royal power."[25] Six months earlier, in a move directed explicitly at the Natchez, the Superior Council of Louisiana decided "That if any of their people are bold enough in the future to kill any horned cattle or horses belonging to the French, the French shall bring the heads of those who have killed them to the commandant of this post."[26]

In 1724, the Crown revised the *Code Noir* of 1685 in order to focus upon problems

[25] King's Declaration Against Killing Domestic Animals in Louisiana, May 20, 1724, AC, B, Vol. 43, fol. 420.
[26] Minutes of the Council of War, November 23, 1723, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 3.

facing Louisianans.[27] The new regulations sharpened the "racial" terminology of the 1685 version, employing terms such as "our white subjects" and "blacks" in articles dealing with intermarriage. The previous edition used less specific words like "slave" and "master" in the same clauses. The implications of these changes will be dealt with later in this chapter. At this point, it suffices to say that the *metropole* had restated its support for the African slave trade and intended it to be the primary means of meeting the colony's demand for labor.

Earlier, in January of the same year, the Superior Council, following orders from Paris, forbade local military commanders from interfering with trade between the *habitants*, *voyageurs*, and Native Peoples.[28] This effectively revoked the Council's edict of June 1723, which prohibited unauthorized transactions between the Natchez and the settlers.[29] Consequently, few official mechanisms remained to mediate Théoloël land sales to the settlers. Thus, by the middle of the third decade of the eighteenth century, the French had re-engineered the legal machinery for exploiting the real estate market around Fort Rosalie.

As far-reaching as the institutional modifications may have been, the colony still required substantial help. Throughout the 1720s, officials in New Orleans, Mobile, and Fort Rosalie clamored for the resources they needed to create a viable tobacco industry. An unsigned report labeled "Memoir on Tobacco at Natchez," listed the impediments to raising and marketing the crop.[30] The author cited a lack of packing facilities and a dearth of small craft to transport the finished product downriver to the port of New

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[27] *Code Noir ou Edit du Roi concernant les esclaves*, March, 1724, AC, A, fols. 119-28v.
[28] Caligny, *Compagnie des Inde*s, Ordinance Concerning the Voyageurs and Trade, September 6, 1724, AC B 43. fols. 453-55; Minutes of the Superior Council, January 27, 1725, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 483.
[29] Decrees of the Superior Council, June 21, 1723, *MPAFD*, Vol. II, 292.
[30] "Memoir on Tobacco at Natchez," October 1724, *MPAFD*, Vol. I, 396.

Orleans. He also remarked on the small returns on anything less than very large shipments of the weed. This led him to list another problem: a shortage of ocean-going vessels for carriage between the colony and France. Others concurred with the memoir; Bienville's 1726 report on the colony also mentioned tobacco as a promising commodity. The Superior Council agreed with many of these recommendations and sent along their own suggestions in a dispatch to the *Compagnie des Indes*. They proposed that the *Compagnie* build a mill in Louisiana to cure and pack tobacco. The councilmen also called for thirty African slaves to fill out the project's workforce.[31]

The Superior Council's appeal focused on the salient issue for the development scheme: a persistent dearth of laborers. Work in the tobacco fields was so hard that free men and women rarely did it willingly. The British seaboard colonies faced the same predicament in the early seventeenth century when planters found that indentured servants did not make the best field workers. Their contracts eventually expired, leaving the region awash with a disaffected European underclass. The Tidewater aristocracy gradually turned toward importing enslaved Africans to meet the demand for labor.[32] The French faced similar problems as their *engagés* either died soon after

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[31] Superior Council of Louisiana to the Directors [of the Company], November 8, 1724, *MPAFD*, Vol. I, 398. Bienville concurred with the Council. In a report that he authored upon his return to Paris, he stated that slaves were the answer to the colony's labor shortage. He had little regard for those he called "the idle scum" shipped in droves from the mother country. Memoir on Louisiana [by Bienville] 1725-6, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 520.

[32] The rise of chattel slavery in British North America is an immense topic far beyond the scope of this dissertation. The definitive study remains Edmund Sears Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: the Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995). Morgan paid particular attention to the trend toward an enslaved workforce on pages 295-315. Other important works on the subject include Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, And Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Winthrop P. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: the Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

arriving in Louisiana or returned home once they had fulfilled the terms of their contracts. The fact that most French indentures mandated only three and a half years of service added to the problems of Louisiana's budding planter class.[33]

Nor did the Native American farmers living in the Lower Mississippi Valley meet France's production requirements. Indians had grown tobacco for generations before the arrival of Europeans. The Natchez shared this tradition, but their agricultural practices, particularly their failure to properly cure the leaves after harvest, prevented their crop from entering the French market. "The Natchez did not know that it was necessary to deliver their tobacco in small bunches. They bought it in twists which Mr. de la Chaise was obliged to take on the basis of ten *sous* a pound in order not to let them be ruined."[34] Moreover, the lifestyle of the Théoloëls did not lend itself to the relentless schedule that furnished the large yields necessary for profitable commercial farming.

Despite the *metropole*'s economic and technical backing, the tobacco project met with increasing resistance from the Théoloëls. One anonymous observer, who also demanded more African slaves, wrote, "I left the Company of the Indies in 1727 when the tobacco farm was united with the general farm. I have since learned that the English had enticed away the Natchez and destroyed the first plantings of these seeds."[35] The People of the Sun had moved beyond attacking the concessions' livestock to damaging their crops. Worse, the officer in charge of Fort Rosalie did little to engender Natchez support for French agricultural endeavors.

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[33] Pierre Boucher, *Histoire veritable et naturelle des moeurs et productions du pays de la Nouvelle France: vulgairement dite le Canada* (Paris: Florentin Lambert, 1664), 161; Peter J. Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada-A Cultural History* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 141; Alan Taylor, *American Colonies*. (New York: Viking, 2001), 366.
[34] Périer and de la Chaise to the Directors of the Indies Company, April 22, 1727, *MPAFD,* Vol. III, 533.
[35] Memoir on Tobacco in Louisiana, 1727? *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 567.

Nonetheless, Périer's appointment of Captain De Chépart to command Fort Rosalie also demonstrated the governor's particular interest in the development of Natchez country. With De Chépart, the governor secured the cooperation of an individual dependent upon his patronage. The captain had already served for several years at the post, long enough to have developed a nasty reputation among his contemporaries. Nearly all those who observed De Chépart commented on his heavy drinking and his short temper. Broutin, the previous commandant of the post, wrote a few months after the destruction of the fort, "I do not know the reasons that made Mr. Périer support to my prejudice a drunkard and a thoughtless man like Sieur De Chépart."[36] Lieutenant Dumont de Montigny harbored particular contempt for the new commandant. At some point after his promotion, De Chépart had ordered him arrested and thrown in irons. Dumont De Montigny escaped to New Orleans to plead his case before higher authorities. De Chépart was censured, and he would have been cashiered except for the intervention of Governor Périer, who restored him to his command.[37] Even Le Page du Pratz departed from his usual generosity when he admitted that he could not understand Périer's lack of discernment in reinstating the captain.[38] Yet, the unanimous contempt in which De Chépart was held worked in Périer's favor. The expansion of the tobacco industry in Natchez Country was bound to irritate the more-established interests, both Indian and European. De Chépart, a man without friends, could execute the most repugnant orders since he was not part of any of the networks of farmers, concessionaires, or native villagers whom they were certain to harm.

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[36] Broutin to the Company August 7, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 126.
[37] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 126-28; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 231.
[38] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 230.

At the same time that the quality of the French administration was deteriorating at Fort Rosalie, the Natchez also lost their most experienced leaders. As noted earlier, the Tattooed Serpent died in 1725.[39] Three years later, the Great Sun joined him in the Land of the Spirits.[40] The son of the Tattooed Arm and the missionary priest, Father St. Cosme, became the primary chief of the Natchez. The new Great Sun had limited political capital to expend with the older, more experienced leaders from the outlying villages. When the military chief of the colonists demanded ever more territory, the anti-French faction faced none of the political opposition that they had encountered from the previous Great Sun.

Tobacco required large amounts of land and large numbers of laborers. Much like the English colonists who they wished to emulate, the Louisianans acquired the former by appropriating it from the Indians and kidnapped the latter from Africa. Both practices propelled the French on a collision course with the Natchez. The growth of commercial farming reduced France's need for men with diplomatic skill; their motivation for coexisting with the land's first inhabitants consequently diminished. In their drive to establish an agrarian colony like Virginia, France transplanted the slave regime that she had created in the Caribbean to the shores of North America.

*Slaves*

The burgeoning population of African slaves made agricultural expansion in Louisiana possible. The influx of these unfortunates onto the farms around Fort Rosalie placed the Natchez in contact with a form of labor unlike Native American slavery. Their towns and homesteads, interspersed among European settlements and tobacco

[39] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane.* Vol. I, 221-40; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 43-60.
[40] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane.* Vol. I, 180, 240-43.

fields, gave the People of the Sun excellent venues to observe "white" Europeans dominating "black" slaves. Moreover, their close proximity to the concessions exposed the Natchez to the discourse of racial categories that furnished the intellectual, social, and legal foundations for this economic arrangement. This provided the Indians with experiences that helped them to reframe the rhetoric of "race" for their own purposes. The Théoloëls' appropriation of the discourse became all the more vital as they discovered that the French categorized Indians as inferiors.[41]

The enslavement of racial "inferiors" solved many labor problems for the French in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Slaves remained bound to their holders for life. Although slaves had some rights under the *Code Noir*, the law did little to mitigate the amount of work that their purchasers could demand from them.[42] Policy makers in France reasoned that if they staffed the concessions with enough of these imprisoned workers, they could begin to compete with Britain's tobacco colonies.[43] Consequently, Paris cooperated with the Louisianans in their efforts to import African slaves, many of whom wound up in Natchez country. On New Year's Day, 1726, the colony's comptroller listed thirty-one "*esclaves negres*" at the White Earth plantation and

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[41] Nancy Shoemaker discussed the European appellations "white" and "black" and suggested that the Indians used red as a response to the newcomers binary classifications. See Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (1997): 625-27, 629. Shoemaker's work informed a good deal of my discussion of race and the construction of redness.

[42] For an overview of the Code Noir and its implementation in Louisiana, see Carl A. Brasseaux, "The Administration of Slave Regulations in French Louisiana, 1724-1766," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995); Thomas N. Ingersoll, "Slave Codes and Judicial Practice in New Orleans," *Law and History Review* 13, no. 1 (1995): 23-62; William Resnick Riddell, "Le Code Noir," *The Journal of Negro History* 10, no. 3 (1925): 321-29. See also Patricia Dillon Woods, "The French and the Natchez Indians in Louisiana: 1700-1731," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 278-95. For a review of the early years of slavery in the French colony, see Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 97-118; Daniel H. Usner, "From African Captivity to American Slavery: The Introduction of Black Laborers to Colonial Louisiana," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995), 183-200.

[43] Memoir on Tobacco in Louisiana, 1727? *MPAFD*, *Vol. II,* 567.

twenty-five captive Africans and four "*esclaves sauvages*" at St. Catherine's Concession. A handful of other settlers held a few more captive laborers making for a total of sixty-three African and seven Indian slaves in the region.[44] By 1729, the number of African slaves had more than doubled.[45]

The increasing number of enslaved Africans played a significant part in changing the Natchez's attitude toward the French—chattel slavery was becoming endemic in their land. The Europeans identified these "*esclaves negres*" by their biological characteristics, namely skin color. Moreover, the French inscribed this difference into their laws.

Although the *Code Noir* did not employ the word "race," it frequently conferred status by references to "black" skin color, which most Europeans of the time (Le Page du Pratz included) believed imparted intellectual and moral inferiority.[46] The preamble to the *Code Noir* of 1724 proclaimed royal authority over "The Province and Colony of Louisiana, which has been well established by a great number of our subjects who are

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[44] De La Chaise, recensement général des habitants de la Louisiane, AC, G1, Vol. 464, n.p.

[45] No census survives from 1729. Africans recaptured by the French and their allies included 100 recovered in February 1730, Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 181; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 284-85, with 20 more taken from the Natchez in 1731, Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 38. Others remained unaccounted for. One anonymous source reported 20 additional Africans were recovered in 1731, and that at least twenty remained at large with the Théoloëls. See Relation of the Last of Attack of the French on the Natchez, January 1731, ASH 67, no. 16, n.p. The Choctaws also held an indeterminate number of Africans who they had captured in January 1730. They refused to return them to the French until they received compensation for their losses. The number of slaves who died or escaped during the war is uncertain. Consequently, one hundred and twenty-six slaves is an extremely conservative estimate of the number of Africans held by the French in Natchez Country in November 1729.

[46] For Le Page du Pratz's conceptualization of African "inferiority," see "Chapter XXV, Negroes, on choosing Negroes; their illnesses and the manner of treating them for cures; the manner in which to govern them," in Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. I, 333; Patricia K. Galloway, "Rhetoric of Difference: Le Page du Pratz on African Slave Management in Eighteenth-Century Louisiana," *French Colonial History* 3 (2003): 1-16. Guillaume Aubert observes that the French used the term "blood" (sang) to denote inherited biological characteristics. See Aubert, "'The Blood of France': Race and Purity of Blood in the French Atlantic World," *WMQ* LXI, no. 3 (2004): 439-78, and Jennifer M. Spear, "Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana," *WMQ* LX, no. 1 (2003): 75-98.

served by *esclaves negres* to cultivate the earth."[47] The decree made several important revisions to the *Code Noir* of 1685. The first decree was far from "color blind," as demonstrated by its name, but its replacement focused far more often on epidermal characteristics. For instance, one of the old law's articles levied a fine of 2,000 pounds of sugar upon free men who had children by their slaves; it contained no reference to color. The slaves involved in the union were subject to seizure and sale to benefit colonial hospitals. The Louisiana version stated: "We forbid our white subjects of either sex to contract in marriage with Blacks (*Noirs*), under pain of punishment and an automatic fine. The revised code allowed slaves to testify in court "only when necessary and only when a White [witness] is unavailable." Article 24 sentenced to lifelong enslavement any "free-born or freed *negres*" who aided a runaway. This punishment replaced the earlier decree's fine of 300 pounds of sugar per day for the same offense. Thus, the *Code Noir* of 1724 finished a process begun four decades earlier by spelling out what had become the norm for chattel slavery in British North America. The Indians did not miss the implications of these developments.[48]

Viewed from a Natchez perspective, members of this African underclass received only minimal amounts of redistributed goods and few changed status. Even after manumission, former slaves had to refrain from "rendering harm or insult to their former masters, mistresses, or the children thereof and will be punished more severely for harming them than if it had been another person."[49] The law also prohibited Euro-African marriages, thereby eliminating among the newcomers a practice that had been a

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[47] *Code Noir*, March 1724, AC A Vol. 22, fol. 119.
[48] The thirteenth article limited the testimony of slaves. See Ibid., Article 13, fols. 120v-121. Article 24, fol. 123.
[49] Ibid. Article 6, fol. 120.

recognized means for social mobility among the Théoloëls. The *Code* also stripped Africans of the ability to practice their faith and instead required that their masters have them baptized and taught the tenets of Roman Catholicism.[50] In essence, a slave lost all rights to his or her cultural identity.

This imported slave regime represented a significant departure from what the Théoloëls had witnessed in earlier decades. When the French arrived in Natchez Country in the 1680s, their treatment of bound laborers resembled Native American practices.[51] La Salle's companions acquired their slaves from other Indian groups, most notably the Quapaws and Taensas. The Koroa slave who escaped from Henri Tonti during the group's first visit to the Natchez quickly found his way to his mother's village.[52] Tonti must have allowed the boy a good deal of autonomy if he slipped away so easily. On the return voyage, another Koroa slave, this one held by a Native American member of the party, saved the expedition by allaying the suspicions of the People of the Sun.[53] The role of spokesman contrasts strongly with the onerous tasks routinely assigned to chattel slaves in France's colony.

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[50] *Code Noir*, March 1724, AC A Vol. 22, Article 2.

[51] For an overview of Native American slavery and the Indian slave trade, see Robbie Ethridge, "Creating the Shatterzone: Indian Slave Traders and the Collapse of the Southeastern Chiefdoms," in *Light on the Path: the Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians*, ed. Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 206-17; Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Almon Wheeler Lauber, *Indian Slavery in Colonial Times Within the Present Limits of the United States* (New York: Columbia University, 1913); Brett Rushforth, "'A Little Flesh We Offer You': The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," *WMQ* LX, no. 4 (2003); "Slavery, the Fox Wars, and the Limits of Alliance," *WMQ* 63, no. 1 (2006): 53-80; Stanford Winston, "Indian Slavery in the Carolina Region," *Journal of Negro History* 19, no. 4 (1934): 431-40.

[52] "Relation de Henri de Tonty," in *Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique septentrionale*, Vol. I, Pierre Margry, ed., (Paris: D. Jouast, 1876): 604; "Relation de Henri de Tonty," 599, "Récit de Nicholas de La Salle" in *Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans l'ouest et dans le sud de L'Amérique septentrionale*, Vol. I, Pierre Margry, ed., (Paris: D. Jouast, 1876): 559.

[53] "Récit de Nicholas de La Salle," 565-66; "The Minet Relation,"in Robert S. Weddle, Mary Christine Morkovsky, and Patricia Kay Galloway, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf: Three Primary Documents*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987): 59.

The Natchez's next exposure to Europeans and their uncompensated laborers came in the canoes of missionaries rowed by "*donnés,*" men who had signed a contract and taken a vow of service as "Secular Domestics" in the Jesuit order.[54] They worked as boatmen, guides, farmers, carpenters, and bodyguards for the Fathers. In return, they received food (which the *donnés* gathered), clothing (which they often made for themselves and the priests), and shelter (which they built for their superiors). Most important, the substantive reward came in the after life, when the *donnés* entered paradise. These men could and did annul their contracts if they wished.[55] At least one of these companions worked alongside Father St. Cosme among the Natchez during the early 1700s.[56] A *donné* named Jacques l'Argilier attended to Jesuit Father Gravier on his journey downriver to Mobile in the winter of 1705.[57] It is likely that he stopped at the mission to the Théoloëls during the trip because the Jesuit later wrote disparagingly of St. Cosme's lack of converts.[58] These arrangements presented little challenge to the Théoloëls' social order since the number of Jesuits and other Catholic priests who visited the People of the Sun remained very small. Moreover, Natchez underlings like the Tattooed Serpent's pipe-bearer performed much the same sort of work for their superiors, with much the same compensation, and followed their "masters" into the "Land of the Spirits."

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[54] Father Jerome Lalament, May 22, 1642, "Mémoire touchant les Domestiques," *JR* 21: 293-301.
[55] Jean Delanglez, "The French Jesuits in Lower Louisiana (1700-1763)" (Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1935): 150-51.
[56] Ibid., 34.
[57] Lettre aux Jésuites du Canada. *Jean Mermet;* aux Cascaskias, March 2, 1706, *JR* 66: 63; Jay Higginbotham, *Old Mobile: Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711*, (Mobile: Museum of the City of Mobile, 1977): 253-54.
[58] Lettre sur les Affaires de la Louisiane. *Jacques Gravier;* Fort St. Louis de la Louisiane, February 23, 1708, *JR* 66: 129.

For the first decades of the colony's existence, when Louisianans exacted labor from those whom they had captured, they followed a pattern familiar to the Natchez. The practice of enslaving prisoners of war had deep roots among Indian nations in the region.

High-status Frenchmen "owned" prestigious Native American slaves. One of these unfortunates, a Chitimacha headman named Framboise, had been held by Bienville. The governor later released the Indian and allowed him to return home.[59] Le Page du Pratz held a female Chitimacha purchased from a *habitant* living among the Acolapissas. When she attempted to escape while the Dutchman visited the Chitimacha villages, her parents returned her to him.[60]

The People of the Sun also had recent experiences with the enslavement of prisoners of war by Europeans. Although the number and fate of the Apple and Jenzenaque people captured by the French in the Third Natchez War remains unknown, their lot was probably not a pleasant one. The colonists executed and scalped several prisoners upon the orders of Bienville, but some Louisianans intended different uses for other detainees. During that conflict, at least one colonist died in trying to seize an Apple Villager as a slave.[61] The Choctaw war leader, Red Shoe, captured four Jenzenaque women while fighting as an ally of Louisiana.[62] Whether the Choctaw sold them to the colonists or brought them back to his homeland is uncertain. Throughout the war, Europeans and their supporters demonstrated that they could and would take Natchez from their homes for use as unfree laborers. This practice, as disturbing as it

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[59] Paul du Poisson [Father Poisson] aux Akensas, October 3, 1727, *JR* 67: 293.
[60] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. I, 82-83, 114.
[61] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 106.
[62] Ibid. 109.

must have been to the People of the Sun, did not depart from established behavior in eighteenth-century Native America.

Chattel slavery, as practiced by the colonists around Fort Rosalie during the 1720s, looked quite different from native forms of enslavement. Natchez's homesteads and villages gave them perfect venues to observe the French dominate Africans in ways that they had not seen when the European settlers were few in number and slaves were scarce. As the newcomers poured into the region, the Natchez also had more opportunities to learn of the Superior Council's ongoing legislative program to reduce Indians, free as well as captive, to an inferior social and legal category. This derogation contradicted earlier colonial policy that granted Native American converts the same liberties as those enjoyed all Frenchmen.[63] By the late 1720s, France's racial policies had arrived in Natchez Country with a vengeance, ready to swallow the People of the Sun.

The French brought these policies to North America during the first two decades of the colony's existence. Louisianans needed to find ways to control the Native American slaves who made up a significant portion of the population of Mobile.[64] As part of their solution, the Superior Council extended certain statutes in the *Code Noir* of 1685 to include Indians. The most comprehensive of these revisions was the *arrêt* of November 12, 1714. Article 23 of the *Code Noir* originally stated, "a slave who strikes his Master…or his mistress …shall be punished by death." The colony's 1714 edict

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[63] Acte pour l'établissement de la Compagnie des Cent Associés pour le Commerce du Canada, contenant les articles accordés à la dite Compagnie par M. Le Cardinal de Richelieu, le 29 Avril 1627, transcribed in *Edits, ordonnances royaux, et arrêts du Conseil d'Etat du Roi concernant le Canada*, I (Quebec, 1854), 10.

[64] In 1708, eighty Native American slaves and two hundred and seventy-nine Europeans lived in Mobile. Census of Mobile, August 8, 1708, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 31.

spelled out the manner of execution—hanging—and then added another clause: "'*sauvagesses*' [sic] who strike their masters or mistresses will suffer the same penalty." The female gender of the noun reflected the Council's preoccupation with the large number of women held by French men. The owners of the condemned were to be compensated by the state at the rate of 150 *livres* per Indian and 300 *livres* for each African. The same decree amended the *Code*'s Article XV, which forbade slaves to carry "offensive weapons or large staffs," by including "arrows or war-clubs." It did, however, provide exemptions for "*Sauvages* to hunt or fish on behalf of their masters or sent someplace Far away in their Service."[65]

Within a year, Louisiana's leaders directed their attention to another set of problems: the sexual unions between French men and native women. Jean-Baptiste Dubois Duclos, the comptroller at Mobile, noted:

> ... although there are several examples of Indian women who have contracted such marriages especially at Illinois it is not because they have become Frenchified, if one may use that term, but it because those who have married them have themselves become almost Indians…
>
> Moreover, he cited skin color as a source of trouble:
>
> …the adulteration of such marriages will cause in the whiteness and purity of the blood in the children…experience shows every day that children that come from such marriages are of extremely dark complexion, so that in the course of time, if no Frenchmen come to Louisiana, the colony would become a colony of half-breeds who are naturally idlers, libertines and even more rascals as those of Peru, Mexico, and the other Spanish colonies give evidence.[66]

In a subsequent letter, Duclos recommended that if such marriages must occur, then the wives should come from the northern nations since their women were more industrious and more "white." The Superior Council included Duclos' later observations with its

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[65] Regulation of the Superior Council, November 12, 1714, AC, A, Vol. 23, fols. 5-6.
[66] Duclos to Pontchartrain, Dec. 25, 1715, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 205.

official dispatches to Paris.[67] Although the Ministry of Marine took exception to the Council's circumvention of long-standing precedents, it tacitly accepted the Louisianans' addendums by failing to overrule the provisions pertaining to Indians.[68]

During the first decades of the French colonial project, their laws had little impact on the People of the Sun; there were far too few Europeans or slaves to make an impression. When the population of Africans and colonists in Natchez country more than doubled between 1726 and 1729, the Théoloëls could see that something drastic was taking place among the immigrants. The brutality with which the Europeans treated their slaves would have been impossible for the Natchez to miss given the degree of integration among the inhabitants from the Old World and New. The Tioux warrior's mutilation of a White Earth Concession horse suggests that the Indians were aware of at least some of the visible displays of French domination over Africans.

Moreover, the Natchez discovered that the colonists also perceived Indians as "racial" others, ineligible for the rights and privileges of the King's subjects. It is highly improbable that the Natchez knew about the nuances of Gallic law or the exact content of every proclamation designed to relegate them to a colonial under class. The Superior Council, however, provided for public readings of these laws, making it likely that the Théoloëls heard something about them. For instance, the edict mandating death for those who struck their masters clearly warned, "listen well, men who are 18 or women who are 20 years old."[69]

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[67] Minutes of the Council, September 1, 1716, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 218.
[68] One side note left by a government official in Paris read "This regulation no longer remains, the Code Noir has the power to police slaves." Regulations of the Superior Council, November 12, 1714, AC, A, Vol. 23, fol. 5.
[69] Regulations of the Superior Council, November 12, 1714, AC, A, Vol. 23, fol. 5.

Although what the Natchez heard about these earlier laws remains uncertain, it is safe to assume that at least one decree reached the ears of the Théoloëls with full force. In late December 1728, the colonial government forbade "all Frenchmen or other white Subjects of the King from contracting marriages with the Savages." Native American widows of Frenchmen could not inherit their husbands' property. If the widows remained in European settlements, they and their offspring would receive an annual pension from the estate's executor. Those who returned to their own people would abandon any claims to the dead men's possessions. With a stroke of the pen, New Orleans demolished a Natchez tradition of intermarriage that dated back to the earliest days of the colony. Moreover, marriage laws that had applied only to Africans now held for Indians, slave or free.[70]

By the summer of 1729, the French posed several threats to the Natchez order of things. First, in their drive for fresh land for their tobacco plantations, Louisianans not only intruded upon the pastures and scrub between Théoloël villages, but on the villages themselves. Second, the colonists' racialization of Indians overturned an established means of diplomacy and culture exchange: marriage. The expansion of the European and African populations around Fort Rosalie gave new weight to the derogatory edicts issued by the Superior Council during the previous decades. The People of the Sun could now directly observe the effects of racism on enslaved Africans. It was equally apparent that many of the laws that the French employed to dominate the "*noirs*" were now being applied to "*sauvages*." Captain De Chépart's ultimatum demonstrated the imminence of these threats. Worse, for the Natchez, the old diplomatic practices no

[70] Arrêt du Conseil Supérieur de la Louisiane concernant le marriage des Français avec les sauvagesses, December 18, 1728, AC A, Vol 23, fol. 103.

longer worked. In fact, one of these traditions, the close relationship that some Natchez women enjoyed with European men, undermined the nation's position. Despite their efforts to maintain their former relationship with the French, the People of the Sun were sliding towards a status not unlike that of African slaves, a status underwritten by a discourse of racial categories.

*Plotting Race*

During a meeting to discuss ways to combat this growing threat, one Natchez leader referred to redness as a source of a shared Indian identity. His use of the term red men in this context marks a crucial milestone in the development of a new racial category. Rather than use the discourse of race like the French— to control slaves—the old man used racial terminology to unite his people against enslavement. The elder's words froze a moment in the Indians' process of plotting red men as a separate category equal to "white" and superior to "black" within the system of color ranking devised by Europeans. Other aspects of new directions in Natchez politics, such as the lack of female participation in the deliberations, also became evident. The absence of decisive leadership by the Great Sun in the decisions taken by the nation's elders indicated yet another shift in the nation's political equilibrium. The appeal to a racial identity helped to redress the internal imbalances generated by these other changes. More important, the Théoloëls were among the first Native Americans to employ this identity to restore balance with the external world. They planned to apply the power generated by their newfound unity to destroy the impudent immigrants among them.

Before this happened, two more meetings took place between De Chépart and representatives of the Natchez. In the first of these, the Sun of the Apple Village carried a message from the council of Théoloël elders. He informed the officer of the losses

that they would sustain if they abandoned their cornfields so early in the season. De Chépart immediately rejected the Natchez's argument for not ceding the Apple Village. The second council proposed a different strategy. In order to buy time for their people, the Indian leaders requested that the captain allow them to stay on the land until the villagers could harvest their crops. In return, the Natchez headmen promised payments of corn, bear's oil, and poultry as quit rent. The Frenchman, flush with confidence because of these concessions, ended the second meeting with a threat. If the Sun failed to deliver the merchandise, De Chépart would "order him to be bound hand and foot and sent down river to New Orleans when the next galley arrived."[71] The captain's impudent tone struck a nerve—being chained and shipped off to the provincial capital resembled the Europeans' treatment of slaves. The Indian also may have recalled Director Guenot's imprisonment of a prestigious Apple Villager, an incident that helped to spark the Second Natchez War. The Sun returned to his town and called an assembly of the Natchez elders to make plans to resist the eviction.[72]

Five or six days later, the Théoloël council met again.[73] The accounts of these gatherings written by Dumont de Montigny and Le Page du Pratz contain some interesting differences. According to Dumont de Montigny, the Natchez elders offered a number of plans, all of which they rejected until the all-out attack on the French was proposed.[74] In Le Page du Pratz's account, the oldest member of the council gave this

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[71] Dumont de Montigny collapsed all three encounters into one meeting. See Dumont de Montigny *Mémoires Historiques sur La Louisiane*, Vol. II, 133. See also Diron to Minister, February 10, 1730, AC C 13A, fol. 362v.
[72] The accounts of De Chépart's negotiations came from Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, 128-34; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 230-33.
[73] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 236. Le Page du Pratz was not at the meeting, of course. He may have derived his version from the Tattooed Arm, who he interviewed in 1731. She probably heard of the council's debate from her son, the Great Sun. Ibid., 327.
[74] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 133-35.

speech during the meeting:

> For a long time we have perceived that the proximity of the French has done us more harm than good, we older men see this, but the young people do not see it. The merchandise of the French gives our youth pleasure, but in effect, it serves to debauch our young women and corrupt the blood of the Nation and make our women arrogant and idle. They do the same to the young men, and the married men work themselves to death to feed their family and satisfy their children. Before the French arrived in this country, we were men who knew how to be content with what we had and it satisfied us, we strode boldly on all our paths because we were our own masters; but today we grope along fearing we will find thorns, we walk as slaves, and it will not be long before we are [slaves] since the French already treat us as if we are.[75]

The old man's rhetoric highlighted several disturbances in the Natchez order of things caused by the Europeans. The first and most important of these entailed the impact that the newcomers had on Natchez women: "to debauch our young women and corrupt the blood of the Nation and make our women arrogant and idle." The unions of French men and Indian women, a ubiquitous arrangement throughout colonial North America, had become a problem. For years, intermarriage worked on behalf of the Natchez by integrating Europeans and other migrant groups into their polity. When the Superior Council forbade "Frenchmen or other white subjects of the King from contracting marriages with 'savages,'" it dehumanized the Théoloëls. The proscription on widows' property rights effectively removed economic incentives from the equation. Moreover, it removed them in a manner particularly egregious to a society that traced descent through its women. After the decree, the presence of the French indeed corrupted the nation, relegating the Natchez to a racial underclass.

The elder also decried the material ambitions of the wives of his countrymen. According to him, husbands had to "work themselves to death" to satisfy their mates' demands. His jeremiad highlighted the second set of problems. The commercialization

[75] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 238-39.

of exchanges drove up the price of European goods. Harvesting more food or pelts merely increased their supply, devaluing them further. Deerskins and other forest products began to supplement foodstuffs as a trade commodity. This forced Natchez men to spend more time hunting away from their families. Their absence led to decline in the number of warriors available to defend the nation or to clear the fields for planting.

Native Americans had been working on ways to counteract the growing power of European colonists by the time De Chépart made his threat. They were forging a racial category of their own as a diplomatic tool to build consensus among Indian peoples by capitalizing on shared biological characteristics. Elements of this emerging Native American discourse can be detected in the words of the same Théoloël elder as he continued his speech before the council:

> What are we waiting for? Do we want to allow the French to multiply to a point where we are no longer in a state to oppose their efforts? What will the other nations say? We are the most spiritual of all the red Men; they will say that we have less spirit than the other People. Why wait any longer? Let us free ourselves and show that we are true men who can make due with what we have…Let us send the Calumet of Peace to all the other Nations in the Country, make them realize that the French were stronger in our neighborhood then elsewhere [and] make us feel that they want to enslave us, when they become strong enough, they will be stronger than all of the Nations of the Land, that it is their interest to prevent such a tragedy; that to keep this from happening, they should join us in the destruction of all of the French, on the same day and at the same hour, that day will be the same day that the French Commandant dictated for our eviction…[76]

The Natchez elder explicitly invoked an identity that his people shared with other Native Americans when he called the Théoloëls "the most spiritual of all of the red

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[76] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 239-40. Dumont de Montigny's account mentions Natchez embassies to their neighbors. See Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 135. See also Jon Muller, *Mississippian Political Economy* (New York: Plenum Press, 1997), 64-68; Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 130-34; Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," 625-44.

Men." The elder's speech is one of several recorded by French and English observers during the middle and late 1720s of Indians using the color "red" to identify themselves in contrast to Europeans and Africans.

The Natchez had employed the term "red men" for several years before the elder made his speech. Le Page de Pratz provided a brief narrative of his conversation with his "friend, the chief guardian of the [Natchez] temple" that took place in the spring of 1725. The Dutchman asked the man what he knew of the Deluge. After some hesitation, the Indian told him "that the ancient Words taught to all of the red men that nearly all of them had perished by water, except for a very small number who had saved themselves on a high Mountain." The steward's response pleased Le Page du Pratz, who often questioned Théoloëls for collective memories that would substantiate biblical stories. The guardian's reply also contained a reference to a collective identity shared by the Natchez and other Native Americans.[77]

The Dutch author also recorded the idiom "red men" in another passage relating part of the Natchez origin story. Again, the guardian of the temple was Le Page du Pratz's informant. The Indian spoke of Théoloëls' journey from the West and their arrival on the banks of the Mississippi. The Natchez's ancestors established communities on either side of the river and were "people who call themselves red men."[78] The colonist confessed that he could not determine the origins of these peoples because "they no longer had a Tradition as strong as the Natchez." Nancy Shoemaker suggests that Le Page du Pratz was referring to the Houmas, whose name means "red"

[77] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 27.
[78] Ibid., 87.

in several Muskogean languages.[79]

At almost exactly the same time that Le Page du Pratz was gathering his ethnographic data, other Frenchmen recorded the term's use by a member of one of the *Petites Nations*. In early 1725, Father Raphael reported on a Taensa headman's tale of a separate creation:

> Long ago, he said, and so long ago that the winters can no longer be counted, that is to say years, there were three men in a cave, one white, one red, and one black. The white man went out first and he took the good road that led him into a fine hunting ground. You will notice, if you please, Sir, that these poor people know of no greater happiness than that of hunting. The red man who is the Indian, for they call themselves in their language "Red Men," went out of the cave second. He went astray from the good road and took another which led him into a country where the hunting was less abundant. The black man, who is the negro, having been the third to go out, got entirely lost in a very bad country in which he did not find anything on which to live. Since that time the red man and the black man have been looking for the white man to restore them to the good road.[80]

The Taensa storyteller spoke of this new category—the red man—hitherto unrecorded in contemporary French documents. (Le Page du Pratz did not publish his memoires until the 1750s.) He associated material well being with the European "white man," who held the key to the prosperity for the other two. Most important, according to Father Raphael, a man hardly predisposed to Indian mythology, Native Americans, not Europeans, created the expression.[81]

Taken together, the Natchez and Taensa stories suggest that the appellation originated somewhere in the Lower Mississippi Valley. According to Marvin Jeter, the Natchez and related groups migrated into the region along a route that followed the

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[79] Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 132. See also, Jack Campisis, "Houmas" in *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 632-41.
[80] Father Raphael to Abbé Raguet, May 15, 1725, *MPAFD*, Vol. II, 485-486.
[81] For another discussion of "redness" in English-Native American diplomacy, see Alden T. Vaughan, "From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American-Indian," *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (1982): 917-53.

Arkansas River.[82] This substantiates Théoloël legends that their people came from a homeland far to the west before they took a long journey to the place where Le Page du Pratz saw them.[83] The Taensas also lived along the Mississippi, where La Salle encountered them south of the Arkansas River in 1682.[84] During his trip upriver in 1699, D'Iberville found them in roughly the same area, a day and a half's journey north of the Théoloëls.[85] Father St. Cosme reported that the Taensas spoke the same language as the Natchez and shared cultural practices.[86] According to Swanton, the Taensas migrated south from the mouth of the Arkansas River and by the middle 1710s, had established a village near Mobile at Bienville's invitation.[87] They carried with them the stories of the red men that one of them related to Father Raphael, after adding a generous role for the white men and a subordinate one for Africans.

Indians in other parts of the Southeast also used the idiom as part of their diplomatic language. Less than a year after Father Raphael talked to the Taensas' envoy, Creek and Cherokee ambassadors met in Charles Town at a conference sponsored by the South Carolina government.[88] When the Lower Creek contingent

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[82] Marvin D. Jeter, "Tunicans West of the Mississippi: A Summary of Early Historic and Archaeology Evidence," in *Archaeological Report No. 18, The Protohistoric Period in the Mid-South: 1700-1700, Proceedings of the 1983 Mid-South Archaeological Conference*, ed. David H. Dye and Ronald C. Brister (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1986).
[83] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III, 27.
[84] "Récit de Nicholas de La Salle," 556.
[85] Pierre Le Moyne D'Iberville, *Iberville's Gulf Journal*, trans. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Mobile: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 72. Shoemaker argued for a pre-contact identity of redness, citing the Taensas role in developing the idiom. See Shoemaker, "How the Indians Got to be Red," 633-35.
[86] Letter of St. Cosme, August 1, 1701, quoted in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 22. See also Galloway and Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 598, 600; Marvin D. Jeter, "From Prehistory through Protohistory to Ethnohistory in and near the Northern Lower Mississippi Valley," in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, ed. Robbie Etheridge and Charles M. Hudson (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), 206-13.
[87] Bienville to Pontchartrain, June 15, 1715, *MPAFD,* Vol. III, 183.
[88] For the background to these negotiations, see Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1760-1732*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1928), 268-70; Stephen J. Oatis, *A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Frontiers in the Era of the Yamasee War*, *1680-1730* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 252-55.

arrived at the negotiations a month late, Long Warrior, the main Cherokee spokesman, challenged their representative Chigilee. Long Warrior began his address to the South Carolina Assembly and Indian delegations by laying a white wing on a table before President Middleton, the de facto governor of the colony. He then turned to Chigilee and said,

> I am come from a greate way and have stayed a long while to see you and it has been by the Governor's Desire. How comes it there are so few of you here at Last? you have done a greate Deal of mischief to the white People Since the first Peace…It is now come to this. We are all the Red People now met together. Our flesh is both alike, but now we must Talk with you…[89]

Much like the Taensa leader, Long Warrior conflated Cherokee and Creek identities with an invocation of redness. Moreover, he contrasted their shared identity with those of the "white People." A little later in his speech, Long Warrior clarified what he meant by the latter term when he addressed Chigilee again:

> Why do you go the French & Spaniards? what do you get by it? How can you goe to so many white People? this great Town is able to supply us with everything we want, more than the French or Spaniards.

For Long Warrior, other European colonists fit into a category that they had created for themselves: white. The Indians, whether they were Lower Creeks or Cherokees, fit into another grouping that they too had created for themselves; they were all "Red People" because their "flesh is both alike."

These simultaneous employments of redness by different Indians, meeting in widely dispersed locations and speaking before French and English colonists, demonstrated its growing importance as part of Native American diplomacy. It also presents a conundrum: did the Cherokees develop their ideas of redness independently,

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[89] "At a Conference of the Headmen of the Cherokees and the Lower Creeks in the Presence of Both Houses of the assembly, January 26, 1726," British Public Records Office, Colonial Office, 5: Original Correspondence, American and West Indies, Vol. 387, fol. 137.

without inspiration from other Indians? This indeed may have been the case.[90] Perhaps Chigilee and other Lower Creeks had heard about redness on their trips to French towns, possibly at Mobile. News of this ideology may have spread north to the Cherokee villages. Long Warrior, in order to promote peaceful relations, may have been using an idiom that Chigilee had already embraced. It is also possible that the Creeks and Cherokees began to call themselves red men for the same reason as the Natchez: to counteract derogation by European colonials. South Carolinian legal practices conflated the status of Africans and Indians, much like the French were doing in Louisiana in the first decades of the eighteenth century. South Carolina's Assembly differentiated between "Indians or white persons living within this Province" in its 1711 legislation regulating trade with Native Americans.[91] The next year, South Carolina made children born to enslaved Indians slaves for life.[92]

Although the exact origin of redness remains obscure, within a short time after Long Warrior and the Natchez temple guardian called themselves red men, the practice spread quickly. Five years after Chigilee's meeting with Long Warrior, Alibamon Creek diplomats were advising the Choctaws that "among the red men they ought to do the same thing and never again speak of making war on each other and scalping each other, and that was the way to live in peace in their houses and see their children grow up without anxiety."[93]

These uses of redness by different Native American nations constitute the earliest

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[90] Shoemaker gave a detailed analysis of the Cherokee's role in developing the term. Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," 639-43.
[91] Thomas Cooper, ed., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, Vol. II (Columbia: A.S. Johnston, 1970 [1837]), 357.
[92] A. Leon Higginbotham, *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process, the Colonial Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 169; Alden T. Vaughan, "From White Man to Redskin," 935.
[93] Lusser to Maurepas, *MPAFD*, Vol I, February 21, 1730, 92-93.

evidence that non-Europeans had co-opted the discourse of racial categories created in the Old World, inserted their own, and were using this discourse as a means to acquire influence in intercultural negotiations. The Natchez elder's address to his countrymen, Long Warrior's harangue of his Lower Creek counterpart, the temple guardian's interviews with Le Page du Pratz, and the Taensan headman's conversation with the Capuchin priest all referred to an identity shared by the indigenous peoples of the region. The "red men" were not Europeans nor were they African slaves, and they possessed common interests vis-à-vis the French and the English. Their rhetoric turned a set of social and political practices based on skin color, originally designed to control African laborers, against its creators. The Natchez and other nations had begun to call themselves "red men" as a means of empowerment and as a tool to protect their sovereignty in the face of European encroachment.

Immediately upon the close of the elder's address, the Natchez began to prepare for the attack. "The most spiritual of the red Men" held their plan in the strictest secrecy and did not reveal it even to the female Suns.[94] Dumont de Montigny noted that the Théoloëls gave no sign that they were getting ready to move to a new location to comply with the captain's demands. "This alone should have aroused the suspicions of De Chépart, if he had been capable of some prudence."[95]

The council's conspiratorial meeting heralded several changes in Natchez politics. From that point on, factionalism disappeared among the Théoloël men, and they conducted themselves with a singular purpose. The People of the Sun no longer acted like an aggregation of villages under the contested leadership of a ruling clan. Through

[94] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 242.
[95] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 136.

their opposition to the French, generated over years of declining expectations that the Europeans would act according to Théoloël standards of "civilized" behavior and crystallized by De Chépart's arrogant demands, the Natchez finally united. Although their polity still consisted of numerous towns of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, the Théoloël men determined that the newcomers from overseas would no longer be a part of the Natchez world.

The account of the council's meeting also marked another shift in the political climate of the nation. The voice of the Great Sun, whose uncle had advocated for the French, went unrecorded. This silence implies that the balance of power had shifted not only from those who were for coexistence, but also from the primary leader of the Grand Village. If he spoke, either Le Page du Pratz or his informant did not think the young Sun's words worth remembering.

Despite the accord reached by the men of the council, a small but significant sector of the Natchez elite refused to countenance the destruction of the Europeans among them. A handful of Théoloël women, the mother of the Great Sun among them, attempted to thwart the council's plan. It may have been because of their relationships with Frenchmen—part of the Natchez's tradition of absorbing immigrant groups—that the men left them out of the debates. The women's unions with Europeans, rather than reinforcing the power of the Mississippian chiefdom, had disrupted its domestic equilibrium just as the elder had stated at the council. Their loss of access to the decision-making forum worked in the favor of the anti-immigrant faction. Events after the meeting proved the old man's words; these women tried to warn the French. Had they succeeded, they would have undone the headmen's plans and exposed their kin to

the ire of the Louisianans. The French had indeed made the Natchez women "arrogant;" at least when they tried to sabotage the elders' plot.

According to Le Page du Pratz, the Great Sun's mother, the Tattooed Arm, vehemently opposed the attack. Although the plan remained a secret, the uneasiness that pervaded the Natchez villages gave her reason to suspect something was afoot. Sometime after the council meeting, she asked her son to accompany her to the Flour Village to visit a sick relative.[96] When they reached a secluded section of the path, the Tattooed Arm stopped and began to interrogate the Great Sun. She reminded him of her years of maternal care and that even though he was the son of a Frenchman, she held her own blood "more dear than that of foreigners."[97] Upon hearing her harangue, the Great Sun revealed the details of the plan to destroy the French. Expressing a fear for his life, she tried to dissuade him from participating. Several times during the conversation, the Tattooed Arm referred to "red men" as a category separate from the French. She told him that she was "an old woman, I do not care if it is the French or the Red Men who kill me…but you are dear to me. If your elders believed that it will be as easy to overcome the French as [it is to overcome] red men, they are grossly mistaken, the French have resources that red men do not."[98] Even the most pro-French Natchez, a woman who bore a Frenchman's child, used the term to differentiate her people from those who had come from overseas.

The Tattooed Arm tried several times to warn the colonists. She sent word of the impending attack to "young women who were in love with Frenchmen" but to no avail.

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[96] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 246.
[97] Le Page du Pratz did not identify the father of the Great Sun except to say that he had been dead for some time. Ibid., 247.
[98] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 249.

In another instance, the Tattooed Arm stopped a soldier and told him of the plot. He went to De Chépart with the story. The commandant clapped the man in irons for cowardice. The Natchez woman later informed Sub-Lieutenant Massé, who relayed the message to the commandant, only to have it dismissed as fantasy. De Chépart then ordered the officer to place himself under arrest.[99] In all, seven Frenchmen who attempted to alert the commandant, the interpreter Papin among them, were imprisoned for their efforts.[100]

De Chépart eventually investigated the reports in his own fashion. In the words of Fort Rosalie's preceding commandant, "he sent the interpreter to ask the Indians to learn whether it was true that they wished to kill us. That was certainly very discreet!"[101] The Natchez of course denied the plot and continued to pay tribute. The Théoloëls even worked this act of obeisance into their strategy; the Indians planned to spring their coup the next time that they visited the captain to make their payment. The time for talk was over.

Over the course of six years, the last vestiges of the old diplomacy vanished. Broutin and the Tattooed Serpent had managed to keep the peace at the White Earth Concession. De Chépart had replaced Broutin as the commandant of Fort Rosalie and the Natchez headman had died. Bienville returned to France and a former slave ship captain took his place as governor. By the close of the 1720s, the mutually fruitful relationship between Natchez and French headmen had collapsed. Tobacco agriculture

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[99] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 139; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 151-54.
[100] Périer to Maurepas, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD, Vol. I,* 62; Broutin to the Company, August 7, 1730, *MPAFD, Vol. I,* 127-28; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 137, 139-40; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 254.
[101] Broutin to the Company, August 7, 1730, *MPAFD, Vol. I,* 128. Périer to Maurepas, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD*, *Vol. I,* 62.

injected hundreds of Frenchmen and African slaves into the plains west of the Grand Village. The former cared little for the old conventions, and the latter were living examples of the degradation the colonists were about to visit upon the People of the Sun. In response, the Théoloëls took up the rubric of racial categories and used them to transform redness into an ideology that helped them to overcome the factionalism that had been endemic to Mississippian chiefdoms. In their coming struggle, the "red" Natchez acted as one.

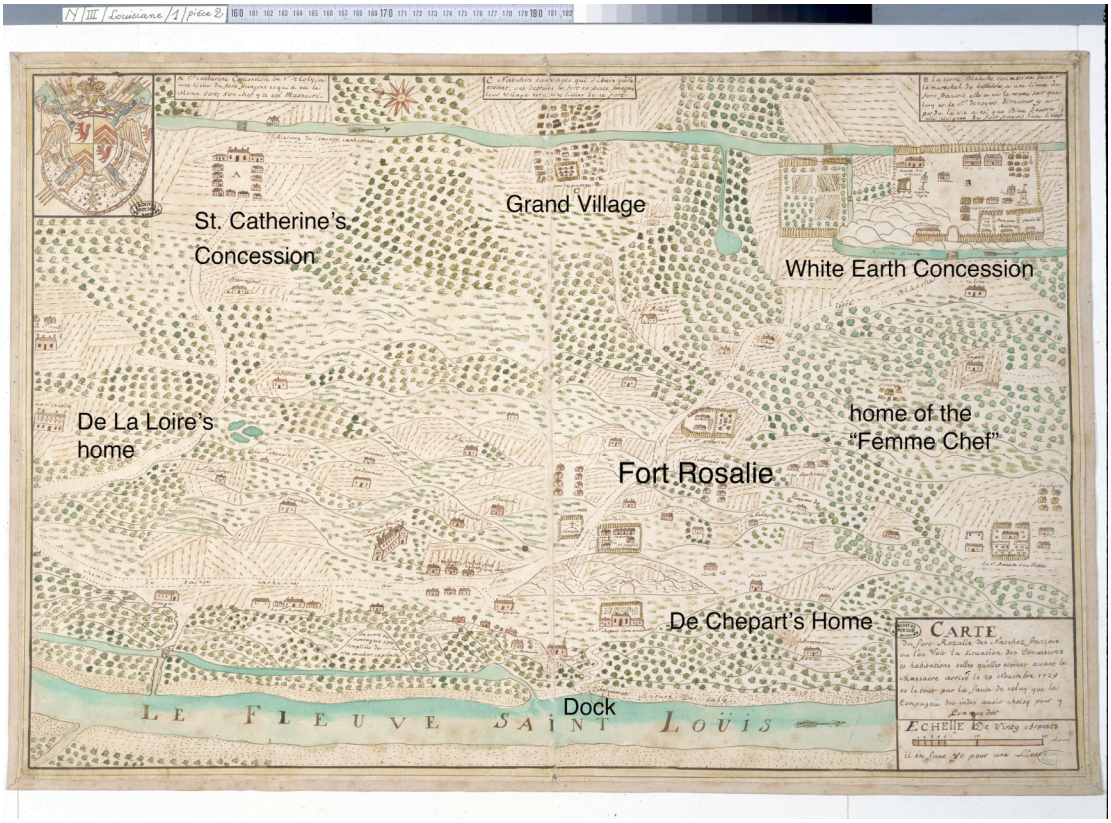


**Figure 4.1 Dumont de Montigny, Map of the Environs of Fort Rosalie,** N-III-Louisiane-1-2, Archives Nationales, Paris.

## Chapter Five: Fallen Forts

Three days of artillery barrages and Governor Périer's threat to use his cannons to reduce the Théoloëls' fort "to ashes" produced the desired effect.[1] The Great Sun ordered his people to surrender to the French. On the morning of January 25, 1731, the White Woman, the wife of the Great Sun, emerged from the defense works on the banks of the Black River. She led her nation's women and children out of the entrenchments and into captivity. Approximately four hundred and fifty women and children became prisoners of the Europeans. Forty-six warriors also laid down their arms later that afternoon.[2] The next day the French army demolished the Indians' fort and shipped their captives downriver to the provincial capital of New Orleans.

The capture of the Théoloëls' "royal family" came after thirteen months of fighting during which five forts fell: the first two belonging to the French, the other three to the Théoloëls. It also marked a turning point in the Fourth Natchez War that started with the destruction of Fort Rosalie in November 1729. Historians of French Louisiana generally characterized the Théoloëls' defeat on the Black River as the end of the Natchez's ability to operate as an independent polity. Most of them also viewed the war as the termination of a classic cycle of Europeans' encounter, settlement, encroachment, and subjugation of Native Americans.[3] Throughout this work, I have labored to avoid

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[1] Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France avec le Journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionnale*, Vol. II (Paris: Chez Nyon Fils, 1744), 492.

[2] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 40; Relation of the Last of Attack of the French on the Natchez, January 1731, ASH 67, no. 16, u.p; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 493-94.

[3] See Andrew C. Albrecht, "Indian-French Relations at Natchez," *American Anthropologist* 48, no. 3 (1946): 321-54; Mathé Allain, *Not Worth a Straw: French Colonial Policy and the Early Years of Louisiana* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1988); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: the First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 88-90; Verner Winslow Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1928); W. J. Eccles, *The French in North America 1500-1783* (Lansing: Michigan State University

the teleology inherent in the historiography of French Louisiana. Nonetheless, the defeat and exile of the Natchez, at first glance, appears to follow that pattern of conquest. Elements of the Théoloëls' methods, however, persisted long after the collapse of their polity, not the least of which was the discourse of redness.

The defeat and death of the Sun of the Flour Village at the gates of Fort Jean-Baptiste in October 1731 signaled the end of the People of the Sun's autonomy. Nonetheless, one aspect of their political culture continued to function during the war: the racialization of the Native-European diplomatic landscape. This discourse survived the conflict to become an enduring legacy in North America. The Natchez elders' invocation of redness succeeded in unifying their people. They used this new unity to convince nearly all of their countrymen to keep silent about the plot to destroy the colonists. This same strategy was already spreading to other nations of the region as a means to power, but it brought little long-term benefit to the Théoloëls. Another aspect of Natchez diplomacy—women in the role of ambassadors—lost its prominence in the region's intercultural politics by the end of the war. This chapter will explore the developments affecting these two characteristics during the first years of the 1730s.

The groundwork for these changes occurred before the French had a chance to react to the destruction of their settlements and post in Natchez country. The first part of this chapter reviews the Théoloëls' victory at Fort Rosalie. It then examines the manner in

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Press, 1998), 186; Patricia Galloway and Jason Baird Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," in *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 609-10; Michael J. Foret, "War or Peace? Louisiana, the Choctaws, and the Chickasaws, 1733-1735," in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafeyette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995); Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana: The French Domination* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 1866; reprint, 1998), 396-441; John Francis McDermott, *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969); James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Alan Taylor, *American Colonies*, *The Penguin History of the United States* (New York: Viking, 2001), 389-90; Mason Wade, "French Indian Policies," in *HBNAI*, Vol. 4, 26; Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier, 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 92-109.

which the People of the Sun treated those who fell into their hands afterwards. Their actions reveal a developing pattern of racial hierarchies that demonstrated both continuity and change in Natchez social practices. These trends continued among the Théoloëls throughout the increasingly perilous times as the colony concentrated its resources and those of its Native American allies in preparation for a counteroffensive. The second section recounts the first French campaign against the Natchez. In the months before their counterstroke, the French destroyed a settlement of peaceful Indians in order to provoke enmity between Native Americans and Africans. This section also covers the Natchez's use of female go-betweens who helped buy them a year of freedom, albeit without security. The chapter concludes with Louisiana's military victory on the Black River. The final phase of the war passed without the aid of the Natchez diplomatic virtuousos who meditiated during previous encounters with the Europeans. The elimination of one of the Théoloëls' high-ranking women removed a seasoned negotiator from their ranks. Moreover, the mistrust created by their surprise attack on Fort Rosalie in November 1729 and their escape in January 1730 degraded their credibility with the French. Consequently, the politics of difference took over as the currency of intercultural relations, replacing the more inclusive practices that had been the standard of Mississippian affairs. Although the discourse of racial categories failed to save the Natchez polity, it lingered on in the region as other nations adopted it for their own ends.

### *Prisoners of the Suns*

By the summer of 1729, the Natchez had decided to rid their land of the immigrants from Europe; they could no longer pretend that these newcomers were candidates for absorption into their polity. They began their effort with an attack on Fort Rosalie and

the nearby plantations on November 28 of that year. The Indians sealed their victory by killing all but two of the adult male colonists. The Théoloëls' treatment of the former African slaves and French women and children, however, suggests that they employed several other strategies to capitalize on their success. Both change and continuity are evident in these strategies. The first of these reinforced the authority of the Théoloëls' ruling couple. The surviving European women and children, numbering about one hundred and fifty souls, were placed under the supervision of the "White Woman," the wife of the Great Sun, and put to work mending clothes and performing chores for their captors. None of the colonial sources hint that these women would become brides for Natchez men. Thus, the People of the Sun departed from their established practice of absorbing newcomers into their polity when they subjected the captive Europeans to unpaid servitude. The Théoloëls also exploited the divisions between the "*blancs*" and "*noirs*," employing the latter as workers, hunters, and soldiers while holding the former as prisoners. They employed biological rather than cultural characteristics to identify their supporters—in this case, Africans—which provides further evidence that the Théoloëls had become adept at using the Europeans' discourse of racial categories to their advantage.

This process of racialization began after the Théoloël elders decided to evict their impudent neighbors. Biding their time, they maintained a cordial façade toward the *habitants* and soldiers through the summer and autumn of 1729, lulling the French leadership into a false sense of security. As far as Captain De Chépart was concerned, the Théoloëls were in full compliance with the terms proposed by the Sun of the Apple Village.

On November 27, 1728, a demi-galley arrived at the docks below the fort carrying supplies for the colonists and merchandise for the *Compagnie* store. It also bore two important passengers, Jean-Daniel Kolly and his son. Kolly had traveled from Paris to inspect St. Catherine's Concession, the plantation that he and Jean Deucher had established ten years earlier.[4] Still oblivious to the Natchez elder's plan, De Chépart and some of his officers attended a feast at the Grand Village that night. According to Dumont de Montigny, "Together they drank and delighted themselves, passing the night in debauchery until three in the morning, then the Frenchmen retired to the fort to recover from their fatigues."[5]

The next morning, De Chépart awoke to the sound of a drum played by a Natchez man who had come with his compatriots to pay their rent. The hung-over captain appeared at the door of his house in his dressing gown. He smiled with self-satisfaction for disregarding the rumors of an attack when he saw the Indians parading toward him carrying pots of bear oil and baskets of corn. As the elders of the Natchez nation marched in cadence bearing the calumet, warriors filtered through gaps in the fort's palisades and took up position around the post. Others visited acquaintances among the Europeans and borrowed muskets ostensibly to hunt game for a feast in

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[4] *Extrait de l'acte de Société entre la Cie des Indes et les associés en la Concession de Ste. Catherine*, September 4, 1719, AC G1 Vol. 465 n.p.; Lettre au Père d'Avaugour, Procureur des Missions de l'Amérique Septentrionale de Mathurin le Petit [Fr. le Petit]*;* Nouvelle Orleans, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 166; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 467; Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, "L'Etablissement de la Province de la Louisiane, poème composé de 1728 à 1742," *Société des Américanistes* XXIII, no. 2 (1931): 275-440; Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane contenant ce qui y est arrivé de plus mémorable depuis l'année 1687,* Vol. II (Paris: J. B. Bauche, 1753), 137.

[5] Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres*, Vol. III (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 254; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 137.

honor of Monsieur Kolly.[6] Some Théoloëls gathered around the demi-galley at the water's edge. Each man chose the nearest European as his target. When all was ready, the Great Sun gave the signal to begin the killing.

Kolly died in the first volley. Father Poisson perished soon afterwards when a Sun threw him to the ground and hacked off his head with a hatchet. Du Coder, an officer from the post at the Yazoos, tried to save the priest only to be felled by a musket ball.[7] Some of the Europeans put up a fight. Their numbers included a number of women who took up arms to defend their husbands or take revenge on their killers. They soon joined the ranks of the dead.[8] The fighting lasted four hours and cost the Natchez twelve warriors. The European casualty list stood at one hundred and forty-five men, thirty-six women, and fifty-six children. The deceased included Longrais, the manager of St. Catherine's and chronicler of the Second and Third Natchez Wars; Laurent Desnoyers, the director of the White Earth Concession; Sub-Lieutenant Massé; Papin the interpreter; Marc Antoine de la Loire, one of the founders of Crozat's warehouse, and Captain De Chépart.[9]

Throughout the day, the *habitants* at St. Catherine's fought off several attempts to storm their plantation. The Théoloëls broke off their attack when a rainstorm soaked their gunpowder.[10] During the respite, the *concessionaires* worked their way down to

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[6] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. II, 466.
[7] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, *JR* 68: 166; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 146-47; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 257.
[8] Le Page du Pratz counted a Euro-African population of 700 at Natchez. See Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 258.
[9] For the Natchez's losses, see Périer to Maurepas, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol. 1, 62 *Etat des personnes tuées au massacre des Natchez*, December 13, 1737; Broutin to the Company, August 7, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. 1, 127-28; Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 96.
[10] To continue the attack at that point was useless despite any numerical advantage. The downpour rendered the Natchez's muskets useless while the Europeans, under the cover of their buildings, kept their powder dry.

the Mississippi under the cover of darkness. They found a small boat near the demi-galley moored at the landing. The Théoleöls guarding the craft had passed out from drinking. The party boarded the dugout, cast off, and drifted into the main channel to make good their escape.[11]

A few others slipped out of the settlements to safety. Ricard, the warehouse clerk, had been at the docks unloading the cargo of the demi-galley when the killing started. He dove into the river and swam to the cypress forest downstream, where he hid until nightfall. Avoiding the main paths along the riverside, he came upon a cabin owned by a local potter. Upon entering, he found it occupied by some Yazoos who had come to Fort Rosalie with Du Coder and Father Poisson. These Indians were unaware of the events at the post. They fed Ricard, dressed his wounds, and lent him a dugout canoe. The clerk departed quickly, not stopping until he reached New Orleans.[12] A single soldier escaped by hiding in an oven dug into the bluffs on the riverbank. One or two other men working in the lumber camps around the settlements stole off into the woods. A handful of African slaves absconded and made their way south to the provincial capital as well.[13]

Two Frenchmen survived the battle only to become prisoners. A tailor named Lebeau went to work altering clothes for the Natchez, while Mayeux, a drover, became the Théoloëls' carter. The latter moved the Louisianans' merchandise and military equipment, including three artillery pieces, to the two forts built by the Natchez along the banks of St. Catherine's Creek south of the Grand Village.

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[11] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 148.
[12] Ibid., 149-50.
[13] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. II, 469; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 150-53; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. III, 258.

During the fighting, the Théoloëls also captured around one hundred and fifty European women and children.[14] They placed many of them under the supervision of the Great Sun and his wife, the White Woman.[15] Some of the Frenchwomen hauled water and prepared meals in Natchez homes. Others worked as seamstresses, repairing clothing stripped from the dead.[16] Although the Natchez expected labor from their captives, they also appreciated the efforts of those who cooperated with them. Le Page du Pratz's housekeeper was among these prisoners. The Natchez employed her in washing and mending shirts, a chore that she performed so well that they named her "Mistress of the Laundry" for the female Great Sun.[17]

The transfer of the French captives to the custody of the Great Sun and his wife demonstrated both continuity and change within Natchez political and social practices. On one hand, it was natural that "the White Woman… who was regarded as the Empress of the Nation" shared in the governance of her people's prisoners.[18] Her standing as a member of the leading family gave her enormous authority over the average Théoloël. It made sense that she also commanded the labor of French captives. This arrangement contrasted with the practices of warriors from other nations in the Lower Mississippi Valley who usually retained individual possession of the "slaves" they captured. Thus, her control of the European detainees reaffirmed the rule of the Great Sun's entourage.

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[14] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. II, 467.
[15] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 154; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*,Vol. III, 261.
[16] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III, 260-61; Le Petit to D'Avaugour, *JR* 68: 169.
[17] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III, 261.
[18] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 154.

The fact that the People of the Sun looked upon European women and children as slaves also reveals a shift in their earlier practice of absorbing foreign elements into their nation. Since they intended to eject the French from the Lower Mississippi Valley, marriages with these women would not lead to the absorption of more men who could protect or hunt for the nation. Charlevoix wrote that the Natchez "wanted to remove from the Women and other Slaves all hope of ever recovering their liberty."[19] It is doubtful that they meant to incorporate these women into their polity as full members. This may have been a function of the Natchez elders' adoption of a red identity; they no longer wanted any more Europeans who "corrupted the blood on the nation." Regardless of their captors' motives, the enslavement of the French women and children marked the end of the old system of incorporating non-Natchez groups into the Théoloëls' ranks.

Despite their rejection of the French as candidates for adoption, the Natchez acted in other ways suggesting that they still saw some social and institutional parallels between themselves and the immigrants. For instance, the People of the Sun recognized that these captives might be able to perform in roles similar to their own female leaders. Madame Desnoyers, the widow of the director of the White Earth Concession, held a position similar to the Tattooed Arm; she had been married to the "Sun" of a French village. In fact, her rank may have saved her when she conspired with her African slaves to avenge the death of her husband. The Natchez did not execute her when one of her accomplices revealed the plot.[20]

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[19] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. II, 468-69.
[20] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, *JR* 68: 171.

Other women, status notwithstanding, met with a different end—death. Nonetheless, at least one killing implies that the Natchez retained some of their old perceptions that the Europeans employed social and political hierarchies similar to their own. In this case, the Théoloëls killed the wife of the late Sub-lieutenant Macé.[21] They did this to eliminate the spouse of a French officer who may have possessed leadership skills similar to the wife of the Tattooed Serpent, the departed Natchez war leader. The Indians also dispatched the widow of Papin, the interpreter, soon after the battle for a more pragmatic reason. They executed her because she may have shared her husband's linguistic skills and would have been able either to understand any plans that she overheard or to communicate directly with the Natchez women who had opposed the elders' policies.

The other group of non-Natchez inhabitants of the region, however, fared better than these two women or the other European prisoners. The Théoloëls did not harm any of the African or Indian slaves who had surrendered peaceably.[22] Father Charlevoix wrote that the Natchez treated these people the best of all their captives. He believed that they did so only to sell the Africans to the English in Carolina.[23]

These newcomers from the Old World played a significant part in the downfall of their former holders. Some time before the coup, the Natchez sent word to the Africans enslaved on the plantations by means of two drivers. These two told their fellow bondsmen that "they would be free with the Indians and that our [French] women and

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[21] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 153-54.
[22] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, *JR* 68: 166; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. II, 468. See also Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 97-106; Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 72-76.
[23] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. II, 467-68.

children would be their slaves and that they would have no need to fear the French at the other posts because they too would be massacred at the same time."[24] The Indians' strategy worked. None of the colonial records mention slaves informing their "masters" of the impending attack.

Whether the Théoloëls cynically manipulated the slaves to their own ends can never be known with absolute certainty. Their willingness to contact the captive workers before the uprising demonstrated that the Indians were prepared to exploit the resentments among the non-European field hands and servants. Moreover, at least some of the African men recognized a common cause with the Natchez and fought alongside them when the French returned. Others took part in hunts to supply the nation with game.

Nonetheless, the exact status of Africans in Natchez country after the fall of Fort Rosalie remains uncertain. The perspectives of both the Africans and the Indians on this issue are lost. None of the European authors left detailed accounts of the questioning to which they subjected their slaves once they were recaptured from the Théoloëls. Nor did they ask any Natchez prisoners about their strategies concerning their treatment of the Africans who fell into their hands. Nonetheless, a few clues can be obtained from the French accounts. Although the former slaves enjoyed some degree of personal liberty, the Théoloëls still demanded labor from them. Father le Petit and Le Page du Pratz both wrote that once the People of the Sun seized control of the area, they made the ex-slaves haul goods from the *Compagnie* magazine, the demi-galley, and the army post.[25] They required from the Africans the same services that they

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[24] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France,* Vol. II, 467.
[25] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, *JR* 68: 167; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*,Vol. III, 260.

demanded from the Europeans, relegating them to a subordinate category. The "black" men remained inferior to the "red" in the Natchez order of things even if they no longer had to answer to the "whites."

Whatever the Natchez thought of them, Africans, like Native Americans and Europeans, often acted on their own initiative. Not all of them cooperated with the Théoloëls. Although some stayed behind and eventually sided with the Natchez, others fled to the colonial settlements downriver as soon as they could.[26]

The rearrangement of social status based on biological characteristics demonstrated that the events of November 28, 1729, forever changed the manner in which the People of the Sun and the subjects of Louis XV related to each other. For the next few months, the Natchez regained control of their homeland and relegated the impudent French to servility. In doing so, they abandoned their old system of amalgamating newcomers into their nation, at least in the case of the Europeans. The Théoloëls' leaders also enjoyed a renaissance of their authority as the warriors placed their prisoners in the custody of the White Woman and the Great Sun. The fortunes of the African slaves were less clear. Although they enjoyed more personal liberty than they had before, the Natchez also expected them to work. In this sense, the "*noirs*" remained beneath the "*hommes rouges*" in the emerging racial hierarchy. The elders had succeeded in their plan to unite the red men and destroy the French. Downriver, however, Louisiana was concentrating its military strength to redress the situation.

### *Louisiana Strikes Back*

When news of the destruction of Fort Rosalie reached Governor Perrier, he threw the resources of the colony into protecting its capital from attack. By mid-December

[26] Périer to Maurepas, December 5, 1729, AC 13A, Vol. 12, fol. 33v.

1729, when the scope of the uprising had become clear, he began to plot revenge. By the time Louisiana's first campaign against the Théoloëls ended, three more forts had fallen, two of them belonging to the Natchez. The Yazoos captured the third, a small French outpost named Fort Saint Pierre.

During the interval between the Théoloëls' coup and the Europeans' counterstroke, several trends emerged. The first was the need for military assistance; both sides cast about for allies. Louisiana received help from the largest nation in the Southeast: the Choctaws. The People of the Sun obtained the aid of several smaller groups including some Africans. The second trend involved the persistence of racial categories as a means to power in the region. In contrast to the Natchez's model of cooperation between the former slaves and Native Americans, Périer launched an unprovoked assault upon a peaceful Indian village with the sole intention of sowing animosity between the Africans and the First Peoples. For their part, the Natchez attempted to employ redness as part of their quest for Indian allies to fight the French; "race" had become an important weapon for both sides in their struggle to control the region. Another trend involved the role of women as negotiators. Once the colonists reached Natchez country in force in February 1730, the Théoloëls fell back into their prepared defenses and attempted to negotiate employing an established diplomatic convention. They used a woman—a European woman in this instance—to send messages back and forth across the siege lines. Her ministrations helped the Natchez to talk their way out of encirclement and to escape across the Mississippi River under the cover of darkness. The Théoloëls also sought advice from at least one other French woman on ways to slake the Louisianan's thirst for revenge. The People of the Sun paid a high price for

their success; they surrendered all of their French prisoners and abandoned their homeland. This left them with little more than their freedom as a bargaining chip during the final round of negotiations a year later.

The colony's governor initiated this chain of events soon after hearing about the catastrophe upriver. On December 5, 1729, two days after the refugees from Fort Rosalie made their reports, Périer wrote to Paris listing the measures that he had taken to prevent further losses. He decreed that no Indian was to be given arms without his explicit permission. The governor also ordered the construction of trenches to protect the town from assault.[27] He concluded by asking his superiors to send the colony six hundred troops from France.[28] Périer then dispatched Captain François Louis de Merveilleux and a handful of men to warn the Europeans living along the banks of the Mississippi. After sounding the tocsin, the captain was to build a fort at the village of the Tunicas and await reinforcements.[29]

Périer intended to use the Indians' town as a staging area for a projected assault that was to be undertaken with the aid of the Choctaws on February 19, 1730. On December 8, the governor sent Fort Rosalie's former commandant, Ignace François Broutin, to help organize the colony's forces that were to concentrate at Merveilleux's camp.[30]

Around the time that the two officers started on their journeys upriver, Périer issued another command. A small nation named the Chaouachas lived a few miles downriver

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[27] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, *JR* 68: 137.
[28] Périer to the Minister, December 5, 1729, AC C13A, Vol. 12, fol. 34.
[29] Périer to Minster, December 5, 1729, AC C13A, Vol. 12, fols. 33-35v. See also Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 89.
[30] Périer to Minister, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. 1, 66; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 265-68.

from New Orleans. These people had never shown hostile intentions toward the colony. Moreover, their small numbers—perhaps thirty families—represented little threat to the capital. On December 8, 1730, Périer sent eighty African slaves armed with axes, swords, and pikes to attack the village. They surprised the Chaouachas while many of the men were out fishing and hunting. The expedition killed between fifteen and thirty males and took the women and children to New Orleans. When the surviving hunters and fishermen traveled to the capital to petition the governor for an explanation, he refused to answer them.[31]

A few months later, Périer broke his silence when he justified his actions to his superiors in Paris. He wrote,

> Fear had so powerfully taken the upper hand that even the Chaouachas who were a nation of thirty men below New Orleans made our colonists tremble, which made me decide to have them destroyed by our negroes, which they executed with as much promptness as secrecy. This example carried out by our negro volunteers has kept the other little nations up the river in a respectful attitude. If I had been willing to use our negro volunteers I should have destroyed all these little nations which are of no use to us, and which might on the contrary cause our negroes to revolt as we see by the example of the Natchez...[32]

The governor's decision to attack a peaceful Native American settlement foreshadowed the violence that was about to become the currency of French relations with many of their Indian neighbors. Moreover, it revealed the anxiety over a slave revolt that plagued Europeans throughout the New World. As Africans made up an increasingly large proportion of Louisiana's non-native population, an anti-French combination of "blacks" and Indians would be disastrous. In a letter written in the autumn of 1730,

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[31] "Coup de François sur les Sauvages Tchiwachas 8 decembre," BN MSS. fr. n.a. 2551, fol. 25.
[32] Périer to Minister, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 64.

after the colony's government brutally suppressed a suspected slave conspiracy, Périer outlined this problem and his solution:

> The greatest misfortune that could befall the colony would be a union between the Indians and the Black Slaves but happily there has been a great aversion between them, we have taken great care to maintain and augment this war.[33]

Périer hoped that destruction of the Chaouachas would promote antagonism between Africans and Native Americans by sowing the seeds of enmity among the two peoples along racial lines. As his choice of wording—"black slaves"—implied, he wanted the perceptions of racial difference to work for the French by keeping their potential enemies from working in concert. Whether his strategy had a material effect remains uncertain. Regardless, the following years' events served to widen any breech between the two groups of peoples that may have existed before the governor executed his scheme.

Despite his "success" in neutralizing the Chaouachas and driving a wedge between the region's two non-European populations, Périer faced the prospect of a wider anti-French coalition. On December 11, 1729, some Yazoo warriors attacked Father Souel, a Jesuit missionary, on his way home from a meeting with their headman. His slave, a recent convert to Catholicism, tried to keep the murderers from plundering the priest's home, but paid with his life. The killers took the cleric's cassock and other religious equipment. His colleague, Father le Petit wrote,

> These Savages, who even to that time had seemed sensible of the affection which their Missionary bore them, reproached themselves for his death as soon as they were capable of reflection; but returning again to their natural ferocity,

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[33] Perier to Minister, October 22, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 87v. For an appraisal of an anti-French coalition, see Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves*, 72-75. For the alleged African slave uprising of 1731, see Patricia K. Galloway, "Rhetoric of Difference: Le Page du Pratz on African Slave Management in Eighteenth-Century Louisiana," *French Colonial History* 3 (2003): 1-16, and Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 99-112.

> they adopted the resolution of putting a finishing stroke to their crime by the destruction of the whole French post. "Since the black Chief is dead," said they, "it is the same as if all the French were dead — let us not spare any."[34]

On the following day, the Yazoos entered Fort St. Pierre under the pretense of singing the calumet. Once inside, they pulled their weapons from beneath their robes and killed the officer and seventeen soldiers who made up the garrison. The intervention of several Koroa women saved five European women and four children.[35] These women may have been fulfilling the same political function as the Tattooed Arm and her supporters. By advocating for the French settlers, they may have thought that they were preventing their nations' warriors from creating an irreparable break with the Europeans. Their influence had its limits, nonetheless. The Koroa men assisted in the attack on the fort.[36]

Soon after the coup at Fort St. Pierre, a Yazoo delegation arrived at the Grand Village of the Natchez. One of the ambassadors wore the late Father Souel's black robe. He told the Théoloëls "his Nation had taken his word and that the French settled among them had been massacred."[37] The People of the Sun had gained an ally.

While the Yazoo proffered their support, the Natchez wasted little time soliciting help from other nations for their war against the French. The Théoloëls went so far as to send Tioux proxies to negotiate with their old enemies the Tunicas. Several incidents

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[34] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 175. For another account, see Diron to Minister, February 9, 1730, AC C13A, 12, fol. 363v. Charlevoix wrote, "Father Souel strongly loved these Barbarians; but he was impatient; he reproached them ceaselessly for falling into the infamous sin of Sodomy to which they were strongly subjected, and it appears strongly that this was the cause of his death." Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 470. Aside from this charge, Charlevoix's account is the same as Father le Petit's version of this incident. See also Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 264.
[35] Lusser to Maurepas, "A Journal…" January 12, 1730 to March 23, 1730. *MPAFD,* , Vol. 1, 99.
[36] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 175.
[37] Ibid. My translation. Rueben Gold Thwaites's translation of this passage is more of a paraphrase in which he took liberties to substantiate a pan-Indian conspiracy theory.

that occurred in the recent past dictated prudence to the Natchez in their attempts to parley with their neighbors downriver. The first of these experiences came in 1716 when Bienville, with the collusion of the Tunicas, captured several Suns and held them hostage. The second came in late summer of 1723 when the Théoloëls fought a war of retribution against the Tunicas.[38] The Third Natchez War witnessed the Tunicas taking a prominent military role in Bienville's destruction of the Apple and Jenzenaque Villages. Bitter memories of these events probably made direct contact between leaders of the two nations dangerous. The Tunicas' long-standing alliance with the French undoubtedly increased the peril. Whatever the reason for their choice of intermediaries, the most experienced and prestigious Children of the Sun stayed out of the negotiations. Despite their distance from the Théoloëls' political leadership, the Tioux's delegation failed to enlist the Tunicas in the Natchez cause.[39]

It is, however, difficult to fully gauge the success of the Natchez diplomatic efforts of 1729 and early 1730. The events and debates that took place around the council fires of the Lower Mississippi Valley as Natchez ambassadors argued their case in front of their neighbors went unrecorded. If the Théoloëls had been planning a pan-Indian, anti-French uprising, they failed. Perhaps they had too little to offer the other nations. It is possible that their promises that the English would provide sufficient trade goods to replace those of the French did not convince the surrounding nations. Perhaps the other nations were already seeing the power of the French gathering on the fringes of the Natchez world. Whatever the reason for their inability to garner military support, the Théoloëls would soon face the gathering power of Louisiana with little help from other

[38] Longrais's Relation of the War, September 1, 1723, AC C13A, Vol. 7, fols, 308v-309.
[39] Diron to Maurepas, March 20, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. 1, 77.

Indians; aside from the Koroas and Yazoos, they could depend only upon local client villages like the Tioux and the Grigras.

Despite the Théoloëls' lack of firm allies and with little evidence, Périer wrote that the Natchez had plotted their coup with the collusion of the Choctaws, who later failed to live up to their agreement.[40] Several versions of the war claimed the plot failed only because the Natchez had mistimed their assault. According to Dumont de Montigny and Le Page du Pratz, the Great Sun used a bundle of sticks to count down the days to the attack. De Montigny wrote that one of the Sun's children, watching his father burn one stick each day, threw a few of the counters into the fire as a lark.[41] In Le Page du Pratz's version, it was the Tattooed Arm who removed the sticks from the bundle to throw off the count.[42] In these narratives—both written in the 1750s, more than two decades after the battle—the People of the Sun attacked the colonists several days too soon. This supposedly disrupted their co-conspirators' plans, causing the Choctaws to renege when they learned that the French were already on the alert due to the early destruction of Fort Rosalie by the Natchez.[43] Father le Petit, in contrast, wrote that the

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[40] Marcel Giraud, relying exclusively on Périer's correspondence, ruled out British instigation. He argued that the Natchez had been deluded by Chickasaw representatives who were the force behind the rising. Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana: The Company of the Indies, 1723-1731*, trans. Brian Pearce, vol. 5 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 401-03.

[41] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III, 241 and Dumont de Montigny, "L'etablissement de la province de la Louisiane," 323-24.

[42] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III, 253.

[43] For images of Native American innumeracy, see Gordon Sayre, *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of America, from Moctezuma to Tecumseh* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 237, 52-54. None of the official reports dating from the early 1730s mentioned such a counting system. The novelist Chateaubriand collected these stories, immortalizing them in his epic *Les Natchez*, furthering the image of Louisiana and the Théoloëls as a place of tragedy and lost opportunity that persists to this day in French popular memory. See François-René de Chateaubriand, "Les Natchez," in *Romans et Poésies diverses* (Paris: Furne, Jouvet et Cie., 1826; reprint, 1876), 442-55. For a more recent fictionalized installment of the Natchez plot, see Michel Peyramaure, *Louisiana* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1996), 549. A contemporary website hosted by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication opens with an extended quote from Chateaubriand's novel *Atala*, (1802) characterizing Louisiana as "a new Eden," and then proceeds to correct the persistent myth of the

Natchez moved up their attack date in order to seize the trade goods on the demi-galley that brought Monsieur Kolly. Had they waited, the vessel would have traveled upstream to Illinois.

There was another reason for the governor to list the Choctaws among France's potential enemies. It was apparent to him that by the spring of 1730, the Choctaws were extremely unhappy with the colony's failure to compensate them for the losses that they suffered fighting against the Natchez. Périer's characterization of these disgruntled allies as conspirators in an anti-French scheme provided a ready explanation if the Choctaws' discontent spilled over into open warfare.

The twentieth-century historian Jean Delanglez argued that Périer concocted a pan-Indian plot to conceal his culpability in the events that led up to the attack on Fort Rosalie.[44] The stories of a grand strategy concocted by a secret Indian coalition would have served the governor's interests. Gordon Sayre has recently offered another interpretation:

> The existence of a Natchez "terrorist" plot was necessary for the historical emplotment of the massacre for both political and literary reasons. If the uprising had been a spontaneous act by a Natchez mob, not only might it portend more such acts of resistance to the colony, but it would be impossible to know who to blame. Likewise today, Euro-American leaders are eager to identify terrorist conspiracies and to demonize their leaders yet are highly reluctant to suppose the existence of a diffuse anti-imperialist movement from which violent resistance might erupt without planning or warning.[45]

The inclusion of the Choctaws in the conspiracy by Périer and his supporters bolsters Sayre's theory of "emplotment" by identifying them as part of a Natchez coalition.

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Mississippi as a lost paradise. See *La Louisiane française, 1682-1803*, accessible at http://www.louisiane.culture.fr /fr/index.html, viewed September 10, 2006.

[44] Jean Delanglez, "The Natchez Massacre and Governor Perrier," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 17 (1934).

[45] Sayre, *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero*, 234. See also Gordon M. Sayre, "Plotting the Natchez Massacre: Le Page du Pratz, Dumont de Montigny, Chateaubriand," *Early American Literature* 37, no. 3 (2002): 392.

Their presence in Périer's conspiratorial narrative, and the willingness of European audiences to accept that narrative, obscured the tensions between French Louisiana and the Indian communities in the heart of the colony. The motives of colonial officials notwithstanding, it is doubtful that the Choctaws wished to destroy the French simply because they outnumbered the Louisianans more than five to one.[46] Had they wanted to wipe out the colony, they could have easily done so without the Natchez's help.

Regardless of his tales of shadowy conspiracies, the governor needed to draw at least some of the Indians of the Southeast into his plans for revenge. The Choctaws, the most formidable nation in the region, were the most important candidates for recruitment. Moreover, the Choctaws had several reasons to join the French in their anti-Natchez campaign. The first of these involved finishing what they had started. In the autumn of 1726, the Choctaws and Natchez fought a war of a few months' duration. The Théoloëls lost two hundred people during the conflict from disease because they spent most of the time within the walls of their fort. The Choctaws' casualties were far lower.[47] The intervention of Diron-D'Artaguette, the *Compagnie* director at Mobile, prevented the Choctaws from initiating a second war against the People of the Sun.[48]

Another reason for joining the anti-Natchez coalition related to the Choctaws' desire for political primacy in the region. The Natchez had ties with the Chickasaws to the north.[49] The first French colonists in the Southeast wrote extensively about enmity

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[46] Peter H. Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South: an Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Gregory A. Waselkov and M. Thomas Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 39, 70.
[47] Boisbriant to the Directors, January 12, 1727, AC, C13A, Vol. 10, 251.
[48] Diron d'Artaguette to Maurepas, October 17, 1729, *MPAFD,* Vol. IV, 24-25.
[49] For the Choctaw-Chickasaw rivalry, see Robert A. Brightman and Pamela S. Wallace, "Chickasaw," in *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 491; Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 45-46; 67-70; Robbie Ethridge, "Creating the Shatterzone: Indian Slave Traders and the Collapse of the Southeastern Chiefdoms," in *Light on the Path: the Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians*, ed. Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Robbie Franklyn

between the Choctaws and the Chickasaws. Moreover, Governor Périer thought that the Chickasaws were the driving force behind the Théoloëls' campaign against the colony.[50] A new Choctaw war against the Natchez would weaken the Chickasaws by depriving them of their ally to the south. Father Charlevoix tied several of these motives together in his narrative of the Fourth Natchez War:

> Several years before, they [the Choctaws] had wanted to destroy the Natchez and the French had prevented them, they had pretended to enter into a general conspiracy to entangle us with our Enemies, to whom we had accorded peace despite them, we were obliged to seek recourse from them while we were weak and they profited simultaneously by despoiling the Natchez and from our liberality.[51]

The Choctaws' true intentions with regard to the Natchez are lost to us since the only records available were written by Frenchmen, none of whom were privy to their decision making process. Nonetheless, the political situation in the Lower Mississippi Valley at the close of the 1720s gave the Choctaws an opportunity to employ Louisiana's military and economic clout to destroy their closest Native American rival.

Périer had already launched his first diplomatic initiative to the Choctaws several months before the fall of Fort Rosalie.[52] The chief agent of the governor's plans was a half-pay ensign named Régis du Roullet. He was to assure the Choctaws that the

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Ethridge (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 213-17; Patricia K. Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 182-199; "Henri de Tonti du village des Chacta 1702: The Beginning of the French Alliance," in *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1982), 146-175; Patricia Galloway and Clara Sue Kidwell, "Choctaw in the East," in *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 511-12; Jay Higginbotham, "Henri de Tonti's Mission to the Chickasaw, 1702," *Louisiana History* 19, no. 3 (1978): 258-96; Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves*, 18-19; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 9; Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier,* 1-22, 45-64.

[50] Périer to Maurepas, April 10, 1730, *MPAFD,*Vol. I,117.

[51] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 475. See also Diron to Minister, February 9, 1730, AC C13A, Vol 12, fol. 364v.

[52] Périer and la Chaise to the Directors of the Company of the Indies, January, 30, 1729, *MPAFD,* Vol. II, 610.

governor was aware of their complaints about the high costs of *Compagnie* goods and that Périer alone possessed the authority to remedy the situation. The governor also ordered du Roullet to tell the Choctaws' headmen (and those of the Chickasaws if he encountered them), that the French would build a warehouse among them and match the prices of the British merchants.[53] He told the emissary to assess the military strength of the Choctaws and map the locations of their villages.[54] Du Roullet left New Orleans in the late summer of 1729, stopping briefly in Mobile in September. From there he started his journey up the Tombigbee River.

From the vantage point of New Orleans, it must have seemed as if the forest had swallowed up du Roullet's small band of soldiers, interpreters, and Indian porters who disappeared for several months. In the meantime, the Natchez rose up against De Chepart and the garrison. In December 1729, still without word from his chief representative, Périer sent two more agents, Jean Paul de Le Sueur and Joseph Christophe de Lusser, to secure the cooperation of the Choctaws.

While the envoys traveled northeast, Périer's troops gathered at the Tunicas, a day's journey south of the Grand Village. The presence of European soldiers squelched any moves toward an anti-French alliance, if the will to join one had existed among the Tunicas. After alerting the French colonists living along the river, Captain Merveilleux and his six-man detachment reached the bivouac on December 10, 1729. The officer quickly built a small fort in case of an attack from upstream. Ignace Broutin arrived a few days later to aid in the defense, after bringing orders to Major Henri, chevalier de Louboëy, and the garrison at Pointe Coupée, which commanded them to move north.

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[53] Périer to Régis du Roullet, undated, *MPAFD,*Vol. 1, 18.
[54] Périer to Régis du Roullet, August 21, 1729, *MPAFD*, Vol. I, 17-20.

Soon thereafter, the major marched upriver to the Tunica rendezvous at the head of twenty-five troopers.[55]

In preparation for a full-scale assault, Captain Merveilleux sent a reconnaissance team of six men under the leadership of Sieur Mesplet, a veteran of Bienville's 1723 campaign, to scout the Théoloëls' positions. One of the soldiers, a man named Navarre, was married to a Natchez woman and spoke their language.[56] The small troop quietly made their way upriver and spent an uneventful night a few miles outside of the Grand Village. Despite their stealth, Mesplet and his men found themselves surrounded by a large party of Natchez warriors on January 25, 1730. The Frenchmen sought cover in a small ravine and defended themselves as the Théoloëls called for them to surrender. Navarre fired upon the assailants with a vengeance, "calling them dogs who did not deserve to live." The Natchez shot at the band, wounding Navarre and Mesplet. Navarre continued to shoot and hurl invectives until a second volley killed him where he stood. The rest of the five survivors surrendered and were brought before the Great Sun.[57]

The Natchez leader refused to take Mesplet's word that the group had come to make peace. The Frenchman blamed the firefight on the drunken bravado of Navarre. The Great Sun summoned Madame Desnoyers, the widow of the director of the White

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[55] Périer to Minister, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 66; Le Petit to D'Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 189. Diron accused Louboëy of procrastination. See Diron to Maurepas, March 20, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 77. Broutin also criticized the arrangements he found in the village as well as the fortitude of the commander: "Mr. Merveilleux was quite unwilling to leave the village on account of the Tunica Indians, where we did not have a drop of water stored up and almost no bread." See Broutin to the Company, August 7, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 131.

[56] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 478; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 174. See also Le Petit to D'Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 191.

[57] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 175; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 268, 277.

Earth Concession and ordered her to draft a letter containing the conditions by which the Europeans could obtain the release of the French women and children. In exchange for the prisoners, he demanded:

> two hundred muskets, two hundred barrels of powder, two thousand gun flints, two hundred knives, two hundred hatchets, two hundred pickaxes, twenty quarts of brandy, twenty casks of wine, twenty barrels of vermillion, two hundred shirts, twenty pieces of limbourg [trade cloth], twenty pieces of coats with lace on the seams, twenty hats bordered with plumes, and a hundred coats of a plainer kind.[58]

The Sun also insisted that the French turn over the chief of the Tunicas and Sieur de Broutin, the previous commandant of Fort Rosalie, so that he could hold them hostage. He sent Mesplet's drummer to carry the letter to the French commander.[59]

European women's assistance to the Natchez did not end when Madame Desnoyers finished writing her note. According to Dumont de Montigny, a group of Théoloël headmen held a meeting during which they asked a Natchez-speaking Frenchwoman her opinion concerning the war. They told her that the Théoloëls would make peace if the French recognized the death of De Chépart as revenge for the execution of Old Hair of the Apple Village—the headman of one French settlement for the headman of a Natchez settlement. The unnamed Frenchwoman thought the idea might work, but the records make no further mention of the plan.[60]

The Great Sun's use of Madame Desnoyers as a scribe and his kinsmen's consultation with her anonymous countrywoman reveal the lasting perception among the Théoloëls that they and the French shared parallel social and political ranks—a mark of the old style of Natchez diplomacy. Madame Desnoyers, as the widow of one

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[58] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 191.
[59] Diron to Minister, March 20, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 78; Le Petit to D'Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 191; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 175-80.
[60] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 180-82.

of the high-status Europeans, possessed a rank analogous to the one held by the Tattooed Arm. When the Great Sun employed her to write to Louboëy, she acted in a diplomatic capacity similar to that of his mother. The headmen's conference with the anonymous Frenchwoman also mirrored roles taken by Natchez women who had been born into lesser castes or foreign nations—she became a temporary advisor who shared the perspectives of the outsiders with whom they would have to negotiate.[61]

The Théoloëls soon realized that despite whatever parallel institutions or ranks they thought they shared with the Europeans, the French would not agree to their conditions. The drummer who carried their demands downriver failed to return. The enraged Great Sun ordered the soldiers burned on the rack. Two of the men died quickly; Mesplet lingered on for several days.[62]

The Natchez had little time left before they would face a very different response from their enemies. Jean Paul Le Sueur, one of the colony's Indian agents, was already marching toward the Grand Village with five to seven hundred Choctaw warriors. On January 27, 1730, they smashed into the unsuspecting Théoloëls. One chronicler wrote, "The reason that the Natchez were no longer on their guard was that they believed that the Choctaws had destroyed the lower part of this colony, they were so assured that they camped outside their forts without their munitions of war."[63] The Choctaw assault killed between sixty and one hundred Natchez and captured another fifteen to twenty.

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[61] Le Page du Pratz's Chitimacha slave woman acted in a similar manner by providing the Dutchman with access to the Natchez and Chitimacha hierarchy. See Galloway and Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," in *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 603.

[62] Diron to Minister, March 20, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol. I, 78; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 479; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 178; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 280. Broutin asked to be allowed to go the Natchez but Périer refused permission. See Broutin to the Company, August 7, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 131-32 and Périer to Minister, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 68.

[63] Relation of the Last of Attack of the French on the Natchez, January 1731, ASH 67, no. 16, u.p.

The attack liberated fifty-four French women and children and seized one hundred enslaved Africans. The suddenness of the strike prevented the Natchez from removing these prisoners to a more secure location. The wife of the Sun of the Flour Village had barely enough time to order the execution of three captives to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy.[64]

Despite the setback, the Théoloëls had not been entirely without assistance during the battle. Périer wrote, "This defeat would have been complete if it had not been for two negroes [sic] who prevented the Choctaws from carrying off the powder and who by their resistance had given the Natchez time to enter the two forts."[65] These were palisaded camps a few hundred yards south of the Grand Village on either side of St. Catherine's Creek (see Figure 5.1, page 236).[66] When the Théoloëls retreated into their defensive works taking with them several dozen African and European hostages, any hopes for a quick victory ended. From inside their stronghold, the Natchez could be heard singing their death songs as their besiegers looted the deserted cabins in the Grand Village. They also hurled curses at the Choctaws for reneging on their commitment to unite in a war against the colony.[67]

Five days later, the French stirred from their bivouac at the Tunica Village and began their march up the Mississippi. Louboëy arrived at the Choctaw camp on the

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[64] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 181; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 284-85.

[65] For Périer's comments, see Périer to Maurepas, March 18, 1730. *MPAFD,* Vol. 1, 68. For other accounts of the attack, see Diron to Minister, February 9, 1730, AC C13A, Vol 12, fol. 368; Diron to Maurepas, March 20, 1730; *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 78; Relation of the Last of Attack of the French on the Natchez, January 1731, ASH 67, no. 16, u.p.

[66] For the development of Native American fortifications in the Southeast during the eighteenth century, see Wayne E. Lee, "Fortify, Fight, or Flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defensive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation," *Journal of Military History* 68, no. 3 (2004), 713-770. For a broader analysis, see David E. Jones, *Native North American Armor, Shields, and Fortifications* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

[67] Le Petit to D'Avaugour, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 191; Périer to Maurepas, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. 1, 73.

site of St. Catherine's Concession on February 8, 1730. He brought with him two hundred men and two cannons. The Europeans shipped in several more pieces of artillery to form a seven-gun siege train of two and four-pound field pieces. They set up one battery on the mound that formerly held the Great Temple of the Natchez.[68] From that vantage point, the Europeans opened up on the Théoloëls' forts at maximum range, but the barrage failed miserably.[69] The Natchez returned fire with three cannons they had dragged from Fort Rosalie. These did little damage because the Indians lacked the training to use them effectively.[70]

The French then began to dig an approach trench and inched their way forward toward the Fort of the Worthy. The Natchez made several desperate sallies to drive off the sappers, none of which succeeded.[71] After repulsing the counterattacks, the French continued to close in upon the fortresses. From inside their defenses, the Natchez could see the Europeans setting up their batteries only a few hundred yards in the distance. At this range they could not fail to knock down the walls.

As the ring around the forts grew tighter, the Choctaw leader Alibamon Mingo approached the Théoloëls' works and called out,

> Do you remember or have you ever heard it said that Indians have remained in such great numbers for two months before forts? You can judge by that our zeal and our devotion for the French. It is therefore useless for you who are only a handful of people besides our nation to persist any longer in being unwilling to surrender the women, children, and negroes whom you have to the French who are still good enough to spare you as you see after the

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[68] Diron D'Artaguette to Maurepas, March 20, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol. I, 78; Périer to Minister, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 68; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, 480; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 287.
[69] Diron D'Artaguette to Maurepas, March 20, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 78; Broutin to the Company, August 7, 1730, 134-35.
[70] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 185; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 287-88.
[71] Father Le Petit, July 12, 1730, *JR* 68: 195; Diron D'Artaguette to Maurepas, March 20, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 78-79.

> treason that you have shown them, for if they had wished to shoot their big guns (speaking of the cannons) you would already be reduced to dust and we who will keep you blockaded here to die of hunger, until you have surrendered the women, children, and negroes who belong to the French, since we have resolved to sow here our fields and to make a village there, until you have executed what we demand of you.[72]

The Natchez leaders needed to find a way to open negotiations with the French without exposing themselves to enemy fire. The Suns called upon Madame Desnoyers once again.[73] They wanted her to act as their "clan aunt," representing the Natchez's interests to the decision-makers among the French. She crossed the battlefield with an offer: the Natchez would release all of the French women and children and remove their villages to any place the commandant would designate.[74] Louboëy countered that the Théoleöls must release all of the slaves and the slaves' children as well as all of the European captives. The Great Sun agreed to free his prisoners if the commandant withdrew his artillery to the riverbank and promised that neither the French nor the Choctaws would enter the forts until the next day.[75] The besiegers complied and pulled back their guns to the bluffs along the Mississippi.

The Théoloëls released all of the French survivors. During the night of February 27, 1730, all of the Natchez, including their women, children, and some of the Africans, slipped out of their forts, crossed the Mississippi, and disappeared into the swamps. When the sun rose, the French discovered that their enemy had absconded. The

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[72] Diron to Minister, March 20, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 79-80.
[73] Ibid., 79; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 188.
[74] Le Page du Pratz's wrote that Ette-Actal, a banished Natchez, acted as the mediator. See Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 291. Dumont de Montigny and Diron attributed that role to Madame Desnoyers. See Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 188-89.
[75] Diron to Minister. March 20, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 80; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 291-93.

colonists decamped and gathered around the ruins of Fort Rosalie to organize a pursuit but the speed with which the Théoloëls traveled foiled their plans.[76]

Another reason that they could not follow the fleeing Natchez was that France's most important Indian allies refused to cooperate. The Choctaws spent much of the next few months negotiating with the French for compensation. They retained custody of a number of Africans as well as some of the colonists they had captured in late January. They did this to ensure that the French would replenish their stocks of ammunition and pay them for the time that they had lost from the winter hunt. The talks between colonial officials and the Choctaw leadership dragged on for two more years. In the meantime, the Europeans still had to contend with the Natchez, who remained a potent military force despite their recent defeat.

Louisiana had regained the ground that once held its most prosperous settlement. The colony had driven off the most powerful nation on the banks of the Mississippi River. Nonetheless, the French lost several hundred settlers, several dozen slaves, and, most important, they lost the political high ground with the Choctaws. Because it was slow in repaying its most powerful allies, Louisiana could not count on the Choctaws' help in future campaigns against the Natchez.

The Théoloëls lost even more. The number of casualties they suffered when their forts fell went unrecorded by the Europeans (whose estimates often reflected the motives of colonial officials rather than actual body counts), but they must have been sorely felt. The People of the Sun also lost their homeland. Their success in surprising

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[76] Broutin to the Company, August 7, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol. I, 135-36; Périer to Minister, March 18, 1730, *MPAFD,* Vol. I, 70; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 482; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 190; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 292.

the garrison and concessionaires at Fort Rosalie and their subsequent escape across the Mississippi deprived the Natchez of credibility with the French. Périer and other colonial officials would never again take the word of the Suns or their representatives and frequently rejected subsequent Théoloël attempts to parley. This forced the People of the Sun into a rare situation in Mississippian intercultural politics: having to face an implacable foe bent on their complete destruction.

*Exile*

By the time the Natchez had evacuated the forts along St. Catherine's Creek, France had mobilized to aid its distant North American province. In preparation for his next campaign, Governor Périer concentrated his colonial militia in New Orleans and awaited the arrival of regular troops from overseas. Supporting him were the Tunicas who, in their ardor, burned an important Natchez woman at the provincial capital. Their action deprived the People of the Sun of one of their peacemakers. The governor's final campaign during the winter of 1730-1731 resulted in the fall of the Natchez's fort on the banks of the Black River. The terms of capitulation forced them to surrender their women and children and all but one of their Suns. The efforts of the White Woman (the last female leader the French deigned to mention in their official dispatches) and those of her male counterparts secured the lives, but not the freedom, of her kinsmen. Périer sold his prisoners into slavery and shipped them to the sugar plantations of Saint Domingue. Those who eluded capture in this capitulation were almost all warriors. Within a year, this militant remnant eventually broke itself in an assault upon Fort St. Jean-Baptiste in Natchitoches. Thus the Natchez lost not only their homeland and most of their people, but they also lost their old way of making peace and their last Sun, who died making war. The Théoloëls were not the only losers. Louisiana's defeats at Forts

Rosalie and St. Pierre, coupled with the Natchez's uncanny ability to slip out of French traps, robbed the colony of prestige among the Indian nations of the region. From that time forward, France relied increasingly on the force of arms to impose her will on the nations of the Mississippi Valley. Most of their Native American allies learned to keep the Louisianans at a distance, using their muskets and soldiers to achieve their ends, but avoiding ties that denied them the latitude to freely navigate in the troubled diplomatic waters of the Southeast.

The Tunicas, however, remained a singular exception. Over the previous fifteen years, they had become close allies with the French, supporting them in three wars against the Natchez. They continued to assist Louisiana throughout 1730 and 1731 in its war against their common enemy, the Théoloëls. In March 1730, the Tunicas came to New Orleans bearing fifteen Natchez scalps and escorting two female and three juvenile prisoners—the wife of the Sun of the Flour Village among them. They presented the detainees to the governor. During the ceremony, several former prisoners of the Natchez charged the female Sun with complicity in the deaths of three Europeans. According to the witnesses, she had ordered their "heads broken" because they lacked the time to burn them. The governor "determined that they were to die by the same torment that they had wanted for the others." Périer then acknowledged the Tunicas' gesture, pronounced sentence, and returned the Natchez women to their captors for execution.[77]

The Indians burned the headman's spouse in a square between the government offices and the town. According to Dumont de Montigny, the female Sun "during this

[77] Extracts of letters from Périer to Minister, April to August 1730, AC C13A, Vol. 12, fol. 308; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 195-97; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 301.

long and cruel agony did not come close to shedding a tear. To the contrary, she laughed at the lack of skill of her executioners who were making her suffer, speaking a thousand insults and threatening them by saying they would soon be dead when her people avenged her."[78] The woman cursed her tormentors, "saying that there was not a man among the Tunicas."[79] This caused a considerable commotion among the Indian spectators "for she suffered the same torment as a warrior with greater Courage."[80] Finally, a sergeant named Le Hoy from the concession at Belle Isle stepped forward and finished her off with his sword. Another *habitant* took the other Natchez woman and the three children, smashed their skulls, and threw their bodies into the flames.

The execution of the female Sun removed a negotiator from the Natchez ranks. At the close of the Second Natchez War in November 1722, her husband and the *femme chef* sang the calumet at St. Catherine's Concession.[81] Dumont de Montigny also recorded his appearance at the funeral of the Tattooed Sun.[82] It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Flour Village Sun brought along his mate to play a part in these ceremonies. Her order to kill the Europeans revealed her authority over outsiders as well as the warriors of her community. Regardless, her death widened the breach between the Théoloëls and the Tunicas. It also destroyed a person who, at least according to the Natchez order of things, would have been instrumental in parleys with the French. None of the Théoloëls' subsequent attempts to negotiate with the colonists

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[78] Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 197.
[79] *Femme brulé au Poteau en 1730 à la Nouvelle Orleans*, BN Mss. fr. n.a. 2551, fol. 53.
[80] Ibid.
[81] *Relation des hostilités commises par les Natchez*, November 4, 1722, AC G1 Vol. 465, n.p.
[82] Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane contenant ce qui y est arrivé de plus mémorable depuis l'année 1687*, Vol. I (Paris: J. B. Bauche, 1753), 218.

included female diplomats. More important, the Sun of the Flour Village became an irreconcilable enemy of both the French and the Tunicas after they burned his wife.

The killing of the female Sun was not the only way the Tunicas showed their solidarity with Louisiana. They bound themselves to the Europeans by other means. The *grand chef* of the Tunicas, Cahura-Joglio, converted to Catholicism.[83] On April 4, 1730, a few weeks after the *auto-da-fé*, Father Raphael baptized Cahura-Juglio's son, François-Antoine, as well as the headman's wife, brother, and mother. The Tunica "war-chief" followed suit and witnessed the baptism of his daughter, Rose Angélique, the same day.[84] The conversions exemplified the close relationship that had developed between the Tunicas and the colony. Even Périer, whose correspondence reveals a thorough mistrust for Native Americans, wrote, "The Tunicas, who, it can be said, were at that time the only Savage Nation truly friends of the French."[85] These Indians were to play a prominent role in Périer's latest plan to destroy the People of the Sun.

During the autumn of 1730, Louisiana bustled with activity as it prepared to attack the Natchez in their refuge west of the Mississippi. Ships had arrived at New Orleans over the summer carrying hundreds of European troops. Among them were companies of *troupes de Marine*, soldiers recruited to serve overseas under the orders of the Ministry of Marine rather than the Royal Army. Each company numbered fifty men and operated outside of the regular chain of command.[86] This made them especially

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[83] Jeffrey Brain, George Roth, and William J. De Reuse, "Tunica, Biloxi, and Ofo," in *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 587-88.
[84] *Registre des Baptesmes de la Paroisse de la Nouvelle Orleans*, 1730, C1, Vol. 41, fol. 111.
[85] Extracts of letters from Périer to Minister, April to August, 1730, AC C13A, Vol. 12, fol. 308.
[86] Eighteenth-century European regiments were regarded as the property of their colonels who controlled every aspect of the unit's pay, dress, discipline, and equipment, as well as appointment of field grade officers. See John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV, 1667-1714* (New York: Longman, 1999), 45-104; William Hardy McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 117-84; Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the*

useful in the colonies since the governors did not need to negotiate orders with regimental colonels who jealously guarded their prerogatives. The French government also sent a number of cannons and mortars—these last items were essential for the successful execution of a siege. To ensure cooperation between the governor and the regular troops, the Ministry of Marine appointed Périer's brother, Antoine Périer de Salvert, as their military leader. Both the Natchez and the Europeans would fight the next campaign with forces commanded by brothers.[87]

In mid-November 1730, soon after Périer returned to New Orleans from a conference with the Choctaws at Mobile, the army's vanguard marched to the Bayagoula's village.[88] The balance of his forces left New Orleans on December 9 and caught up five days later. The host camped for four days awaiting further reinforcements from the civilian militia.[89]

On December 28, 1730, the troops moved on to the Red River to rendezvous with the frigate *Prince de Conti*.[90] They resumed their march five days later, accompanied by a contingent of Tunica warriors. The army gathered reinforcements from the posts at Natchez and Natchitoches *en route* to the Black River. Small war parties from the *Petites Nations* rounded out the force.[91] Despite the infusions of Native American warriors, the army was overwhelmingly European. The expedition eventually consisted

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*Age of Reason* (Hertfordshire: Cumberland House, 1987). For details on the organization of the *troupes de marine* see W. J. Eccles, "The Social, Economic, and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France," in *Essays on New France* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 110-124. For further information on the composition France's troops in Louisiana see Khalil Saadani, "Colonialisme et Stratégie: Le Rôle des Forces Militaires en Louisiane, 1731–1743," in *France in the New World: Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* (1996), 203-224.

[87] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 35.

[88] Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier,* 103.

[89] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fols. 35-36.

[90] Ibid., fol. 36.

[91] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fols. 35-36.

of one hundred and ninety-two soldiers of the *troupes de marine* led by twenty officers. It also included twenty sailors, one hundred and ninety men of the colony's troops, one hundred and sixty-four civilian militia, eighty-four Africans, and one hundred and eighty-one Indians. Ancillary personnel brought the total to eight hundred and eleven.[92] Their siege train included six cannons and the same number of light mortars.[93]

Périer split his men into three battalions in order to cover more territory as they searched for the Natchez. The governor kept his artillery and a large detachment under his direct command during the advance.[94] On January 19, 1731, the Indian auxiliaries discovered a party of Natchez hunters in the bayou near the Black River. A company of *troupes de marine* and Ouchitas returned with word that they had found the Théoleöls' fortified refuge.[95] Périer left Baron De Crenay with a hundred men to guard the camp while he moved the bulk of his troops up the Black River.

The Tunicas acted as a screening force to maintain communication between the three battalions as they worked their way through the tangle of bayous and swamps. The thick cover provided by the cane breaks allowed the army to approach undetected to within musket range of the Natchez earthworks. Meanwhile, De Crenay's men broke camp and took up a position on the left of the main body of troops.[96] Before they realized it, the Théoloëls were surrounded, this time by a conventional army equipped with artillery.

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[92] *Attaque du fort des Natchez par les François en janvier 1731*, BN Mss n.a. fr 2551, fol. 111. See also Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 488.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 35; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 490; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 205; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 321.
[95] Dumont de Montigny, "L'etablissement de la province de la Louisiane," 327.
[96] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 37; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 490-91; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane,* Vol. II, 205-207; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 321.

On January 21, 1731, Périer sent an interpreter under a flag of truce to negotiate the return of the Africans still held by the Natchez. "They [the Natchez] fired on the flag and said to the interpreter that they do not want to talk to dogs like us...two hours later one our wooden mortars arrived and fired some heavy grenades which fell into their huts and started fires."[97] The screams of the Théoloëls' women and children could be heard from behind the walls after each volley. The pace of the firing also took its toll on the equipment when the oversized gunpowder charges burst two of the mortars. The arrival of the last units of the siege train on January 22 replenished the French batteries, and the shelling continued for the next two days while the weather deteriorated.[98]

The bombardment had a debilitating effect on the Natchez. After enduring three days of shelling, the Théoloëls hung out a white flag at seven o'clock on the morning of January 24, 1730. Périer recalled the preliminary negotiations:

> I said to them that he had nothing to talk to them about until they sent me the negroes who were in their fort and in their fields. Nineteen negro men and one negro woman arrived immediately and that the others had been killed and that six were on a hunt with some of their people. I said to the same *sauvage* that I did not want to parley about anything unless the chiefs came to our camp first.[99]

The Indian negotiator told Périer that the Great Sun's brother, a man named St. Cosme, and the Sun of the Flour Village intended to fight on. The Great Sun, however, offered different terms: if Périer's army withdrew, the Natchez would never again take up arms against the French and would return to their old villages if permitted.[100] The governor

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[97] Relation of the Last of Attack of the French on the Natchez, January 1731, ASH 67, no. 16, u.p.
[98] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 38.
[99] Ibid., fol. 40. The anonymous account in the Archives de Sociétié Hydrographique counted 40 Natchez and 20 Negroes out on the hunt, Relation of the Last of the Attack of the French on the Natchez, January 1731, ASH 67, no. 16, u.p.
[100] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 40. In his description of the funeral of the Tattooed Serpent, Dumont De Montigny mentioned St. Cosme as one of the offspring of the Tattooed Arm. See Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane.* Vol. I, 229.

repeated his stipulation that he would parley only if the Suns came out of the fort. Périer promised that he would let them live if they surrendered and gave them a day to think it over. He told the Natchez spokesman that if the Suns' intransigence provoked him to reopen the bombardment, he would take no prisoners when he overran their defenses.[101]

After the Natchez diplomat withdrew, St. Cosme came out to speak directly to Périer. He told the governor that the primary instigator died the year before during the Choctaws' siege. Périer listened politely to the Sun's explanation, and then repeated his demand that all of the Suns come out of the fort. He would hear no more conditions and would fire upon anybody besides those headmen who emerged in an attempt to parley. Périer then threatened to reduce the Natchez defenses to cinders.[102]

St. Cosme returned to the fort and shortly reappeared with the Great Sun and the Sun of the Flour Village. Périer ordered that the three men be taken prisoner and held in the French camp. The Great Sun and Périer discussed the situation later that day. The Natchez leader proclaimed his innocence, citing his lack of influence with his nation's council due to his youth and inexperience. The Sun blamed the Sun of the Flour Village, calling him a usurper. According to the Great Sun, the Sun of the Flour Village was the culprit behind the destruction of Fort Rosalie. Périer listened to the headman's protest and ordered the men held in a cabin in the French camp. The governor engaged the Chief of the Tunicas and a Natchez leader named the Tattooed Serpent in an unsuccessful attempt to learn more from the three. During the night, the

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[101] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 491.
[102] Ibid. 491-2.

Sun of the Flour Village escaped. Le Sueur, one of the officers assigned to guard them, stopped the other two at gun point as they were about to abscond.[103]

His imprisonment and Périer's threat to destroy the fort prompted the Great Sun to order his people's surrender. The French commander agreed not to enter the fort until all of the Natchez had evacuated it. On the morning of January 25, the White Woman, in her last authoritative act, led the Théoloël women and children into captivity. Some of the warriors eventually surrendered later that day. As many as four hundred and fifty women and children became prisoners of the Europeans. Forty-six warriors also laid down their arms.[104]

Not all of the Natchez gave up; at least seventy men vowed to continue the battle from inside the fort. Périer ordered all of his troops to fire upon them, but rain prevented this action. The bad weather lasted through the night, soaking the gunners' powder, which made it impossible for the French to recommence their bombardment. The remainder of the Théoloëls slipped out of the fort in the dark and escaped to the south.[105]

The French army quickly secured those Natchez left in their custody. The soldiers loaded most of the prisoners onto the demi-galley and the frigate that had accompanied the expedition up the Black River. Périer divided the rest between smaller bateaux for the trip to New Orleans. The next day the French set about demolishing the fort. On

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[103] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 492-93.
[104] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 40; Relation of the Last of Attack of the French on the Natchez, January 1731, ASH 67, no. 16, u.p; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 493-94.
[105] Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 498.

January 28, Périer and his convoy of prison vessels set sail and arrived at the capital on February 5.[106]

Since the ships in the port were too few to hold all of the prisoners, some of the Natchez women and children were locked up in the main government building. It was at this time that Le Page du Pratz recognized the Tattooed Arm among those in the improvised jail, imprisoned "despite all she had done to warn the French."[107] During her captivity in New Orleans, she told her story to the Dutchman, who included her words in his three-volume history of the colony.

After securing his Théoloël captives, Périer kept his promise; none of the prisoners were executed. He had nearly all of them loaded onto a *Compagnie* ship bound for Saint Domingue. A few stayed behind, enslaved on European plantations along the lower reaches of the Mississippi. The bulk of the Natchez people, the Great Sun and the White Woman included, spent the rest of their days as slaves in the sugar fields near Cap Francis.[108]

The exile of the Théoloëls was not complete—a powerful remnant remained free. Three bands with as many as three hundred warriors continued to fight against the French and their allies. The Sun of the Flour Village, the man who had lost his wife at the hands of the Tunicas, led the most powerful group of one hundred and forty warriors

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[106] Périer to the Minister, March 25, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 41; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 494-95.
[107] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. III, 327.
[108] M. Lancelot to Minister, March 1731, BN Mss n.a. fr. 2610, fols, 63-64v; Attaque du fort des Natchez par les François en janvier 1731, BN Mss na fr 2551, fol. 113; Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale de la nouvelle France*, Vol. II, 496-97; Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane*, Vol. II, 208.

bolstered by twenty Africans and sixty women. Under his leadership, a new cycle of revenge was about to begin.[109]

In April 1731, a Natchez band of sixty men and sixty women approached the Tunicas asking them to mediate with the French. The Théoloëls agreed to settle at whatever place the governor designated.[110] The number of warriors in the band must have come as a surprise to Périer since as late as March 25, 1731, he confidently reported,

> Since the river has become freed by the destruction of the Natchez, Tious, Yazoos, and Coroas…of these four nations not more than forty men remain who have scattered to avoid falling into the hands of the nations that I sent in pursuit of them.[111]

The governor quickly agreed to the Théoloëls' proposal and ordered them to disarm and move to a site about five miles from the Tunicas. From Périer's response, it appeared that the People of the Sun had regained some diplomatic leverage.

On June 13, 1731, the Sun of the Flour Village led nearly two hundred of his people into the Tunicas' village to chant the calumet.[112] The Tunicas welcomed the refugees at the behest of Périer. In order not to upset the Natchez women accompanying them, the Sun obtained permission for his warriors to keep their weapons overnight.[113]

Early the next morning, the Natchez sprung upon their hosts. Cahura-Joglio, the Tunicas' headman, was one of the first fatalities. With their leader gone, the nation's war chief rallied his men and fought for five days to eject the Théoloëls from the town. The Tunicas lost twenty dead, twenty wounded, and eight women captured. Thirty-

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[109] AC, Cartes et Plans, Vol. 67, fol. 15.
[110] Périer to Minister, December 10, 1731, AC C13, Vol. 14, fol. 151.
[111] Périer to Maurepas, March 25, 1731, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV, 73.
[112] Perier to Minister, October 22, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fols. 85-86.
[113] Diron to Minister, June 24, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 147v.

three Natchez warriors died, and three were taken prisoner.[114] The rest of the Théoloëls escaped, taking with them weapons and supplies seized from the Tunicas.[115]

Around the same time that the Sun of the Flour Village was leading his forces against the Tunicas, the French made contact with one hundred and fifty Natchez who had returned to the vicinity of the rebuilt Fort Rosalie. The commandant, De Crenay, convinced thirty-seven Indians to come inside the fort. Once behind the walls, the officer ordered his soldiers to seize the Natchez's weapons. In the confusion, the troopers failed to take the knives hidden among their prisoners. The captives managed to grab eight muskets, killing a sentry in the process. They then barricaded themselves in the prison until De Crenay trained an artillery piece on the jail. In the ensuing bombardment, all of the Natchez died, including the women and children. Only the chief of the group survived since he had already been sent downriver to New Orleans.[116]

After these two incidents, many of the Natchez moved north to seek refuge with the Chickasaws. By the summer of 1731, they had constructed a village near their new hosts. When Périer demanded that they be returned to Louisiana, the Chickasaws replied "that they had not gone to get them to hand them over, that they know very well how to defend them."[117] With this new arrangement, the French found themselves facing six hundred Chickasaw warriors and perhaps as many as three hundred Natchez fighters.[118] The French declared war upon the Chickasaws in July. By this time

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[114] *The Natchez attack on the Tunicas*, BN mss. n. a. 2551, fol. 135; Périer to Minister, December 10, 1731, AC C13, Vol. 14, fol. 151v.; Beauchamp to Maurepas, November 5, 1731, *MPAFD*, Vol. VI, 79.
[115] Diron d'Artaguette to Maurepas, June 24, 1731, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV, 77.
[116] Beauchamp to Maurepas, November 5, 1731, *MPAFD*, Vol. 4, 80; Périer to Minister, December 10, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 14, fol. 152.
[117] Diron d'Artaguette to Maurepas, June 24, 1731, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV, 77.
[118] Beauchamp to Maurepas, November 5, 1731, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV, 8.

Louisiana had finally secured the backing of the Chickasaws' long-standing enemy, the Choctaws.[119]

Nonetheless, the Sun of the Flour Village and his band continued to harass Louisiana's settlements west of the Mississippi. On October 5, 1731, the Natchez tried to take the village of the Natchitoches and Fort Jean-Baptiste. The Sun and two hundred warriors succeeded in driving the Natchitoches from their riverside settlement. The latter then took refuge in the French fort. After rallying his allies, Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis, the commandant, led a counterattack at the head of twenty-two soldiers, all of the Natchitoches refugees, a band of sixteen Spaniards from nearby Texas, and two hundred and fifty Caddos. They swept the Natchez out of Natchitoches, killing thirty and capturing twenty-eight Théoloël men and women.[120] The "famous Flour Chief" was listed among the dead.[121] Some of the survivors fled up the Red River to the Ouachitas. Others retreated into Chickasaw territory.[122]

After their defeat at the gates of Fort Jean-Baptiste, the People of the Sun ceased to function as an autonomous polity. Although as many as three hundred warriors remained free, they were unable to operate as a united force. Tracking down and destroying the remnant of the Théoloëls became a primary goal of Louisiana's Indian policy. As if to underscore the devastation of the Natchez, from the death of the Sun of the Flour Village on, the French never again mentioned a Théoloël leader by name. Nor did officials in Louisiana record any further direct negotiations with the Natchez. The

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[119] Beaudouin to Salmon, November 23, 1732, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV, 159; Memoir of the King to Bienville, February 4, 1732, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 552.
[120] St. Denis to Salmon, November 2, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 163.
[121] The governor used the adjective "famous" when describing the Sun's death. Perier to Minister, October 22, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fols. 91-93; Anonymous memoire entitled *Defaite des Natchez Prés du poste des Natchitoches*, BN Mss na fr 2551, fol. 107; Périer to Minister, December 1, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 14, 1731, fols. 152-52v.
[122] St. Denis to Salmon, November 2, 1731, AC C13A, Vol. 13, fol. 163.

Children of Thé settled in their own villages in Chickasaw country. In the succeeding decades, they dispersed into settlements among the Creeks and the Cherokees.[123]

Over the course of fifteen years, the diplomatic prowess of the Tattooed Arm, St. Cosme, and the Tattooed Serpent had given way to subterfuge and relentless warfare under the Sun of the Flour Village. From their position as the preeminent nation in the Lower Mississippi Valley, offering refuge to bands seeking shelter from the chaos of slave raids and warfare, the Natchez themselves had become refugees. Moreover, the rubric of biological difference—race—had replaced the old practices of absorbing foreigners. The People of the Sun united themselves as red men, but their initial success provoked the ire of France, which eventually scattered them among the nations of the Southeast. The French colonial government, obsessed with eliminating their enemies, squandered its resources and exhausted its diplomatic capital with the other Indian nations of the Southeast. Within a few decades, France ceased to be a political force in North America. The discourse of redness, which they helped to shape and spread, took on a life of its own.

[123] James Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 272, 355-58; Patricia Galloway and Jason Baird Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," in *HBNAI*, 610-11; John Reed Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 250-57.

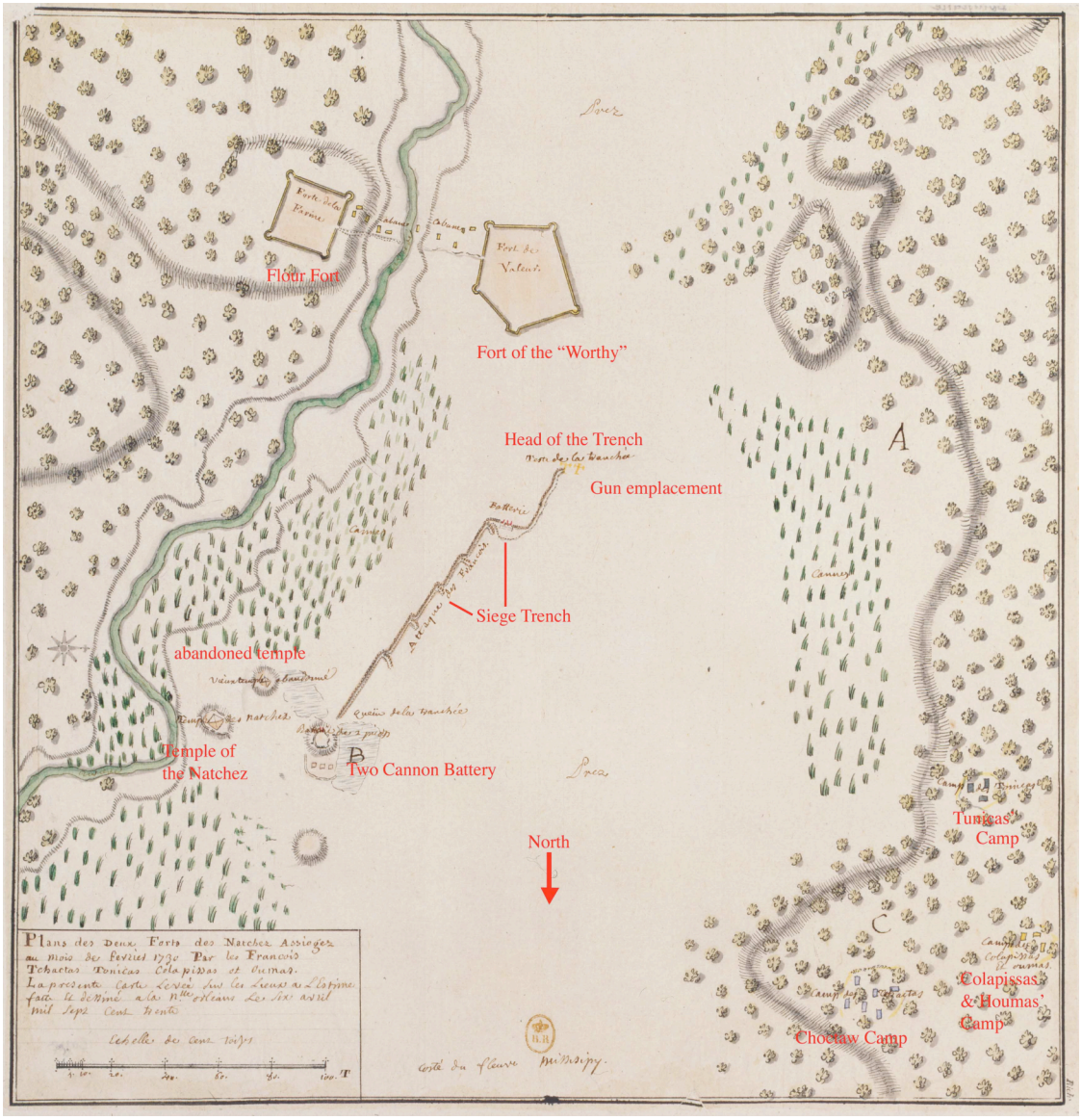


**Figure 5.1 Plans des deux forts Natchez, Nouvelle Orléans 1730** par Ignace Broutin, Department des Estampes, Vd 32 Fol. T.3. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

## Conclusion

After the defeats of 1731, the People of the Sun who escaped French captivity dispersed among various nations throughout the Southeast. One group fled to the Ouchitas on the Red River, another went to the Chickasaws, and a third band tried to return to their ancestral lands near Fort Rosalie. The Tunicas and French soldiers quickly captured or dispersed this last batch of refugees.[1] Some Théoloëls traveled east to Charles Town. In the spring of 1734, a delegation of "Natchees" visited the capitol to ask for authorization to move to South Carolina's frontier region.[2] Two years later, another group of "Natchee" Indians petitioned the colony's government for permission to settle within the British province's borders. There they came into contact with the largest Native American nation in the English colonies: the Cherokees. These Indians called the immigrants the *Ani-Ná'sti*.[3] James Adair recorded Natchez villages among the Chickasaws and the Creeks some thirty years after Bienville's last campaign.[4]

Despite their small numbers and their isolation from other members of their polity, these Natchez strove to maintain their identity. During the second half of the eighteenth century, British observers noted the presence of "Notchee" towns among the Cherokees that retained unique linguistic and cultural practices.[5] In 1813, two Moravian

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[1] Périer to Minister, December 1, 1731, AC C13, Vol. 14, 1731, fols. 152-52v.; Bienville to Maurepas, May 18, 1733, *MPAFD*, Vol. III, 622. See also Louboey to Maurepas May 20, 1733, *MPAFD* Vol. 1, 215.
[2] *The South Carolina Gazette*, April 27, 1734; Verner Winslow Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1928), 275.
[3] James Mooney, "End of the Natchez," *American Anthropologist* I, no. 3 (1899): 510-21.
[4] James Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 273, 355.
[5] Patricia K. Galloway and Jason B. Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," *HBNAI*, Vol. 14, 610; John Reed Swanton, "Ethnological Position of the Natchez Indians," *American Anthropologist* IX, no. 3 (1907): 513-28; and *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 251-52.

missionaries drew a map of Creek Territory that included a town called Natchez.[6] Anthropologists James Mooney and John Swanton traced the persistence of the Natchez language and customs through the first decade of the twentieth century.[7] When the Creeks and Cherokees moved west to Oklahoma, the People of the Sun went with them. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, there is still a Notchee Town outside of Gore, Oklahoma whose inhabitants trace their roots back to the Théoloëls. Descendants of Natchez Indians still celebrate the Deer Moon festival at the beginning of each spring at the Grand Village near the banks of St. Catherine's Creek.[8]

Despite their uncanny ability to avoid annihilation at the hands of the French, the death of the Flour Village's Sun marked the end of the Natchez capacity to act as an independent participant in Southeastern politics. Even as they scattered, the use of redness as a rhetorical tool quickly gained currency throughout the region. The Théoloëls used it to identify Native Americans in general. This usage spread throughout the Southeast and eventually across the continent. These final pages briefly examine the adoption of the discourse of race by the Natchez's neighbors, particularly the Choctaws. They also review France's increasing reliance on military solutions as she pursued the remnants of the People of the Sun and their allies, the Chickasaws. Together, these demonstrate the passing of the Mississippian custom of adopting foreign elements into paramount chiefdoms. Although Indian nations still incorporated groups of outsiders, they did so in different ways. Europeans still married into the nations of the Mississippi Valley, but they did so as individuals and often found themselves ostracized by their

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[6] Johann Christian Burckard and Karsten Peterson, *Partners in the Lord's Work: The Diary of Two Moravian Missionaries in Creek Indian Country*, trans. Carl Mauelshagen and Gerald Davis (Atlanta: Georgia State College, 1969), 11-12.
[7] Mooney, "End of the Natchez," 510-21; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 255-57.
[8] http://www.natcheznation.gq.nu/ accessed March 12, 2006.

fellow "whites." Nobody could mistake large groups of Englishmen or Americans as potential inductees into native polities; the discourse of race had taken its place in the diplomatic and social landscape of the Southeast.

The Natchez's adoption of the rhetoric of biological difference, and then their decision to use force against the colonists represented a dramatic departure from their earlier interactions with the *arrivistes* from the Old World. During the first phases of their dialogue with the French, both the People of the Sun and the subjects of the Sun King recognized similarities in the other. When the first Frenchmen arrived in Natchez country, they came as part of a group made up primarily of Native Americans. They, and the small numbers of missionaries, *coureurs de bois*, and merchants who followed them, fit into the Natchez order of things. Following a complex chiefdom's traditions of incorporating outsiders, they saw these newcomers as prospective recruits into their nation. At the very least, the first immigrants from Europe met the social and political needs of Théoloël elites by providing goods with which the Indian leaders could reward their partisans.

Louisiana's relentless pursuit of the People of the Sun throughout the 1730s also reflected a break with past practices. The French, in their earliest encounters with the Natchez, thought that they had stumbled upon a type of "Aztecs"—a centralized polity that exhibited many of the attributes of a state or something that was on its way to becoming a state. The Indians' temple reminded them of the Vestal shrines of ancient Rome, and their religion resembled the worship of Apollo and Jupiter. The Great Sun of the Natchez evoked comparisons with the potentates of the Old World. They hoped that these perceived attributes would facilitate the absorption of the Natchez into the French

colonial project by providing the Sun King's officers with an authoritative monarch with whom they could efficiently negotiate.

As the Natchez and French intermingled during the 1710s and 1720s, they were able to observe one another more closely; this eventually disabused them of their illusions of similarity. Both discovered that the other's social, religious, and political institutions were not analogous. The close proximity of increasing numbers of settlers and slaves provided the Théoloëls with the opportunity to see the stark contrast between their own way of life and the one that the European immigrants were building. Under these conditions, the old style of diplomacy that had permitted the incorporation of non-Natchez peoples into the nation broke down.

Several other factors accelerated the decline of the previous system of amalgamation. The attrition of experienced diplomats on both sides complicated negotiations. Many native women who were part of that process either died or lost their credibility with the Indians whom they were supposed to represent. Senior French diplomats and leaders passed on or were recalled to the mother country. Refractory towns on the marchlands of the nation continued to oppose the policies of the Grand Village, exacerbating the factionalism inherent in coalescent chiefdoms. These towns became the hotbed of anti-French sentiment. The shift in demographics, particularly the introduction of several hundred enslaved Africans, and the rise of plantation agriculture, injected a large number of immigrants. These newcomers lacked the ability to acknowledge the Great Sun's authority and become part of his nation. The colonial government hastened this decline in relations when it forbade its "white" subjects to marry Native American women and disinherited the Indian widows of such unions.

The People of the Sun looked for new ways to deal with their latest and most troublesome sets of immigrants. The close proximity and high concentration of non-Natchez people in the midst of Natchez country who did not conform to Natchez cosmology and derogated the Indians to an inferior social category, created a "critical mass." The Théoloëls responded to the increasing pressure wrought by the French colonial project by producing their own "race:" red men. They shaped a term then in use among the region's indigenous peoples into a racial category to unite their disparate factions against the impudent immigrants who plagued their nation. The Natchez continued to categorize people by biological characteristics after they destroyed Fort Rosalie.

Though the Natchez Diaspora deprived the Théoloëls of agency in the field of Southeastern intercultural relations, they helped to add the term "red men" to the lexicon of Native American and European relations in the Mississippi River Valley and Gulf Coast. The ramifications of their contribution persist until this day. Although several other nations, such as the Creeks, Taensas, and Cherokees, used the same term around the same time, the Natchez were the first to use it as a means to power to unite their people against the French.

Unfortunately, several factors prevent us from arriving at a complete understanding of the Natchez's discourse of race beyond its role in fostering domestic unity. The first of these arises from the fact that the documents left to us contain only the testimony of colonial women and children once held captive by the People of the Sun. The French officials and clergymen who wrote about the ordeal did not seek out the Théoloëls' perspectives on rank and status after the coup of November 28, 1729. The records culled

from the European prisoners provide only a rough approximation of the standing that the Natchez meant to confer on those who were not "red." Like the Europeans, the Théoloëls used skin color to organize laborers; the "white" women worked at repairing and laundering clothing. The only two "white" men spared had specific skills; one was a tailor who could also mend coats and shirts, and the other was a drover whose skill with draft animals made him valuable. The "blacks," in contrast, though put to work at times, received more personal freedom from the People of the Sun than from their European "masters." We can conclude, therefore, that the Natchez ranked the "whites" on the bottom and saddled them with the most onerous tasks. They placed the "blacks" on the next rung of the hierarchy and themselves, the "red men," in command.

The second factor occluding our vision of the Natchez's concept of race is time, not merely that which has elapsed between the late 1720s and the present day, but also the short amount of time that the Natchez wielded the power to enforce that vision. The first instances of the Natchez using the term "red men" occurred in the spring of 1725. During that time, the guardian of the temple and the wife of the Tattooed Serpent referred to their people as red men. During the summer or autumn of 1729, the elder of the nation used the term to characterize the People of Sun as the "most spiritual of the red men." It was not until the afternoon of November 28, 1729, when the Théoloëls controlled the territory around Fort Rosalie and the Grand Village, that they had the opportunity to realize their discourse of race through the proscription of personal autonomy and the assignment of specific tasks to its non-red population. That brief window of opportunity lasted only sixty days, from the destruction of Fort Rosalie until

the Choctaw counterattack on January 27, 1730. That two-month period offered little time for the Natchez to work out their racial hierarchy in detail.

Once they surrounded the twin fortresses and besieged the People of the Sun, the Choctaws severely curtailed the Natchez's capacity to further deploy their racial theories. After that time, the Théoloëls' authority did not extend much more than a musket shot beyond their camp. Such close quarters and the dire circumstances facing the Natchez produced conditions far different from those during the previous two months of calm. Such pressure acted as a catalyst for the Théoloëls' violent behavior toward their prisoners during the month of February 1730.

The Choctaws, however, left indications that the syntax of race had already gained purchase among them around the same time the Natchez were planning their coup. French envoys recorded Choctaw leaders calling themselves red men as early as the autumn of 1729. In September of that year, Red Shoe, who had fought alongside the French during the Third Natchez War, told du Roullet "the word is out among the French as well as among the red men that the Great Chief of the Mississippi had intended to say that we wanted to embrace the words of the English."[9] Red Shoe's employment of redness to identify American Indians resembles earlier uses of the term by the guardian of the Natchez temple and the Taensa storyteller. Red Shoe had captured several Théoloël villagers during Bienville's campaign.[10] The fate of his prisoners remains a mystery, but he may have heard about red men at that time. During a meeting held in September 1729, another Choctaw headman complained to du Roullet

[9] Régis du Roullet to Maurepas, 1729, *MPAFD*, Vol. 1, 33.
[10] Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste Pays; sa description géographique; un voyage dans les terres*, Vol. I (Paris, Lambert, 1758), 102.

"that the red men would not be duped" by the *Compagnie* director at Mobile when he refused to give the nation its customary gifts."[11]

There is also evidence that the Choctaws and the Natchez used the term during diplomatic exchanges. Moreover, one of these encounters took place during the two months following the destruction of Fort Rosalie. Payamingo, chief of the village of Boucfouca of the Cushtushas, traveled to the Grand Village where he saw the destruction wrought upon the French by the Natchez. The Théoloëls greeted the visitor and presented him with a ten year-old French boy. They employed their discourse of redness to enlist Payamingo's nation in their cause. The Natchez told him that the Choctaws should join the war against Louisiana because "they [the French] treated the red men badly." They promised Payamingo three European women and an equal number of horses if he led a raid against the Louisianans.[12]

In late February 1730, Josephe Christophe de Lusser met with Mingo Emita from the Scanapas' town. The Choctaw told him of a rumor circulating among the villages that the French governor had written to his English counterpart suggesting that their colonial governments shut off the flow of merchandise to the Indians. According to the story, the Englishman refused and said, "Since the French wished to abandon the red men he was going to send goods to the Chickasaws and to the Choctaws."[13] Lusser refuted the gossip and reminded Mingo Emita that the French had aided his people in their efforts to repel English-sponsored slave raids.

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[11] Règis Du Roullet to Maurepas, 1729, AC C13, Vol. 12, fol. 82v.
[12] Lusser to Maurepas, "A Journal of the Journey that I had made to the Choctaws" January 12, 1730 to March 23, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol. 1, 97-99.
[13] Ibid., 91.

On the same day, another Choctaw "peace chief" named Atachimingo told Lusser of a recent conference with the leaders of the Alibamons. These Indians spoke highly of the French because of their largesse, but said that it was important "to live well with all the whites" because of the valuable items that they provided.[14] Moreover, the Alibamon leaders promulgated a discourse of unity centered upon a common identity. They told the Choctaws that, "Among the red men they ought to do the same thing and never again speak of making war on each other and scalping each other, and that was the way to live in peace in their houses and see their children grow up without anxiety."[15] These admonitions show that by the spring of 1730, the discourse of redness had moved beyond the Taensas, Natchez, and Choctaws to the Muskogee-speaking Alibamons.

Whether the Choctaws and Alibamons borrowed redness as a source of identity from the Natchez or developed it independently remains uncertain. One thing is clear: the term gained rapid currency throughout the Southeast during the late 1720s and early 1730s. Although the Natchez cannot be identified with absolute certainty as the source of the ideology of redness in Native America, they were the first to use it in front of European observers. Le Page du Pratz dated his interview with the Natchez temple guardian to the spring of 1725, nearly a year before the Cherokee's employment of the term "red" before the South Carolina legislature.

The Natchez, during their brief ascendancy after the destruction of Fort Rosalie, played another role in introducing racial categories into the culture and politics of the Southeast. Their domination of their "white" and "black" prisoners offered a template for the Indian nations of the region. The Choctaws were in a particularly good situation

[14] Lusser to Maurepas, "Journal of a journey that I made in the Choctaw nation,"" January 12, 1730 to March 23, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol. 1. 92.
[15] Ibid, 92-93.

to observe the Théoloëls' racial practices. During their surprise attack against the Grand Village, they seized several score of Africans as well as a number of Europeans. During the course of 1730 and 1731, Louisianan officials worked diligently to secure the return of the human "property" from their erstwhile allies. In the meantime, the Choctaws employed the Africans as personal slaves and as bargaining chips to win compensation for their military service and to gain better trade terms.[16]

This new tactic became apparent a few months after the recapture of Fort Rosalie, when Périer's agent, Régis du Roullet, found himself at odds with various leaders among the Choctaws. He recounted one effort to secure the return of African slaves that took place during the spring of 1730:

> There arrived at this time the little chief of the Yellow Canes who told me that while he was going to carry to Mobile some scalps taken from the Natchez, he had been very glad to show them to me. There upon I told him that I should have been more delighted to see him with the negroes whom he had at his village. He replied that they were for the purpose of serving his warriors; that the French ought to be content with those who had been returned to them.[17]

The Native American's reply made it clear that the Choctaws intended to use their captives in the same manner as their former "masters"—as slaves. In an equally revealing comment, the leader of the Yellow Canes went on to tell du Roullet that "the Tunicas and other small nations had not wished to fight [the Natchez] because the French had put some of them in chains and treated the red men like slaves."[18] The headman's statements demonstrated the depth to which the convergence of skin color

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[16] The most comprehensive accounts of the Choctaw-French negotiations regarding the African captives can be found in the journals of Périer's emissaries, Josephe Cristophe Lusser and Régis du Roullet. See Lusser, "Journal of a journey," *MPAFD*, Vol. I. 81-117; Régis du Roullet to Périer, "Abstract of the journals of the journeys made by Sieur du Roullet…1729-1733," *MPAFD*, Vol. I, 170-192; Journal of Régis du Roullet, April to August 10, 1731, *MPAFD*, Vol. I, 136-154; Régis du Roullet to Périer, February 21, 1731, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV, 58-64; March 16, 1731, Ibid, 64-71.

[17] Régis du Roullet to Maurepas, April 2, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol I, 170.

[18] Ibid.

and enslavement had become imbedded in the region's diplomatic discourse. The "*negres*" purpose was to serve his men, while treating "the red men like slaves" was an insult.

In the autumn of 1730, Périer traveled to Mobile to negotiate with the Choctaws to resolve the issue. The Indians promised to return the "*negres*" but they also extracted promises of better prices and reimbursement for their losses during the previous winter's campaign.[19] Both sides reneged on their pledges within a few weeks; French goods remained dear and the Choctaws retained their African prisoners.[20] Nor did these captives fare well at the hands of the Indians. More than a year after the siege of the Natchez twin forts, Régis du Roullet recorded an encounter with several former slaves still held by the Choctaws:

> On the fifth [of March 1731] three negroes entered my house as I was speaking to the chiefs and told me that they asked no better than to go to Mobile, but that they did not want to be taken by the Indians. I asked them the reason why. "The reason why, " they told me, "Is that the Indians make us carry some packages, which exhausts us, mistreat us much, and have taken from us our clothing down to the a skin shirt that we each had." In fact, one of these three negroes had a tomahawk wound on the head which went as far as the bone, which made me think.[21]

One of the Africans told du Roullet that the Choctaws still held thirty-two slaves whom they had seized from the Natchez the year before.[22] In contrast to the Yellow Cane's defiant refusal to return the colony's former slaves, other Choctaws released several French prisoners upon the request of Périer's envoys.[23] The "whites" ranked above the "blacks" in the new Choctaw system of race.

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[19] Périer to Ory, November 15, 1730, AC, C13A, Vol. 12, fol. 314.
[20] Régis du Roulet to Périer, March 16, 1731, *MPAFD* Vol. IV, 67.
[21] Ibid., 66.
[22] Ibid., 67.
[23] Lusser, "A Journal of a Journey," *MPAFD*, Vol. 1, 105-109.

The Yellow Cane leader's speech of 1730 was the first indication that the Choctaws intended to hold Africans as unpaid laborers. He also indicated that red men were not to be treated in the same manner. French envoys and missionaries made no mention of the nation employing enslaved Africans despite their frequent visits to Choctaw country during the first three decades of Louisiana's existence. Moreover, the Yellow Cane warriors had acquired these unfortunates from the Natchez. Their experiences with Louisiana's former slaves laid the groundwork for the development of chattel slavery among the nation in later years. During the last half of the eighteenth century, prominent Choctaw families obtained more enslaved Africans. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, wealthy Choctaws ran plantations staffed by slaves purchased from their American neighbors.[24] These developments underscored the importance that racial categories had attained in the region, a process that the Natchez helped initiate.

The racialization of the Southeast's diplomatic landscape was not limited to the Indians. Étienne Périer, the governor of Louisiana between 1726 and 1733, had served as an officer on slave ships in West Africa. His correspondences with his superiors in Versailles reveal Périer's preference for violent and coercive measures. His decision to destroy the innocent Chaouachas to engender enmity between Indians and Africans demonstrated his reliance on brute force as well as his tendency to employ solutions founded upon racial categorizations. The unprovoked attack drew immediate censure

[24] For slave-holding among the Choctaws during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see James Taylor Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path: The Mississippi Choctaws from Prehistory to Removal* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 80-81; Greg O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 87, 105, 109; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 134.

from Paris.[25] The harsh treatment meted out to the Sun during his captivity during the late winter of 1731 also did little to enhance the governor's reputation among the Native peoples. Of the nearly five hundred captives taken during the final Natchez war, less than one hundred and sixty made it to Sainte Domingue alive.[26] This provoked further criticism from his superiors in the *metropole*.[27]

Despite growing doubts about his methods, Périer sent a dispatch to the Minister of the Marine, the compte de Maurepas, to inform him of a plan to destroy the small nations along the Mississippi River and thus cow the Choctaws. He wrote,

> I even expect that in less than a year we shall no longer have any Indian nations on the river from the lower part of the river to the Natchez except the Tunicas, who up to the present have been very much attached to us. The Choctaws have persuaded the small nations to retire toward them. If they were not following this course we should be obligated to destroy them, especially the Houmas, the Bayougoulas, and the Acolapissas, who were in the general conspiracy although they are under obligations to us and they are very near us.[28]

The three Indian nations that governor now wished to destroy had recently served alongside French troops during the siege of the Natchez forts.[29]

Périer's aggressive prescriptions would have increased the colony's administrative costs far beyond what Paris was willing to pay. Anticipating opposition, he suggested that Ministry of Marine use the funds earmarked for Indian gifts to pay for troops instead. Even with this redirection of resources, Louisiana's military would still have

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[25] "What do you think that the Indians will think when they see entire nations destroyed which have not offended you at all? What confidence will they be able to have in you? Is this not on the contrary to force them to regard the French as barbarians whom they must drive out and massacre?" Ory to Périer, November 1, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV p. 45.
[26] Giraud, Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana: The Company of the Indies, 1723-1731*, trans. Brian Pearce, Vol. 5 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 428-29.
[27] Minster to Périer, June 15, 1731, AC B, Vol . 55, fols. 614-615v.
[28] Périer to Maurepas, April 1, 1730, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV, 33.
[29] Broutin's map shows the Houma and Colapissa siege camps to the east of the Grand Village (see Figure 5.1, page 236).

been inadequate for subduing the nations of the region.[30] Worse, the governor's failure to defeat the Natchez bands that remained free convinced his superiors that the colony needed new leadership. The king reappointed Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, sieur de Bienville, governor on February 2, 1732.[31]

The arrival of the aging veteran in early 1733 did little to halt the decline of France's fortunes in the Mississippi corridor. The ouster of the Natchez from the river valley removed only one impediment to French control. Bienville quickly learned that the Chickasaws were disrupting communications between Kaskaskia and New Orleans.[32] Natchez and Chickasaw parties continued to conduct forays as far south as Pointe Coupée, only a few dozen miles from the provincial capital.[33] Worse, the Chickasaws' inland stronghold of nine fortified villages presented a far more difficult objective for the colony's forces than the Théoloëls' defensive works near the Mississippi and Black Rivers.

Like Périer, Bienville soon turned to a military solution despite his reputation for good relationships with the Indians. He conducted two expensive campaigns in 1736 and in 1739-1740.[34] Bienville's efforts yielded meager results; rather than crushing their enemies as he intended, the French walked away with a prisoner exchange and the

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[30] Khalil Saadani, "Gift Exchange between French and Native Americans in Louisiana," in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, ed. Bradley G. Bond (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 51-52. See also King to Bienville, February 2, 1732, AC B, Vol. 57:796-806. For an assessment of France's military in Louisiana during the 1730s, see Khalil Saadani, "Colonialisme et Stratégie: Le Rôle des Forces Militaires en Louisiane, 1731–1743," in *France in the New World: Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* (1996): 203-219.

[31] King to Bienville, February 2, 1732, AC, B. Vol. 57, fols. 796-806.

[32] Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, July 26, 1733, *MPAFD* Vol. 1, 205; Bienville to Maurepas, August 20, 1735, *MPAFD* Vol. 1, 264.

[33] Salmon to Minister, June 20, 1732, AC C13A. Vol. 15, fols. 149-49v; Périer to Minister, July 25, 1732, AC, C13A, Vol. 14, fols. 170-70v; Crémont to Salmon, August 18, 1732, *MPAFD,* Vol. 4, 122-23.

[34] For a review of the first campaign, see Patricia K. Galloway, "Ougoula Tchetoka, Ackia, and Bienville's First Chickasaw War: Whose Strategy and Tactics?" *The Journal of Chickasaw History* 2, no. 1 (1996): 3-10.

Chickasaws' promises to eject the Natchez and the English traders from their villages. Louisiana also gained a few Natchez prisoners in the deal, but the rest had already moved on to live among the Cherokees and the Creeks.[35] The peace that Bienville's troops established was ephemeral at best. Within two months, Chickasaw war parties were on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers conducting raids on French convoys.[36] Gathering war clouds in Europe, however, overshadowed these events in Louisiana.

France soon found itself involved in a series of grand struggles with Great Britain that would eventually determine, among other things, who would dominate the North American continent. Louisiana, in its bid to retain a presence in the Mississippi basin, constructed forts at several strategic points along its waterways. The colony could no longer count on consistent support from its Indian neighbors. The Choctaws soon found themselves embroiled in a vicious civil war between French supporters and the anti-French faction. The struggle cost hundreds of lives and destroyed dozens of villages.[37] When they finally emerged from the conflict in the early 1750s, the Choctaws kept the Louisianans at a distance and steered a middle way between the French, the British, and the Spanish. The other Indian nations in the Southeast had suffered such catastrophic population losses that their contributions to the French cause were negligible. Many tribes, such as the Creeks and the Caddoes, followed the example of the Choctaws and steered clear of entangling foreign alliances.

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[35] Salmon to Maurepas, May 4, 1740, *MPAFD* Vol. I, 441; Bienville to Maurepas, May 6, 1740, *MPAFD* Vol. I, 447.
[36] Louboey to Minister, June 23, 1740, *MPAFD*, Vol. IV, 168; Benoist to Salmon, July 28, 1740, AC, 13A, Vol. 26, fols. 190-191
[37] Patricia K. Galloway, "Choctaw Factionalism and Civil War, 1746-1750," in *The Choctaw Before Removal*, ed. Carolyn Keller Reeves (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1985), 120-156.

Thus, the Mississippian system of paramount chiefdoms had ended by the middle of the eighteenth century. The larger tribes of the Southeast still took in refugee populations, but these became members of loose confederations rather than subordinate villages in a centralizing polity. More important, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Creek diplomats were calling themselves red men. Before long, their British and American counterparts began using the name as well, but with far less altruistic intentions. When the French and Indian War ended in 1763, Native American religious and political leaders employed the concept of a shared Indian identity to unite indigenous peoples against the British and their colonists. The racial category of "red men" had become an integral component of intercultural relations in North America—a component that was developed and refined in Natchez country.

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