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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

NOT ALL DISAPPEARED: DISEASE AND SOUTHEASTERN INDIAN SURVIVAL, 1500-1800

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor OF Philosophy

By
Paul Kelton
Norman, Oklahoma
1998

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A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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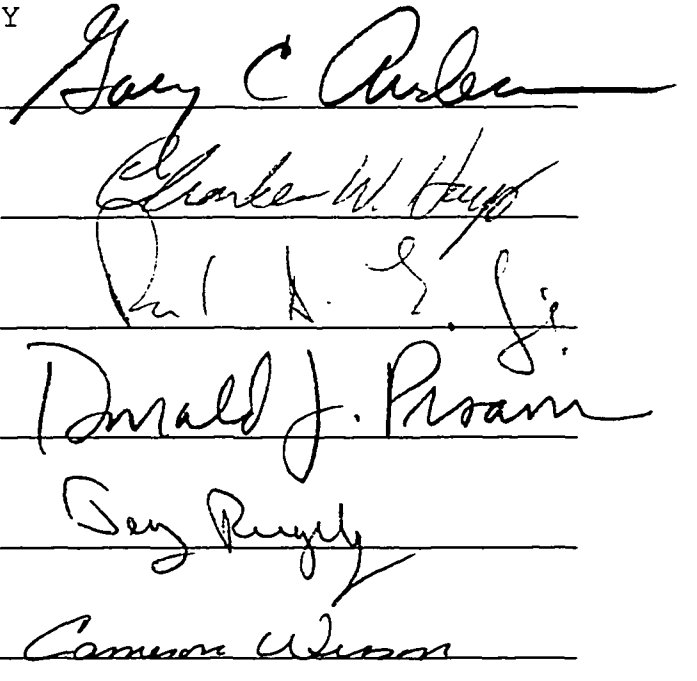

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Abbreviations

BPROSC Records in the British Public Records Office Relating to South Carolina. ed. W. Noel Sainsbury, 36 vols. microfilm. Columbia, S.C., 1955.

CRG Colonial Records of the State of Georgia. ed. Allen D. Candler. 26 vols. Atlanta, 1904.

CRNC The Colonial Records of North Carolina. ed. William L. Saunders. 10 vols. New York, 1886-1890.

CO Colonial Office. Public Record Office. London. Photostats, transcripts, and microfilm in the Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division. Washington, D.C.

DRIA Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21, 1750 - August 7, 1754, and Documents Relating to Indian Affairs,1754-1765. ed. William L. McDowell, Jr. Columbia, S.C., 1958, 1970.

DSC The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to the United States, 1539-1543. ed. Langdon Clayton and Vernon Knight. 2 vols. Tuscaloosa, 1993.

HCL Historical Collections of Louisiana ed. B.F. French. 5 vols. New York, 1846-75.

HCSC Historical Collections of South Carolina. ed. Bartholomew R. Carroll. 2 vols. New York, 1836.

JCHASC The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly of South Carolina. ed. Alexander S. Salley, 21 vols. Columbia, S.C., 1907-1949.

JHPP The John Howard Payne Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago, microfilm.

JPE The Juan Pardo Expeditions: Exploration of the Carolinas and Tennessee, 1566-1568. ed. Charles Hudson with documents relating to the Pardo Expedition transcribed, translated, and annotated by Paul E. Hoffman. Washington, 1990.

LP The Luna Papers, ed. and trans., Herbert Priestly, 2 vols. Deland, Fla., 1928.

MPAFD Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion. ed. Dunbar Rowland, A.G. Sanders, and Patricia Galloway. 5 vols. Jackson, Ms., 1927-1932 and 1984.

MPAED Mississippi Provincial Archives, English Dominion. ed. Dunbar Rowland. Nashville, 1911.

NAW New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612. ed. David B. Quinn. 5 vols. New York, 1979.

WE Westward Expansion. Colonial Office. Class Five Files, 1700-1783. British Public Record Office. University Publications of America, microfilm. University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections.

Abstract

Following the introduction of European and African diseases, Native Americans suffered dramatic population loss. The four powerful confederacies of the interior Southeast, the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, however, withstood the epidemiological onslaught. How these groups survived repeated epidemics is the central question of this dissertation.

Southeastern Indian survival depended on four factors. First, smallpox came relatively late to the Southeast, failing to become epidemic until the 1690s. Second, when epidemics struck with full force after the 1690s, Indians were not affected equally. Geography and the nature of diseases gave interior confederacies advantages over coastal, piedmont, and Mississippi Valley groups. Third, the Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Choctaws were able to compensate for population loss by absorbing, capturing, or conquering smaller groups. Fourth, the Southeastern Indians took social and cultural actions that protected themselves from the full impact of epidemics. They enacted quarantines within a culturally-prescribed religious context and avoided certain areas that were experiencing epidemics.

Introduction

For Native Americans, the European invasion of the Americas created a tragedy of monumental proportions. Europeans and Africans carried a multitude of diseases, including measles, yellow fever, influenza, and smallpox, that American Indians had never before experienced. Indians, lacking acquired immunity, consequently suffered dramatic population loss from "virgin soil epidemics," or outbreaks occurring among a people who had no previous experience with a particular disease. Such demographic catastrophe has led some scholars to label this historical phenomenon a "holocaust."[1] In the last two decades, historians, anthropologists, and demographers have debated the extent of post-contact

[1] Russell Thornton, American Indian Holocaust and Survival, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

population collapse among Indians.[2] Although their estimates vary, they nonetheless agree that virgin soil epidemics were highly significant in the development of Colonial America, exacting many Native American deaths and facilitating European conquest.[3]

Not all American Indians disappeared, however. Focusing almost exclusively on the factors that contributed to both Indian mortality and subsequent success of European settlement, historians have failed to show how some Native Americans survived in the new disease environment. This dissertation seeks to redress this failure. Specifically, it explains how the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, or the Four Nations as they were collectively known in the late eighteenth century, not only withstood frequent epidemics but also increased in population by the end of the eighteenth century.[4]

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[2] A helpful over-view and critique of such demographic studies is John D. Daniels, "The Indian population of North America in 1492," William and Mary Quarterly 3d ser., 49 (1992): 298-320. A useful survey of Southeastern Indian population is Peter Wood, "The changing population of the colonial South," in Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial South, Peter Wood, Gregory Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley, eds., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 35-103.

[3] Several scholars have written works relating to this subject. The most important works that relate directly to the Southeast are those of Alfred Crosby, Henry F. Dobyns, Marvin Smith, Ann Ramenofsky, and Timothy Silver. These will be discussed in more detail and cited later in this introduction. Other notable works include William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); and Richard White, Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

[4] U.S. officials and members of the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations frequently used the term the "Four Nations" in the late eighteenth century. (For example, see Benjamin Hawkins, Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, vol. 9, Collections of the Georgia Historical Society (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1916), 180, 214, 248, 252, and 255. The Creeks referred to Hawkins, U.S. Superintendent of Southern Indian Affairs, as "*Iste-chate-lige-osetate-chemis-te-chaugo*," or "the Beloved Man of the Four

Four reasons explain the remarkable survival of the Four Nations. First, smallpox, the disease most responsible for depopulating aboriginal societies, came relatively late to the American Southeast. The region was one of the first areas in North America that Europeans explored, but no evidence exists that confirms a widespread smallpox epidemic spread into the southern interior before the 1690s. Typhoid, malaria, and other illnesses were introduced before then, but such afflictions produced nothing like the spectacular depopulation that smallpox caused among Indians living in Mexico in the sixteenth century or those in New England in the early seventeenth century. Second, when epidemics occurred in full force in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century, they did not affect all Indian societies equally. The major colonial outbreaks consisted of multiple diseases, each having its unique nature. Some spread far, while others remained localized. A differential impact thus occurred in which Indians living along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, the piedmont, and the Mississippi Valley succumbed to multiple infections, while the Four Nations faced comparatively few pathogens due to their remote locations. Third, each of the Four Nations acted in imperial ways, adding captives and incorporating

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Nations.") The "Four Nations" did not receive much currency past 1800 due to the emergence of the Seminoles. Thereafter, the "Five Civilized Nations" became a more prevalent name. Since this dissertation does not include the Seminoles the uncommon name the Four Nations must be used.

remnant groups to augment their populations. And, fourth, members of the Four Nations pursued cultural innovations that allowed them to avoid exposure to contagion and impede the spread of epidemics.

This study takes both a regional and tribal approach. While the Four Nations receive primary attention, other native peoples in the Southeast cannot be ignored. During the colonial period, American Indian tribes were highly dynamic. At various points in their history they seceded from larger tribes and merged with other groups, and they frequently changed locations. Consequently, they might appear in colonial records under many different names. This dynamism makes the traditional approach to Indian history of focusing on specific tribes problematic. It is therefore crucial to show how epidemics affected interactions among Indian tribes. This dissertation examines interactions not just among the Four Nations but among all Indians living in the modern states of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi. Within this area, epidemics greatly affected the relationships among native groups and fostered the emergence of the Four Nations as powerful confederacies that played prominent roles in colonial history.

Any study of the history of Native Americans and disease must cross disciplinary bounds. Archaeological and

anthropological research informs this study, qualifying it as a work of ethnohistory. It also draws from medical research, which may entitle it to be considered a work of historical epidemiology. Historical demographers might welcome this work because it attempts to establish the timing of diseases based on extensive examination of colonial records and because it estimates the population dynamics of the Four Nations during the eighteenth century. Demographers, however, will be disappointed with this study if they seek calculations that approximate the number of Indians that originally inhabited the Southeast and how many died as a result of European conquest.

The chapters of this dissertation are arranged both chronologically and topically. Chapter one utilizes the chronicles of the Hernando de Soto expedition (1539-1542), the first written accounts of the region, as well as the archaeological record to reconstruct the various societies that existed in the region before the European invasion. The reconstruction of the region and its people may surprise individuals who cling to romantic notions of pre-contact Native Americans as a homogenous group of people living in an idyllic environment. Societies of varying complexity composed the social landscape. These included sophisticated polities known as chiefdoms, which utilized large, human-constructed, earthen mounds, as well as less complex tribes

and confederacies. These societies, moreover, were dynamic. Chiefdoms especially changed over time, continually evolving and disintegrating due to environmental, political, and health factors.

Chapter two assesses what Europeans did to change the social landscape of the Southeast during a time that Southeastern Indian specialists are increasingly beginning to understand, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Specifically, it addresses the probability of virgin soil epidemics striking the region and its people. Other than the Soto expedition, European intrusion into the interior was limited and sporadic until the founding of South Carolina in 1670. Coastal exploration and attempts by the Spanish, French, and English to establish colonies occurred during this period, but the documentation of these interactions remains sparse and sheds little light on the impact of Europeans upon Indians. Some scholars have argued that massive epidemics must have occurred during this period either as a result of direct contact or pathogens traveling from Mexico or the Caribbean. Chapter two will consult documentary, archaeological, and medical evidence to reconstruct the most likely epidemiological scenario during this mysterious period.

Chapter three centers on the first documented and most important smallpox outbreak in the American Southeast. What

deserves the title of the "Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic" erupted in Virginia in 1696, spread to the Carolinas by 1697 and into the Mississippi Valley by 1698, destroying numerous Indians in its path. Subsequent infections, such as malaria, yellow fever, measles, and other afflictions labeled "plague" by English and French officials, compounded the impact of smallpox. This chapter will explain the conditions that facilitated the spread of this epidemic and how it indelibly remade the social landscape. It will show how coastal, piedmont, and lower Mississippi valley tribes bore the brunt of the epidemic, while the Four Nations, which were at that time forming as confederacies in the interior, suffered comparatively less.

Chapters four continues to focus on the differential impact of colonial epidemics. For nearly one hundred years following the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, outbreaks of multiple diseases struck the Southeast every five to ten years. By 1783, Native Americans existed in significant numbers only in the interior. The dynamics of eighteenth-century outbreaks—the diseases involved, how they spread, and how they affected various peoples differently—will be shown in detail. In addition, this chapter will assess the demographic impact of diseases on the Four Nations by examining population estimates that colonial officials and other Euro-Americans made.

The response of the Four Nations to epidemics will be analyzed in chapters five and six. Chapter five looks at the imperial nature of the Four Nations, or how each interior confederacy recovered demographically by dominating their rivals militarily. To varying degrees, each of the Four Nations actively sought captives from rival groups and recruited remnant groups to confederate with them. The relations between different ethnic groups within each of the Four Nations and the degree to which they became integrated into a homogenous culture will also be examined. Chapter six addresses the cultural response of the Four Nations. It specifically examines how Native American medicine people explained epidemics and how they constructed avoidance rituals and healing ceremonies to deal with the dangers that confronted their people.

* * *

This dissertation is possible because of the hard work and gifted scholarship of many anthropologists and historians who have addressed similar questions. Alfred W. Crosby and Henry F. Dobyns have written sophisticated analyses of the impact of post-contact epidemics on Indians of the Americas, making epidemiological concepts understandable to non-medical scholars. Dobyns and Crosby, moreover, have inspired Southeastern specialists, such as George Milner, Marvin Smith, Ann Ramenofsky, and Timothy Silver, who have

expanded our understanding of the impact of epidemics on the region and its people.

More than anyone, Crosby has shown the devastating impact that European and African diseases had on Native Americans. In his 1972 classic, The Columbian Exchange, Crosby depicted European colonization as more than people moving from hemisphere to hemisphere but rather as an exchange of animals, plants, and microbes.[5] This biological exchange was not equal between Europeans and Indians. Europeans received corn and potatoes, adding two valuable cultigens to their agricultural production and allowing populations to expand. Indians received viruses, bacteria, and other parasites that brought catastrophic population loss. This microbial exchange, according to Crosby, was more important than technology and violence in facilitating European conquest.

In a later essay, Crosby developed his now widely accepted "virgin soil epidemic" thesis.[6] In doing so, he provided a more concise assessment of the epidemiological reasons why Native Americans suffered so severely from parasites of European and African origin. Acute infectious diseases, Crosby argued, were absent from the Americas prior

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[5] The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492 (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1972).

[6] "Virgin soil epidemics as a factor in the aboriginal depopulation in America," William and Mary Quarterly 3d ser., 33 (1976): 289-299.

to contact. Caused by microorganisms (viruses and bacteria), these illnesses display a rapid onset of symptoms and a relatively short period of infection before the victim either dies or recovers. These pathogens survived over the long-term by being transmitted from one person to another, and they became permanent companions to humans only when relatively large and dense populations developed which could support continuous chains of infection. The epidemiological nature of acute infectious diseases, thus, prevented the small bands of hunter-gatherers that crossed over the Bearing Straits from carrying common illnesses to the Americas.

Crosby also showed why Native Americans had no experience with many chronic infectious diseases common in the Eastern Hemisphere. These illnesses transpire much more slowly than acute ones. Symptoms manifest themselves over years or even a lifetime, during which time an infected human can transmit the disease to others. Small groups traveling over vast spaces and over an extended period could conceivably carry chronic maladies into new environments. But most of these diseases originated within large and dense human societies and were presumably not prevalent among hunter-gatherers such as the ancestors of the Indians. One of the most prominent chronic afflictions, malaria, was certainly not transmitted over the Bering Straits.

Anopheles mosquitoes, the necessary vector for transmission of malaria, existed in many locations in the Americas for thousands of years before contact, but they could not and did not live in the Arctic.[7]

Since the Americas were relatively disease free, Crosby concluded, epidemics erupted after European invasion with such fury that Native Americans inevitably failed to respond effectively. With everyone in a particular community vulnerable to disease, basic services, such as care for the ill, food production, and defense from one's enemies, collapsed. Fear, anxiety, and an inability to treat the previously unknown sicknesses only increased mortality rates. Indians often fled in terror, unintentionally exposing others, who may never have seen a European or African. At other times, the cultural response of Indians made matters worse. They resorted to what Crosby claims were detrimental cures such as cold-water bathing or sweating.

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[7] See also Saul Jarcho, "Some Observations on Disease in Prehistoric North America," Bulletin History of Medicine 38 (1964): 9; Charles F. Merbs, "A New World of Infectious Disease," Yearbook of Physical Anthropology 13 (1992): 12-13. Merbs gives other reasons beside the Bering Straits passage to explain the less numerous and varied disease inventory of the Americas. Evolutionary factors made it unlikely that many diseases evolved exclusively in the Americas. First, human residence in the Americas had been relatively short in evolutionary terms, estimated to be 20,000 to 10,000 years; bacteria, viruses, and other microbes generally need a much longer period to interact with humans before they become adapted to human hosts. Secondly, Native American societies generally remained too dispersed, lacking appropriate densities to sustain crowd infections. Thirdly, domestic animals were absent. Livestock among Old World societies increased the reservoir of living carriers needed to maintain a pathogen, and many diseases arose as a process of close interaction between animals and humans.

In his early works, Crosby persuasively demonstrated that virgin soil epidemics significantly aided Europeans in their take-over of the Americas. He continued to develop this theme in his more recent work.[8] Crosby argues that virgin soil epidemics afflicted the Indians in North, South, and Central America in much the same manner and often at the same time. He particularly cites the Southeast as an area that experienced massive depopulation during the sixteenth century. Crosby claims that European and African diseases penetrated the region before Soto's expedition and brought the collapse of the famed mound-building civilizations. Epidemics continued after Soto. By 1700, foreign pathogens had transformed the region's Indian societies from densely populated, hierarchical, and advanced polities into thinly settled, egalitarian, and less sophisticated tribes.

Crosby based much of his information on the Southeast on the work of Henry Dobyns. Dobyns, an anthropologist, began his career by studying depopulation in South America, but turned his attention to Florida at about the time Crosby published Columbian Exchange. Dobyns' research culminated in a controversial book that suggests a series of epidemics swept the Americas from Chile to Canada beginning as early

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[8] Ecological Imperialism: the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

as 1520 and continuing until 1890.[9] These were "pandemics," affecting a multitude of different societies over a vast geographical area. The century between 1517 and 1617 was especially severe, according to Dobyns, as American Indian population declined by ninety-five percent.

Most of Dobyns' primary research involves the Indians of Florida, but his conclusions also relate to the greater Southeast. He claims that smallpox, measles, bubonic plague, and influenza brought a demographic catastrophe to Southeastern Indians between 1520 and 1559. These diseases were spread not only by European explorers to the region but also by Indians themselves traveling along aboriginal trade networks linking the Southeast to Mexico. Subsequent epidemics thinned Native American population in the Southeast and beyond, and demographic recovery did not begin until 1890.

Dobyns also argues that pandemics had a transforming effect on Indian culture. Diseases caused population movements and a multitude of mergers among aboriginal groups, which sought to maintain stable numbers. He claims

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[9] Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983). Some of Dobyn's earlier works include, "An outline of Andean epidemic history to 1720," Bulletin of the History of Medicine 37 (1963):493-515; and "Estimating aboriginal population: an appraisal of techniques with a new hemispheric estimate," Current Anthropology 7 (1966): 395-416. Dobyns received many critical reviews of Their Number Become Thinned. For particularly thorough critiques, see David Henige, "Primary source by primary source? On the role of epidemics in New World depopulation," Ethnohistory 33 (1986): 293-312; and "If pigs could fly: Timucuan population and Native American historical demography," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 16 (1986): 701-720.

that archaeological evidence demonstrating these changes proves that disease had an impact, but he leaves the task of examining such evidence to others. Dobyns also contends that Indians rarely died from diseases prior to contact and when confronted with a new epidemiological reality they suffered a cultural crisis. As does Crosby, Dobyns emphasizes the ineffective cultural response of Native Americans. Their priests and leaders did not know how to deal with the crisis, making their people more vulnerable to acculturation. In the wake of epidemics, Indians abandoned traditional customs and adopted foreign, mostly European, culture.

Most historians have agreed with both Crosby and Dobyns that Indians lacked exposure to common diseases of European and African origin and virgin soil epidemics erupted sometime after contact. Most also agree that Indians suffered high mortality rates. Nevertheless, debate continues over when Indians of particular regions first experienced epidemics. Did pandemics originating in Mexico sweep all of the Americas during the sixteenth century, or did epidemics occur later and only locally in areas where Europeans had built permanent settlements?

George R. Milner offered a preliminary assessment of the idea of "pandemics."[10] Milner agrees with Dobyns, believing that prior to 1700 Southeastern Indians experienced massive population loss and culture change due to virgin soil epidemics. He nonetheless doubts that pandemics occurred, contending instead that localized outbreaks depopulated much of the region. Citing various primary accounts of Spanish, English, and French explorers and settlers, Milner suggests that diseases erupted over one and one-half centuries wherever Europeans intruded, gradually producing demographic decline. He claims that such an interpretation remains unproven until scholars conduct a thorough examination of archaeological records.

Marvin Smith heeds this call in his examination of the archaeological record of eastern Tennessee, northern Georgia, and eastern Alabama.[11] Smith concludes that some signs of sixteenth-century pandemics exist but such evidence remains weak at best. He finds scattered evidence of population movements and decrease in size as well as number of villages that possibly can be dated to the sixteenth century. Despite the tenuous nature of his findings, Smith still believes that pandemics occurred as Dobyns suggests.

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[10] "Epidemic disease in the postcontact Southeast," Mid-Continental Journal of Archaeology 5 (1980): 39-56.

[11] Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change in the Interior Southeast: Depopulation during the Early Historic Period (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1987).

Ann Ramenofsky is even more convinced that archaeological evidence confirms Dobyns' claims of massive depopulation during the sixteenth century.[12] She examines the archaeological record of various regions of North America, including the Southeast, and claims that human movement out of the Mississippi valley area verifies population loss of up to ninety percent. She agrees with Dobyns that such depopulation came from pandemics, but claims that rather than a large number of diseases, only a relative few pathogens limited to smallpox, whooping cough, and malaria could have been carried by explorers or spread from Mexico. These diseases were nonetheless severe, causing mortality rates as high as those that Dobyns cites.

In a later essay, Ramenofsky refines another aspect of Dobyns' pandemic theory.[13] She develops a model of "differential persistence" to explain why some Southeastern Indian groups survived illnesses during the sixteenth century while others did not. Dobyns provides few clues to this phenomenon, leading his readers to believe that pandemics struck all peoples uniformly. Ramenofsky on the other hand argues that settlement patterns and geographical location served as selective factors of survival; densely

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[12] Vectors of Death: the Archaeology of European Contact (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

[13]"Loss of innocence: explanations of differential persistence in the sixteenth-century Southeast," in Columbian Consequences, vol. 2., Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East, ed. David Hurst Thomas, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 31-49.

settled societies located near "axis of communication" (rivers, coasts, and trading paths) perished during the sixteenth century, while those groups that were more dispersed in remote areas survived.

The idea of massive population loss in the interior Southeast in the sixteenth century has received much currency in historical and anthropological literature. Timothy Silver's environmental history of the Southeast, for example, begins with the premise that diseases carried by early explorers had a devastating impact on Native Americans before the founding of South Carolina in 1670.[14] Silver, who models his study after William Cronon's environmental history of colonial New England, characterizes depopulation due to virgin soil epidemics as the first major ecological change associated with European colonization. Silver, however, believes that microbial pathogens affected various groups differently and by the 1690s some groups had recovered somewhat. He focuses most of his attention on the eighteenth century, giving the impression that population loss occurred over three centuries rather than being confined to the sixteenth.

While Silver moves the study of Southeastern Indians and epidemics into the eighteenth century, he also briefly

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[14] Timothy Silver, A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

addresses the actions, both positive and negative, that Indians took in confronting new illnesses. Much like Crosby he shows how traditional Indian curing practices increased mortality rates, but he also briefly mentions some Indian adaptations such as abandoning traditional cures and establishing quarantines. These practices, he believes, partly explain how interior groups such as the Cherokees and Creeks survived.

Crosby, Dobyns, Milner, Smith, Ramenofsky, and Silver each provide innovative ways to approach the history of Southeastern Indians and disease, but there is much room for further research and analysis. This dissertation seeks to refine and present some alternatives to their findings.

Previous scholarship suffers from a tendency to characterize Indian societies before contact as relatively free from illness. While the virgin soil thesis that Indians lacked immunity to European and African pathogens seems valid, Indians obviously had some experience with disease. Archaeological evidence indicates a variety of ailments including tuberculosis, blastomycosis, and nutritional deficiencies afflicted Indians before contact. Native Americans thus had a tradition of medical beliefs that conditioned their response to new types of sickness. Curing practices, religious ceremonies, and the institution of the medicine man or woman persisted through the colonial

period and helped Southeastern Indians deal with the new disease environment.

This study also takes issue with the thesis that the Southeast experienced "massive depopulation" before the 1690s. Proponents of an early and severe impact of virgin soil epidemics cite as evidence the disappearance of the chiefdoms described in the chronicles of the Soto expedition. As chapter one will show, chiefdoms were not static societies; they evolved and devolved due to indigenous causes such as environmental and political stress. The complex, mound-building societies that Soto found could have disintegrated for reasons other than dramatic demographic decline. Southeastern Indians experienced new diseases in the sixteenth century, as Chapter Two describes, but only certain pathogens incapable of causing "massive depopulation" could have been spread widely. Archaeological reports, documentary evidence left by explorers, and epidemiological literature indicate that malaria, typhoid, and other afflictions could have spread throughout the region and destabilized chiefdoms. Nevertheless, these pathogens produced no catastrophe comparable to what followed in the wake of a disease such as smallpox.

Major depopulation did eventually occur in the Southeast, and it came during the 1690s with the Great

Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic. At that time historical circumstances, such as the advent of European-inspired raids for Indian slaves and the fur trade, made conditions ripe for a massive smallpox outbreak. By 1700, when the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic had subsided, more Southeastern Indians lost their lives within a four year period to European and African diseases than in the previous two centuries combined. The greatly accelerated pace of contact with Europeans and Africans, moreover, meant that recovery for many groups would be problematic if not impossible.

Yet even this massive depopulation occurred in a non-uniform way. Although this study disagrees with Ramenofsky's assessment that major population collapse occurred in the sixteenth century, it agrees with her proposal of differential persistence. Geography was a key variable to differential persistence, as were slave raids. Scholars have underestimated the impact of slave raids on Southeastern Indian societies. Europeans allied with Indians and encouraged them to capture other Indians to sell for trade items. The Iroquois were among the first slave raiders, and their activities reached deep into the South. The Virginians also bought Indian slaves, and later the Carolinians dramatically increased the volume of the trade. Not only did this pernicious activity carry off numerous

Indians, but it also made recovery from disease difficult for some groups. This occurred for two main reasons. First, disease-afflicted groups found it very difficult to mobilize enough warriors to defend themselves from enemies. Second, the heightened level of native warfare made basic subsistence activities hazardous, depriving infected groups of the nutrition needed to survive illness. Groups that could not defend themselves from slave raids thus suffered disproportionately from epidemics.

All the intellectual energy dedicated to explaining why Indians died should not obscure the remarkable survival of the Four Nations. And, it is explaining this phenomenon that this study seeks to make its most significant contribution. To be sure, others have addressed how Indians adapted to the new disease environment and recovered. One scholar, Russell Thornton, in particular deserves notice for calling attention to this aspect of Native American history. Thornton has challenged the assumptions of Crosby and Dobyns that all Indian groups suffered linear population decline following contact, and he criticizes them for discounting Indian abilities to recover from smallpox epidemics.[15] In doing so, Thornton calls for a more detailed analysis of Native American adaptation, recovery, and survival, which is

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[15]"American Indian population recovery following smallpox epidemics," American Anthropologist 93 (1991): 28-45. Thornton, a sociologists and demographer, has written extensively on the population history of American Indians. See also The Cherokees: a Population History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

indeed the focus of the last chapter of this dissertation. Unlike the works of Crosby, this study will show how the cultural responses of the Four Nations aided rather than hindered their physical and spiritual survival. Southeastern Indians maintained traditional institutions of medicine and even developed novel curing and preventative practices. These positive actions impeded the spread of diseases, retarded mortality rates, and demonstrated a will among Indians to retain spiritual vitality amid bewildering circumstances.

Chapter One:

The Land of Chiefdoms

In 1539 Hernando de Soto and nearly six hundred Spaniards began a four-year journey through the southeastern interior. Composed of men who had participated in the conquest of Peru, the expedition searched the Gulf Coast, Carolina piedmont, Appalachian Mountains, Mississippi River, and all areas between for gold, silver, and slaves. The Spaniards landed near present-day Tampa Bay and headed north through Georgia and into the Carolinas. They then turned west, venturing over the Appalachian summit and into eastern Tennessee. Turning southwest, they traveled through northern Georgia and central Alabama. After marching westward across Mississippi, they passed into Arkansas and Texas. Finding a dearth of food, they returned to the Mississippi where they decided to leave the region. Without gold or silver to show for their adventure and without their

leader Soto who died in May 1542, the remaining Spaniards built boats, sailed down the Mississippi through Louisiana, departed from the delta, and reached Tampico, Mexico in September 1543.[1]

Members of the Soto expedition expected to find wealthy states like those of the Incas or Aztecs, but instead they found themselves in a land of less-sophisticated chiefdoms. Both the Incan and Aztecan states had multiple levels of hierarchy and possessed control over a diversity of people living over a much larger territory than their Southeastern contemporaries.[2] Southeastern chiefdoms involved a single

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[1]Charles Hudson and his associates have put a tremendous effort into revising John Swanton's earlier reconstruction of the route that Hernando de Soto took through the Southeast. Although the specific route remains debated, I rely on Hudson's rather than Swanton's work. For an excellent synopsis of his research and a useful map, see Charles Hudson, "The Hernando de Soto expedition, 1539-1543," in The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704, ed. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser, (Athens: University of Georgia, 1994), 74-103. See also John R. Swanton, ed., Final Report of the United States De Soto Expedition Commission. United States House of Representatives Document 71, 76th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1939). Four chronicles of the Hernando de Soto expedition are known to exist. Three of these contain fairly reliable information. One chronicler known as the Gentleman of Elvas either participated in the expedition or received first hand accounts. Published in 1557, The Account by a Gentleman from Elvas is the most thorough as well as most useful. Luis Hernandez de Biedma the factor of the expedition provided another generally reliable but shorter account, Relation of the Island of Florida. Soto's personal secretary, Rodrigo Ranjel kept a diary on the trip which Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes later used in his four volume work on Spanish colonization, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, (Madrid, 1851-1855). A generally unreliable account is that of Garcilasco de la Vega's The Florida of the Inca, first published in 1605. Translated and edited reprints of these four accounts are contained in The De Soto Chronicles: the Expedition of Hernando de Soto to the United States, 1539-1543, 2 vols., ed. Langdon Clayton and Vernon J. Knight, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama); hereafter this edition will be cited as DSC, and the particular account will be cited by the author's last name. For an overview of European exploration and settlement in the Southeast during the sixteenth century, see Paul E. Hoffman, A New Andalucia and a Way to the Orient: the American Southeast during the Sixteenth Century (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

[2]On the organizational level of the Inca and Aztec, see Eric Wolf, Europe and the People without History (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), 59-68 and 130-135. Two detailed accounts of the conquest of the Inca and Aztec are Charles Gibson, The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964) and John Hemming, The Conquest of the Incas (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970).

level of hierarchy, with an individual town possessing power over a group of other towns. Some of these polities incorporated numerous villages distributed over hundreds of miles, but the typical chiefdom possessed only a small cluster often less than ten villages.[3] Southeastern Indian societies thus paled in comparison to their more complex Latin American contemporaries.

Despite appearing relatively poor and small to Soto's men, sixteenth-century southeastern chiefdoms present a picture of a more complex social landscape than historians of North American Indians have traditionally studied. Most of the familiar indigenous groups in American history have been tribes. Composed of highly autonomous communities, tribes dispersed political power among a multiple number of settlements, clans, and individuals. These societies showed relatively little political coordination beyond the local community.[4] Tribes in fact dominated much of North America in the sixteenth century and became predominate in later

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[3]The best description of a chiefdom as it applies to the Southeast is Christopher S. Peebles and Susan M. Kus, "Some archaeological correlates of ranked societies," American Antiquity 42 (1977): 421-448. See also John F. Scarry, "The late prehistoric Southeast," in The Forgotten Centuries, 21; Randolph J. Widmar, "The structure of southeastern chiefdoms," in Forgotten Centuries, 127; and Richard R. Polhemus, The Toqua Site: A Late Mississippian Dallas Phase Town, 2 vols., University of Tennessee Department of Anthropology, Report of Investigations No. 41. Tennessee Valley Authority Publications in Anthropology No.44. (Knoxville, 1987), II, 1239.

[4]The classic theoretical work on tribes is Marshall D. Sahlins, Tribesmen, Foundations of Modern Anthropology Series, ed. Marshall D. Sahlins, (Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968). According to Sahlins, chiefdoms are the most sophisticated types of tribal societies, while the least complex are segmentary tribes which are collections of extremely decentralized and highly autonomous local communities. When I use the term tribe I do not include chiefdoms but rather am referring to societies organized below the chiefdom level.

centuries in the Southeast. Nevertheless, the Southeast that Soto saw was a land of powerful chieftains reigning over multiple villages. These leaders were quite unlike those of tribes. Many chieftains belonged to elite families who possessed hereditary rule. They commanded many people, being able to mobilize a large number of individuals for military and economic purposes.

While Soto's chroniclers described existing southeastern chiefdoms, they did not adequately capture the fluid nature and diverse array of native societies in the region. Before contact, chiefdoms were dynamic. They continually underwent cycles of growth and subsequent disintegration due to stress caused by environmental, political, and health factors. Chiefdoms, although the dominant polities in the land, also shared the region with less sophisticated tribes and confederations of tribes. Tribes generally escaped the attention of Spanish chroniclers, but they were indeed present, particularly along the coasts and in remote, rugged areas. Tribes, confederacies, and chiefdoms all composed the pre-contact southeastern social landscape, which is best depicted as a dynamic mosaic of native peoples.[5]

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[5]Reconstructing the dynamic mosaic of native peoples that resided in the Southeast is difficult. Documentary evidence pertaining to the sixteenth-century Southeast is largely restricted to the various chronicles of the Soto expedition and minor accounts of other Spanish explorers. Spanish chroniclers, though, failed to provide thorough information and often contaminated their accounts with extreme ethnocentrism. The historian consequently must practice what is called "ethnohistory," using a variety of literary and non-literary sources to reconstruct the past. The first group of sources involves eighteenth-

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The emergence of southeastern chiefdoms involved a cultural revolution that began six centuries prior to European contact. Around 900 AD Southeastern Indians started to practice a culture now labeled Mississippian. Intensive cultivation of maize, beans, and squash in cleared fields characterized this development.[6] Before Mississippian development, Southeastern Indians utilized some cultigens including squash and a species of corn best grown in dry-climates, called tropical flint. Both of these had been present for over 1000 years before the Mississippian revolution, but they never replaced hunting game and gathering wild produce as dominate subsistence activities. Intensive agriculture and permanent settlements emerged with the arrival of a new species of corn around 1000 AD. This species, eastern flint, thrived in moist environments and had much larger cob lengths than preceding species, effectively doubling the agricultural potential of native societies. Beans appeared in the Southeast about the same time, enhancing maize production with their nitrogen fixing

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century accounts of the Natchez who retained certain characteristics of a chiefdom-level society. French officials and Catholic priests wrote extensively on this amazing group which appears to have been the last surviving southeastern chiefdom. The second source of information comes from the oral traditions of members of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek nations. These groups were composed of many people who had descended from chiefdoms. When asked about their histories, they could remember what their ancestors had told them about the days before the European invasion. The last and most important category of information entails archaeological records. Archaeologists, especially in the last twenty years, have offered intriguing interpretations of the material remains that pre-contact Indians left and have verified that the Southeast was a land of dynamic and diverse people.

[6]Scarry, "The late prehistoric Southeast," 29.

abilities.[7] Older forms of acquiring subsistence persisted, as Mississippians continued to hunt deer, turkeys, and bear, and gather nuts, roots, and berries.[8] By 1200, however, corn, bean, and squash agriculture met the majority of nutritional requirements of Southeastern Indians.

Mississippian peoples divided labor differently from their hunting and gathering ancestors as well as their eighteenth-century descendants. Hunter-gathers separated the two different chores of food acquisition by sex, with men doing the former and women the latter. Eighteenth-century groups reverted back to this division of labor, although they did not give-up farming. As tribes became involved in the fur trade, men devoted much more time to hunting, leaving women with most of the tasks involved in gathering and agriculture.[9] Mississippians probably maintained distinctions between male and female work. Men most likely monopolized hunting, weapon production, and warfare, while women performed tasks such as cooking, making pottery, and child care. Agriculture, though, involved both

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[7]Charles Hudson, The Southeastern Indians (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 80-81 and 293; William Walter Baden, "A Dynamic Model of Stability and Change in Mississippian Agricultural Systems" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1987), 48.

[8]Arthur Bogan, "Faunal Analysis: A Comparison of Dallas and Overhill Cherokee Subsistence Strategies," in The Toqua Site, II, 987-988; and Thomas M.N. Lewis and Madeline Kneberg, Hiwassee Island: An Archaeological Account of Four Tennessee Indian Peoples (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970), 43-46.

[9]James Adair, History of the American Indians, [1775], ed. Samuel C. Williams, (New York: Promontory Press, 1930), 438-439.

male and female labor. Both sexes helped plant, tend, and harvest crops, activities that demanded the most time and energy of Mississippian peoples.[10]

Intensification of agriculture encouraged rapid demographic and cultural development throughout the Southeast.[11] By 1000 AD, populations had significantly grown, villages became more permanent, shell-tempered pottery appeared, and numerous flat-topped pyramidal mounds were built.[12] Mounds served as religious centers, residences for priests, and burial sites for deceased leaders. Indians also increasingly used a variety of ornate symbols including gorgets, effigies, discs, and plates that represented images of fertility, war, and the supernatural. Some of these artifacts consisted of materials including copper, mica, marine shells, and exotic stones that became distributed along extensive trade routes linking societies throughout the greater Southeast and beyond. Some symbols themselves became widespread. Artifacts depicting a common set of religious images, representing what anthropologists

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[10]Biedma in DSC, I, 238; and Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, ed. and trans., Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Pénicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 20.

[11]Gerald F. Schroedl, R.P. Stephen Davis, Jr., and C. Clifford Boyd, Jr., Archaeological Contexts and Assemblages at Martin Farm, University of Tennessee Department of Anthropology, Report of Investigations No. 39. Tennessee Valley Authority Publications in Anthropology, No. 37. (Knoxville, 1985), iii.

[12]Scarry, "The late prehistoric Southeast," 29.

have called the "Southern Ceremonial Cult," reached their point of maximum distribution in 1250 AD.[13]

Mississippian culture spread by both diffusion and migration of people. At times, people seeking fertile lands carried this culture into new areas, displacing groups who had not yet developed intensive maize cultivation. Around 1300 AD, for example, an intrusive group caused less sophisticated Indians to abandon their homes near the headwaters of the Pee Dee river in what is today North Carolina, marking the farthest eastern extent of Mississippian society.[14] Other times, Mississippian development occurred *in situ* as a group adopted the new way of life for themselves, becoming more permanently attached to the land in the process.[15] By 1500, most of the major river valleys of the Southeast had been at one time or another inhabited by people practicing Mississippian culture.

The adoption of Mississippian culture in many, but not all, cases facilitated the development of chiefdoms. With

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[13]Jon Muller, "The Southern Cult," in The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, ed. Patricia Galloway, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 11-26.

[14]Joffre L. Coe, "The Cultural Sequence of the Carolina Piedmont," in Archaeology of Eastern United States, ed. James B. Griffin, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 300-301; and Hudson, Southeastern Indians, 83.

[15]Good examples of *in situ* development can be found in the Little Tennessee River valley. For an overview, see R.P. Stephen Davis, Jr., Aboriginal Settlement Patterns in the Little Tennessee River Valley, University of Tennessee Department of Anthropology, Report of Investigations No. 50. Tennessee Valley Authority Publications in Anthropology, No. 54. (Knoxville, 1990), especially 16.

increased production, population grew, villages became too large, and colonizing parties were sent out to build new settlements.[16] Usually, these villages lay in linear fashion along a river valley.[17] They remained closely associated through festivals and ceremonies celebrated in the mother town. Sometimes villages of different origins became linked through military alliances to protect fields and hunting grounds from a common enemy. The most aggressive chiefdoms even conquered less powerful peoples. As a chiefdom expanded, conflicts inevitably arose with neighbors with whom they competed for land and resources. Weaker groups either evacuated the area or recognized their conquerors as paramount rulers to whom they owed tribute.[18]

Chiefdom authority seldom grew outside of a river system, and populations of chiefdoms remained relatively homogenous. This occurred for two reasons. First, riverine environments provided a diversity of foodstuffs that eliminated the need for exchange between different biotic zones. Soil along the river proved highly fertile for maize-intensive agriculture, while forests along the edge of

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[16]Scholars disagree somewhat on why chiefdoms formed. This interpretation is a composite of various arguments. A valuable summary is Charles Hudson, "The Indians," in JPE, 53-56. For a theoretical discussion, see Timothy Earle, "The Evolution of Chiefdoms," Current Anthropology 30 (1989): 84-88.

[17]David Anderson, "Stability and change in chiefdom-level societies: an examination of Mississippian political evolution on the South Atlantic slope," in Lamar Archaeology, ed. Gary Shapiro, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), 207.

[18]Widmar, "Structure of southeastern chiefdoms," 143-144; and Anderson, "Stability and change in chiefdom-level societies," 190-191.

valleys served as ideal habitat for deer and turkey. Wild nuts, berries, and roots also abounded in these areas. Each town of a chiefdom had equal access to this variety, consequently lowering the need for inter-village trade or seasonal migration.[19] Second, the available means of transportation retarded the development of a chieftain's power. Chieftains could easily use canoes to communicate and collect tribute among villages located within a river system, but lacking horses, mules, or other burden-bearing animals, overland travel between different valleys proved rather difficult. Some large chiefdoms embraced villages located in different valleys, but these involved rivers that existed in close proximity.[20]

When functioning well, a chiefdom ensured a relatively prosperous existence for its constituent people. It did this by maximizing food production, creating surpluses, and ensuring stability during times of crisis.[21] Chieftains made the crucial decisions of where, how, and especially when to plant. A bountiful harvest depended on avoiding late frosts, so leaders kept a careful watch on the lunar cycle. When the time was right, they sent word throughout the chiefdom. Ritualized ceremonies that elites planned and

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[19]Peebles and Kus, "Ranked societies," 424-425.

[20]Anderson, "Stability and change in chiefdom-level societies," 207.

[21]Peebles and Kus, "Ranked societies," 432-433.

conducted marked the beginning of the planting season. During the growing season, chieftains inspected crops and determined when they were ripe. They over-saw first fruit celebrations similar to the Green Corn Ceremony practiced by eighteenth century tribes, and they conducted the feasts marking final harvest. In return for maintaining the agricultural calendar, elites received tribute mostly in the form of maize, which served as surplus to be distributed during the winter and to villages that may have experienced crop failures due to enemy sabotage, pests, floods, or localized droughts.[22] Reciprocity between elites and followers thus provided a mechanism for individuals to receive at least a minimum amount of carbohydrates.[23]

Reciprocity and elite leadership also helped secure a wide distribution of protein. Hunting wild game during the period of Mississippian development most likely differed from earlier practices. Rather than individual hunters stalking animals, chiefdoms employed relatively large parties that used fire to maximize game kills. Chieftains mobilized hunters throughout the chiefdom and sent them into the forest which they ignited in several locations. The

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[22]Widmar, "Structure of southeastern chiefdoms," 138-139.

[23]Since this type of information cannot be determined solely from archaeological records, this interpretation rests heavily on the theoretical model of Peebles and Kus. Nevertheless, 18th-century groups maintained several features of chiefdom social organization, particularly the various feasts and ceremonies that gave a certain rhythm to their life. These celebrations also clearly had redistributive functions. See Adair, History of the American Indians, 105; and JHPP, I, 72-73, 78, and III, 38.

hunters kept the fire in the form of a continually shrinking ring that entrapped a variety of game, particularly deer. Eventually, the frightened animals jumped through the fire, only to be met with a barrage of arrows and spears.[24] Not only did fire-surround techniques increase yields available to hunters bearing weapons made of stone and wood, it also created ideal habitat for game. Fires consumed much of the litter on forest floors, exposing nuts that had fallen from trees and allowing berries and grasses to flourish. This type of management consequently sustained deer herds and allowed prosperous hunts to continue.[25] After a hunting expedition, participants took a share of the harvest for their own use, but much of the meat was redistributed to others through communal feasts. These feasts included annual cleansing and renewal rituals, ballplays, funerals, and other occasions.[26] Elites most likely received the best cuts of meat, but in times of abundance everyone received at least a portion of the game harvest.[27]

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[24]Gregory A. Waselkov, "Evolution of deer hunting in the Eastern Woodlands," Mid-Continental Journal of Archaeology 3 (1978): 15-34.

[25]Cronon, Changes in the Land, 49-51; and Timothy Silver, A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 61-62.

[26]Adair, History of the American Indians, 115; and JHPP, I., 72-73, 78; and III, 38.

[27]On unequal distribution of meat, see Arthur Bogan, "Faunal Analysis," 986-987; Bogan notes that certain people received choice cuts but a differential level of nutrition did not occur. Parham's skeletal analysis shows that health did not vary with status among residents of Toqua. See also Parham, "Toqua skeletal biology: a biocultural approach," in The Toqua Site, I, 498.

Individuals within a chiefdom would not have seen their prosperity only in terms of acquiring proper types or sufficient amounts of nutrients. To them, abundant harvests, good hunts, and plentiful food for everyone depended on supernatural power and appropriate behavior to please the mysterious forces that controlled life.

Resembling priests, chieftains were ultimately responsible for maintaining good relations with the spiritual world. Only elites understood the ritualized language needed to conduct the sacred festivals and ceremonies that held society together. Chieftains also monopolized the use of exotic items, such as copper and marine shells. These items, obtained through extensive regional trade networks, were given ceremonial importance and inscribed with fantastic images whose meaning chieftains only knew.[28] Elites moreover passed down esoteric information and sacred objects only to their kin, making elite status hereditary, or they passed it to specially chosen individuals.[29]

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[28]Adair, History of the American Indians, 187; and Vernon J. Knight, "Some speculations on Mississippian monsters," in The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, 206-209.

[29]Chieftains probably showed considerable variation. This is a generalized description based on Randolph J. Widmar, "The structure of southeastern chiefdoms," in The Forgotten Centuries, 147; and David G. Anderson, "Stability and change in chiefdom-level societies," 190-207. The Lower Cherokees had less powerful chieftains, but at one point in time they had chiefly priests who were in charge of the agricultural calendar and spoke a language that their followers could not understand; Sources call these priests, *Ani-Kutani*; see John Norton, The Journal of Major John Norton 1816, ed. Carl F. Klinch and James J. Talman, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1970), 79-80; and Charles Hicks to John Ross, March 1,

Mounds constructed of earth became the most obvious symbol of an elite's spiritual prestige. Upon these structures, homes, temples, and tombs of living and deceased chieftains stood. The mounds grew with the addition of another layer of soil after a chieftain died and another succeeded. The height of the mound and its central role in religion symbolized a chieftain's close association with the supernatural. In temples upon these mounds, chieftains maintained a sacred fire, assumed to be directly from the sun. Some of these leaders even claimed divinity themselves. For example, among the Natchez, chieftains called themselves "Suns," believing that they had descended directly from the divine star.[30]

The strongest chieftains used religious ideology to hold their chiefdoms together during a crisis. A leader, for example, might have explained a flood that destroyed a village's crops as a result of a violation of marriage customs, disrespect of elders, or neglect of prayers.[31] If the damage was limited to one village, the afflicted people probably were made to feel remorse, choosing to accept

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1826, Papers of Chief John Ross, 2 vols. ed. Gary Moulton, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), I, 114-116.

[30]Several French accounts of the Natchez exist. For the most thorough, see Charlevoix, "Historical Journal," in HCL, III, 162-170. See also McWilliams, ed. and trans., Fleur de Lys and Calumet, 82-96; Antoine Le Page Du Pratz, History of Louisiana, (London: Beckett, 1774; reprint, New Orleans: J.S.W. Harmanson, 1947), 298-300; and Bérnard de la Harpe, "Journal" in HCL, III, 18.

[31]Adair, History of the American Indians, 111 and 113-114.

punishment instead of rebelling for fear of reprisals from those left unaffected. Chieftains also might have extricated themselves entirely from crises by delegating responsibility to vulnerable people in society. Among the Natchez, the chieftain, or "Great Sun," did not engage in rituals to ensure good weather. Instead, this duty fell on a few elders who no longer could hunt and depended on others. An individual family employed a rainmaker, for example, who filled his mouth full of water, expelled it through a reed onto their crops, and recited prayers to the heavens. If lack of moisture ruined crops, the people took their anger out on the rainmakers, executing them for their false prophecy.[32]

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Even before contact, chiefdoms had a history of collapse. Chiefdoms were quite fragile and disintegrated for a variety of reasons. The personalized leadership of chieftains failed to provide for chiefdom survival after the death of a particular leader who lacked qualified heirs or replacements.[33] Living chieftains could also lose legitimacy. Military defeat, for example, raised questions about a leader's abilities to protect his people. In addition, invasion by rival groups could cut-off

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[32]Charlevoix, "Historical journal," 168; and Adair, History of the American Indians, 98-99.

[33]Widmar, "Structure of southeastern chiefdoms," 145-156.

communication among villages within a chiefdom, disrupting the process of redistribution and curtailing the acquisition of exotic goods that symbolized elite status.[34]

Severe climatic disruptions also proved difficult for chiefdoms to survive. A widespread drought or flood or a particularly devastating late frost, especially in combination with military pressure and loss of hunting grounds ruined the economic bases for redistribution. Chieftains lost their presumed spiritual authority with their inability to meet the crisis. Subordinate villages broke-away, and the population scattered seeking subsistence in other locations.

An example of a chieftain facing such turmoil can be found in the records of the expedition of Soto. In 1542, Spanish explorers came upon a chiefdom along the Mississippi River that they called "Ycasqui," whose people suffered from warfare and drought. Their leader, seeking to prevent his people from dying of hunger, went out to greet Soto, hoping that the Spanish leader would not only give him military aid but also help him bring rain. The chieftain may or may not have thought Soto was divine. Spanish chroniclers claimed the Indian "knew that he [Soto] was a man from heaven," but

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[34]Anderson, "Stability and change in chiefdom-level societies," 199; Christopher S. Peebles, "Paradise lost, strayed, and stolen" in The Burden of Being Civilized: An Anthropological Perspective on the Discontents of Civilization, ed. Miles Richardson and Malcolm C. Webb, Southern Anthropological Society Proceedings, ed. Mary W. Helms, no. 18, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 30. For a summary of the process of devolution, see Patricia Galloway, Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 347-348.

he probably believed that if the Spanish explorer was a chieftain among his people he might possess knowledge of how to make it rain. In any event, allying with an outsider was a desperate act to save what status among his people he had left.[35]

Sometimes chiefdom decline resulted from much slower ecological processes. As a chiefdom became more populous and as its villages grew larger, the soil from which Indians procured their life-sustaining maize became taxed from decades and even centuries of use. Maize depended heavily on nitrogen-rich soil, an environmental fact that determined the fortunes of several chiefdoms.

Mississippians attempted to manage their environment in order to guarantee that their soil possessed a continual supply of nitrogen. Unlike Europeans, Southeastern Indians did not manure their fields to keep them fertilized; North American Indians lacked domestic livestock, and had to depend on other ways to guarantee continuous yields from their fields. They purposely selected river bottoms, usually the second terrace of a valley, because periodic floods replenished soil with new layers of silt. Indians also used fire both to clear the land of trees and to burn their fields before planting. After years of such practices, Indians left a human mark on the land, creating

deforested areas, especially along rivers.[36] In the short term, floods and burning proved beneficial as it continually replenished the soil with silt and nitrogen-rich ash, respectively. In the long-term, however, Mississippian practices could not replace enough nitrogen to keep up with the demands of their agriculture. Yields declined over the years, and once a field became depleted it took at least a century to be restored. Indians of chiefdom thus continually had to create new fields. For populous societies this proved problematic. Ultimately, some societies ran-out of fields and broke-apart into several independent villages that moved to new locations seeking better land. Sometimes these chiefdoms reverted back to older subsistence schemes, relying more heavily on hunting and gathering to make up for declining harvests. The cultural trappings of chiefdoms—its large permanent villages, mounds, religious iconography, and powerful chieftains—consequently faded.[37]

The collapse of chiefdoms could also have been associated with the decline of health due to nutritional deficiencies. As a chiefdom's population grew, the mechanisms to redistribute produce and game became taxed and

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[35]Biedma in DSC, I, 239.

[36]Davis, Aboriginal Settlement Patterns, 31 and 33.

[37]For an excellent discussion of ecological stress faced by chiefdoms, see Baden "A Dynamic Model of Stability and Change in Mississippian Agricultural Systems," especially 1-3, 30, 56-59, 70, and 127-130.

cases of malnutrition resulted. Shortages of protein became even more severe when members of a chiefdom lost access to hunting grounds due to military defeat. In this event, people relied even more heavily on maize but in doing so they faced iron-deficiency anemia. Corn lacks the essential amino acids lysine and tryptophan which enhances iron absorption; processing corn in lime to make hominy further decreases iron absorption by adding excess calcium to one's diet. Anemia was especially severe for menstruating women and young children, depressing fertility and increasing rates of infant mortality.[38]

Especially during times of nutritional stress, indigenous diseases took their toll on Southeastern Indians. Scholars have emphasized post-contact epidemics to such an extent that they may be creating a false image of pre-contact Indians living extremely healthy lives. Nevertheless, several chronic infectious diseases were endemic among populous Mississippian groups and may have in fact helped destabilize some chiefdoms before contact.

The malady most commonly associated with being indigenous to the Americas was treponematosis, a disease caused by a spirochete bacteria of the genus *Treponema*.[39]

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[38]Parham, "Toqua skeletal biology," 492, 493, 496, and 508.

[39]The debate on the origins of syphilis has been long lasting, but currently most scholars believe it to have been in America before Columbus. The chronic nature of syphilis made it possible for hunter-gatherer bands to carry the disease over the Bering Straits. Treponema could have also been present in the

The most prevalent syndrome of this disease in the Americas included sexually (venereal) and non-sexually transmitted syphilis, while pinta and yaws seemed to predominate in Europe and Africa. Left untreated, syphilis slowly destroys the human body. Months or years after first infection, tumors throughout the body may form, creating heart, vascular, and neurological problems. Blindness, insanity, paralysis, and even death can result. Syphilitic mothers can pass the disease to unborn children, increasing the chance of infant mortality or death before a child reaches reproductive age.[40]

The extent that treponematosis afflicted the population of pre-contact Native Americans may never be determined. Examination of burial remains indicates that syphilis was indeed present. Due to its progressive destruction, the disease, in its advanced stages, leaves evidence of its presence in the form of lesions on the skeleton. Physical anthropologists have found such markings among some pre-

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Americas before humans inhabited the land, living in animal hosts. Some scholars have suggested that syphilis was exclusively an American affliction and only came to the Eastern Hemisphere after Columbus' second return from the Caribbean in 1495. Columbus' soldiers, it seemed, contracted the infection and transported it back to Europe. Many of these men enlisted in the army that the Holy Roman Emperor sent to siege Constantinople. On their march to war and on their return home, the soldiers spread the disease throughout Europe. The illness seemed quite novel to Europeans, who reported that they had seen nothing like it, thus leading to the assumption of syphilis' American origin. This argument is proposed in Percy M. Ashburn, Ranks of Death: A Medical History of the Conquest of America, ed. Frank D. Ashburn, (New York: 1947), 175-190. Other scholars agree about syphillis' American origins. See Mahmoud Y. El-Najjar, "Human Treponematosis and Tuberculosis: Evidence from the New World," American Journal of Physical Anthropology 51 (1979): 600-608; Jarcho, "Disease in prehistoric North America," 11-15; and Merbs, "New world of infectious disease," 21-24.

[40]Professional Guide to Diseases, 4th ed., (Springhouse, Pa.: Springhouse Corporation, 1992), 964-967.

contact burial remains. Nevertheless, these findings have been rare, indicating that either treponematosis was not widespread or that syphilitic patients died from other causes before the characteristic bone lesions could form.[41]

A practice among Indians of ostracizing afflicted individuals may have also contributed to the rarity of the disease and its archaeological correlates. The Englishman, John Lawson, for example, observed such practices among Indians of the Carolina coast and piedmont in 1700. He cited the case of a village refusing to give care and food to an infected woman, treating her as an outsider and leaving her to die. "The Pox [a common name for venereal disease among Europeans] is frequent in some of the Nations, amongst which I knew one Woman die of it," he reported. "They could not, or would not cure her. Before she died she was worn away to a skeleton, yet walked up and down to the last."[42] Such an ostracized person most likely did not receive a ceremonial burial, leaving her bones in a place that archaeologists would not likely find.

Another chronic infectious disease, tuberculosis, was apparently present in the Americas prior to contact. Tuberculosis is a bacteria, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*,

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[41]Jarcho, "Disease in prehistoric North America," 11; El-Najjar, "Human treponematosis and tuberculosis," 603-605; and Merbs, "New world of infectious disease," 23-24.

[42]John Lawson, A New Voyage to Carolina , [1701], ed. Hugh Talmage Lefler, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 231.

transmitted mainly by inhalation. Usually, a person who inhales the parasite will not immediately suffer symptoms. Instead, the body's immune system prevents disease from forming by walling-off the bacteria, in the form of tubercles. Tubercles can remain dormant in the lungs for the victim's lifetime, but if a person's immunity becomes weak, the walls around the tubercles will breakdown, symptoms will emerge, and infection of another person becomes possible. Commonly called consumption, pulmonary tuberculosis destroys the lungs and is especially lethal to immune-deficient persons such as the elderly, malnourished, and victims of other diseases.[43]

Physical anthropologists have determined the presence of some form of tuberculosis among pre-contact Indians, especially among peoples belonging to Mississippian chiefdoms.[44] Skeletons often display characteristic lesions. The blood stream disseminates tubercles throughout the body. These often find a home in bones and joints, causing inflammation, slow deterioration, and lesions. In

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[43]Professional Guide to Diseases, 499-501. Ingestion is another mode of transmission, usually through unpasteurized cows milk. Bovine tuberculosis, though, would not have been present among pre-contact Native Americans for obvious reasons.

[44]Jane E. Buikstra, "Introduction," in Prehistoric Tuberculosis in the Americas, ed. Jane E. Buikstra, Northwestern University Archaeological Program, Scientific Papers, No. 2, (Evansville, Il: 1976), 7; Robert L. Blakely and David S. Mathews, "What price civilization? Tuberculosis for one," in The Burden of Being Civilized, 11-23. For two good summaries of this topic, see H. Jay Paulsen, 'Tuberculosis in the Native American: Indigenous of Introduced?," Reviews in Infectious Diseases 9 (1987): 1180-1186; and Hans L. Reider, "Notes on the History of an Epidemic Tuberculosis Among North American Indians," The Indian Health Service Primary Care Provider 14 (1989): 45-50.

addition, tuberculosis victims may display severe angulation of the spine, becoming "hunchbacks."[45] Numerous artifacts recovered from pre-contact sites depict such hunchbacked people, giving even more evidence of the long presence of tuberculosis in the Americas.[46]

Treponemal and tubercular infections were the most serious of American pathogens, but numerous other illnesses made life difficult for members of southeastern chiefdoms. Intestinal worms and fungal infections were common. These pathogens predated human occupation of the Americas, being first adapted to animal hosts and then later adapting to humans.[47] Of these, a soil-born fungus, causing the chronic disease blastomycosis, was perhaps the most prevalent among Mississippian peoples. This pathogen commonly infected people who worked extensively in agricultural fields. It invaded the lungs and produced bronchopneumonia. Slowly progressing, the fungus sometimes invades the bloodstream, causing skin ulcers, bone degeneration (osteomyelitis), and genital disorders. Left untreated, blastomycosis is usually fatal.[48] As with tuberculosis and treponematosis,

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[45]Mahmoud Y. El-Najjar, "Skeletal changes in tuberculosis: the Hamman-Todd Collection," in Prehistoric Tuberculosis in the Americas, 85-86 and 91.

[46]Ashburn, Ranks of Death, 146; and El-Najjar, "Human treponematosis and tuberculosis," 608.

[47]Merbs, "A new world of infectious diseases," 5-6.

[48]Professional Guide to Diseases, 199-200.

blastomycosis leaves characteristic bone lesions identifiable in burial remains.

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In the centuries before European contact, several specific southeastern chiefdoms appear to have undergone cycles of evolution and disintegration due to indigenous causes. Archaeologists have reconstructed some of these chiefdoms, and in doing so, they have clearly shown that chiefdoms were inherently unstable polities.

A prominent example of chiefdom collapse predating contact occurred at the Cahokia Mound site in Southern Illinois. Beginning in 900 AD, Mississippians began building the sophisticated society that characterized Cahokia. At its height in 1200, it contained over one hundred mounds within a five-mile radius, and integrated perhaps as many as 38,000 people into a single chiefdom.[49] Nevertheless, chiefdom social structure began to breakdown over the next 250 years. Settlements became more dispersed as people moved away from mound centers into tributary creek valleys and uplands. The causes of this fragmentation remain a mystery, but some evidence of the consequences of this collapse exists. Apparently, the people who had been part of Cahokia increasingly experienced health problems. Malnutrition, particular iron-deficiency anemia, rose as

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[49]Hudson, Southeastern Indians, 77, 80, and 84.

social fragmentation occurred. The redistributory functions of chiefdom social organization most likely failed to meet the needs of the Indians of the area. Moreover, tuberculosis, treponematosis, and blastomycosis, which had probably been endemic at Cahokia, became even more difficult to survive. Each of these illnesses was nutritionally dependent, becoming more virulent among malnourished individuals.[50] By the mid-sixteenth century, Cahokia was a small shadow of its former greatness.

Chiefdom societies located along the Cumberland River also experienced collapse well before contact. Around 1200 AD, Cumberland people began to display common Mississippian cultural traits including permanent settlements, shell-tempered pottery, and elaborate mortuary practices such as stone-boxed graves.[51] But sometime before 1400, access to game and wild produce became restricted. Corn production did not keep up with nutritional needs, and severe cases of iron-deficiency anemia and perhaps even starvation resulted. Tuberculosis, treponematosis, and blastomycosis took their toll, decreasing life expectancy to 17.4 years for men and

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[50]George Milner, "Health and cultural change in the late prehistoric American Bottom, Illinois," chap. 4 in What Mean These Bones?: Studies in Southeastern Bioarchaeology, ed. Mary Lucas Powell, Patricia S. Bridges, and Ann Marie Wagner Mires, (Tuscaloosa, Al.: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 52-67.

[51]Robert B. Ferguson, Middle Cumberland Culture, Vanderbilt Publications in Anthropology, no. 3., (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1972), 14, 31, and 39.

14.6 for women. This demographic collapse left a weakened remnant at the time of European contact.[52]

A Mississippian society that has been named Moundville in the lower Black Warrior River valley in central Alabama presents another interesting picture of chiefdom collapse predating European invasion. The paramount center of Moundville began to develop around 1000 AD and reached its height around 1400. It possessed 16 mounds spread over 300 acres all enclosed by defensive palisades. At any one time, approximately 1,000 people must have lived in Moundville proper, while over 30 villages were brought into its hegemony.[53]

Powerful elites apparently ruled the Moundville chiefdom. The extent and size of mound construction demonstrated this power as did burial practices and the prevalence of a number and variety of status items. Elites were buried in elaborate graves rich in exotic goods, while commoners were buried with less energy expenditure and fewer items. Some of the items associated with elites included conch shells acquired from the Gulf Coast and axes made of copper most likely obtained from the Great Lakes region.[54]

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[52]Leslie E. Eisenberg, "Mississippian cultural terminations in middle Tennessee: what the bioarchaeological evidence can tell us," in What Mean Those Bones?, 70-88.

[53]Christopher S. Peebles, "Paradise lost, strayed, and stolen," 25 and 29; and Peebles and Kus, "Ranked societies," 433-35.

[54]Peebles and Kus, "Ranked societies," 439 and 443.

As with many southeastern chieftains, elite status seemed to be ascribed. An absence of fractures among skeletal remains of leaders demonstrated that they had not received their prestige through warfare, the most common way to achieve social mobility in aboriginal societies.[55]

The people of Moundville appear to have been well nourished and suffered from few cases of severe chronic infectious diseases before the mid-fifteenth century. The land was particularly suited for a subsistence regime comprised of a mix of farming, gathering, and hunting, allowing Moundvillians to obtain sufficient amounts of carbohydrates and proteins. The redistributive functions of the chiefdom worked well, with both elites and commoners enjoying a similar healthy existence.[56] Average life expectancy for both sexes was 25 years, low by modern standards but high for pre-contact Native Americans.[57] By the mid-fifteenth century life for Moundvillians began to change. Chiefdom social organization weakened and ultimately disintegrated by the time Soto ventured into the area. Although the reasons for this collapse remain unclear, elites probably began to lose power as they lost access to exotic goods. Without legitimizing objects,

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[55]Mary Lucas Powell, "Ranked Status and health in the Mississippian chiefdom at Moundville," In What Mean These Bones?, 47.

[56]Mary Lucas Powell, "Ranked status and health," 46.

[57]Leslie Eisenberg, "Mississippian cultural terminations," 86.

chieftains lost status and people ceased giving deference and tribute to Moundville. Population became more dispersed throughout the Black Warrior River valley, with small homesteads instead of dense villages predominating.[58]

At the time that their socio-political structure was disintegrating, residents of Moundville experienced a health crisis. Lacking political mechanisms to mobilize large hunts and protect hunting territory, Moundvillians suffered from a lack of game and subsequent iron-deficiency anemia. Agriculture, moreover, did not keep up with nutritional demands. Indians had surpassed the carrying capacity of the land, and yields steadily declined. Without a means to distribute food equitably, nutritional stress erupted and mortality from severe cases of chronic infectious diseases also rose.[59]

Many people associated with Moundville found the situation intolerable, moved west, and attempted to rebuild chiefdoms within the Tombigbee Valley. During the sixteenth century, Indians built villages in Pickens County, Alabama and in Oktibbeha County, Mississippi. These settlements possessed fortifications and mounds organized much like

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[58]Peebles, "Paradise lost, strayed, and stolen," 30-32; and Christopher Peebles, "The rise and fall of Moundville in western Alabama: the Moundville and Summerville phases, AD 1000 to 1600," Mississippi Archaeology 22 (1987): 1-31.

[59]Peebles, "Paradise lost, strayed, and stolen," 31-32; and Peebles, "The rise and fall of Moundville," 18 and 23.

those of Moundville, but they never developed into full-fledged chiefdoms.[60] Other remnants and former tributary groups of Moundville moved further into Mississippi, and are believed to be ancestors of some of those who became part of the Choctaw and Chickasaw confederacies.[61]

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The histories of Cahokia, the Cumberland River, and Moundville and perhaps other societies that archaeologists have failed to discover demonstrated the fragile nature of chiefdom polities. In the sixteenth century, however, there were still many chiefdoms that had not completed their cycle of evolution and disintegration. Soto and his men found several of these sophisticated societies existed across the regions from the Carolina piedmont to the Mississippi River. Some of the most prominent were those that chroniclers called "Cofitachequi," "Coça," "Mauvilla," "Quizquiz," "Aquixo," and "Quigualtam."

With its central town located in the piedmont near present day Camden, South Carolina, Cofitachequi was one of the most prominent chiefdoms east of the Appalachian Mountains. The development of this polity most likely occurred as powerful Muskogean speaking peoples came into

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[60]Richard A. Marshall, "The protohistoric component at the Lyon's Bluff site complex Oktibbeha County, Mississippi," in The Protohistoric Period in the Mid-South, 1500-1700, ed. David H. Dye and Ronald C. Brister, (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1986), 86.

[61]Galloway, Choctaw Genesis, 348-349, and 354.

the area after 1300 AD, pushing Siouan speakers out of the piedmont and into the foothills of the Blue Ridge.[62] By 1450 AD, chiefdom development tapered-off, and many mounds became abandoned.[63] Cofitachequi remained functioning, however, when Soto arrived. Although an unknown "pestilence," which will be examined in more detail in the next chapter, had destroyed several of its tributary groups, it dominated an area between the Santee and Pee Dee Rivers from the Atlantic Coast to the foot of the Blue Ridge.[64]

Centralization of power and a system of collecting tribute represented the two most visible characteristics of Cofitachequi's chiefdom social organization. Several servants carried the ruler, a female probably from a hereditary elite family, upon a litter to meet the Spanish. Quite impressed with the chieftainness, one of the chroniclers of the expedition claimed that she "collected tribute from many of her neighboring chiefs, some of whom gave her clothing and others gold in abundance."[65] The chronicler either lied about the gold or mistook copper or

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[62]James Merrell, The Indians New World: Catawbas and their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 13-14; Hudson, "The Indians," 67; and DePratter, 'The Chiefdom of Cofitachequi," 197-226.

[63]DePratter, "Chiefdom of Cofitachequi," 216.

[64]Charles Hudson, "Some thoughts on Cherokee prehistory," in Conference on Cherokee Prehistory, ed. David G. Moore, (Swannonoa, N.C.: Warren Wilson College, 1986), 139; and Elvas in DSC, I, 70, 80-85, and 86.

[65]Elvas in DSC, I, 74.

mica for the more precious mineral, but he did notice that she had significant power over villages within "300 leagues" to the West. Some local rulers resented giving tribute to the ruler of Cofitachequi and had rebelled against her, but generally her people obeyed her, doing "with great efficiency and diligence what she ordered of them."[66]

To the west of Cofitachequi and the Appalachian Mountains, a more extensive chiefdom called Coça or "Coosa" existed. At its height in the mid-sixteenth century, Coosa encompassed at least 25 and perhaps as many as 49 villages distributed over a broad area including what is today eastern Tennessee, northern Georgia, and eastern Alabama. These villages, each with an approximate population between 350 to 650 people, were arranged in five to seven clusters within the Tennessee River system, including the Little Tennessee and Hiwassee valleys, and the Coosa river system, including the Coosawatte and Etowah valleys. These clusters may have previously operated as independent chiefdoms, but by the mid-sixteenth century they appeared to be united by the central town of Coosa, located in northern Georgia, which served as a center for collecting tribute.[67]

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[66]Ibid., 86.

[67]On the archaeological record of Coosa, see David J. Hally, "The Chiefdom of Coosa," in The Forgotten Centuries, 239-241, 246, and 248; Charles Hudson, Marvin Smith, and Chester DePratter, "Coosa: A Chiefdom in the Sixteenth-Century Southeastern United States," American Antiquity 50 (1985):723-737; and David J. Hally, Marvin T. Smith, and James B. Langford, Jr., "The Archaeological Reality of de Soto's Coosa," in Columbian Consequences, vol. 2, of Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the

As Soto's men advanced down the Tennessee River and crossed over to the Coosa, they noticed many characteristics of a chiefdom-level society. Spanish chroniclers mentioned that palisades surrounded many if not all of the tributary towns of Coosa.[68] Unlike tribes, chiefdoms could mobilize the labor necessary to build these defensive structures. Soto's men also discovered that a powerful chieftain who resided in the central town of Coosa reigned over numerous villages. When they approached the paramount center, the leader was carried out to them on a "chair borne on the shoulders of his principal men, seated on a cushion..." The leader bore the marks of Mississippian elite by his ornate dress and the homage his people gave him. One chronicler described him as being "covered with a robe of marten skins of the form and size of a woman's shawl," and wearing "a crown of feathers on his head." Certain people followed him "singing" what were most likely ritual songs to denote his status.[69]

Coosa has been one of the most studied of pre-contact southeastern societies, and archaeologists have uncovered extensive evidence showing that it was a chiefdom. Numerous platform mounds of varying sizes stood within the domain of

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Spanish Borderlands, ed. David Hurst Thomas, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 122 and 124-131.

[68]Biedma in DSC, I, 232; and Rangel in DSC,, I 283.

[69]Elvas in DSC, I, 92.

Coosa. Although Etowah the largest mound site within the polity was abandoned by the mid-sixteenth century, Coosa took-over the duties of maintaining the institutional order and religious ideology necessary to hold together a chiefdom. Grave goods and location of burials associated with mounds, for example, indicate the close association that ruling elites had with the spiritual world. A wide distribution of Citico Rattlesnake gorgets probably symbolized the religious power structure that dominated the chiefdom.[70]

When members of the Soto expedition came into the region of Coosa, they found a Mississippian chiefdom with a highly productive agricultural system. They arrived during summer, and fields of corn and beans had grown rather extensive. One chronicler noted that Coosa possessed the best lands of the Southeast.[71] Another reported that the "land was very populous and had many large towns and planted fields which reached from one town to the other ... with good cultivated fields stretching along the rivers."[72] From these observations and given the accounts of Coosa's large

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[70]Hally, "The Coosa Chiefdom," 244-246; Hudson, et al., "Coosa: a chiefdom," 732-733; Polhemus, The Toqua Site, 1239; and Widmar, "Southeastern chiefdoms," 142.

[71]Biedma in DSC, I, 232.

[72]Elvas in DSC, I, 93.

population, one can reasonably assume that individuals were receiving a sufficient supply of carbohydrates. Unfortunately, Spanish accounts do not let us make any conclusions about the distribution of meat. Perhaps if Soto came into the area during the winter, he would have seen the men of Coosa engaged in communal hunts. Archaeological records indicate a utilization of game animals especially deer and turkey, but how well meat was distributed remains unclear. Severe cases of iron-deficiency existed among some skeletal remains associated with the Coosa chiefdom, but whether this pathology existed before or after contact remains uncertain. The presence of palisaded towns probably indicates continual aboriginal conflict that indeed might have hindered hunting.

The chiefdom of "Mauvilla" or Mobile, located along the Alabama River, may have been one of Coosa's rivals. Chiefdom development began on this river and into the Mobile bay area during the mid-thirteenth century, with one site possessing 15 mounds within 50 acres.[73] Until the mid-fifteenth century, however, Mobilians remained circumscribed by Moundville, which dominated the Alabama interior. But as Moundville devolved, Mobilians expanded their power from the

[73]Neil R. Stowe, "The Pensacola variant and the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex," in Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, 127-129.

Gulf Coast, up the lower Tombigbee River, and possibly into the Black Warrior Valley.[74]

By the time that Soto visited the area in 1542, a man named "Tuscaluça" or Tuscaloosa served as chieftain of Mobile. "He was greatly feared by his neighbors and vassals," according to Spanish chroniclers. "He was lord of many lands and many people." Tuscaloosa indeed bore the marks of a powerful chieftain. The leader sat on a throne-like seat, elevated above commoners and having two cushions. His principal men sat near him, with one "holding a sort of fan of deerskins which kept the sun from him." Tuscaloosa may have achieved his status through heredity and may have fulfilled a major role in the religious life of his subjects, but perhaps unlike other chieftains he was also a war leader. The deerskin object was a ceremonial shield "quartered with black and white, with a cross made in the middle...." The chieftain carried it into battle, not only as a device to protect himself against an enemy's arrows but also as a sacred object denoting his high status.[75]

Despite Tuscaloosa's appearance as a warrior rather than a priest, Mobile served as an important religious center of the region. When the French official Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville visited the area in 1702, he

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[74]Keith J. Little and Caleb Curren, "Conquest archaeology of Alabama," in Columbian Consequences, 180-181.

[75]Elvas in DSC, I, 96.

noticed numerous statues that he described as "made of plaster in the likeness of Indians of this country." He claimed that the Indians greatly revered these artifacts, believing "that a person cannot touch them without dying on the spot and that they came down from the sky." These sacred objects represented a religion that had influence among Indians living along the Gulf Coast and in the interior. Bienville stated that "all the neighboring nations make such a fuss" over the objects and formerly offered "sacrifices" to them. The skeptical French official took the objects and sent them back to Europe, noting that the Indians were "amazed at our boldness and amazed that we do not die as a result."[76] By Bienville's rude actions, the Indians of the Mobile region had lost some of the most important symbols of the religious ideology that formerly held a powerful chiefdom together.

Religious symbolism and ceremonies most likely made Mobile similar to other chiefdoms, but it was unique in one important aspect. The Mobilian chiefdom extended into a coastal area, an environment not generally conducive to social development beyond the tribal level. Coasts lacked the fertile river valleys to support intensive agriculture and before contact were not especially abundant in large

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[76]Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, ed. and trans., Iberville's Gulf Journals (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 168-169. Bienville later became governor of the French colony of Louisiana. At the time, he served under his brother Iberville who was the colony's first governor.

game animals such as deer, bear, and turkeys. The availability of fresh water suitable for drinking further limited the growth of large populations. Small and migratory tribal groups consequently tended to predominate in coastal areas.

The Mobile bay area was not as harsh as typical coastal areas and allowed for some intensive agriculture, but Indians in the area had to make certain adaptations to build a chiefdom. Several fresh-water lakes lay near the bay providing a healthy water supply for human inhabitants, and fertile soil in the Mobile Delta helped the Indians grow the usual triad of Mississippian staples, corn, beans, and squash. Large game was less abundant, and Mobilians relied more heavily than did interior peoples on fish and other aquatic animals such as marsh clams and oysters. They also depended more on inter-village trade. Villages of interior chiefdoms generally existed at the junction of particular biotic zones—forests and river bottoms—and did not demonstrate specialization of subsistence activities, but villages comprising Mobile covered different environments and most likely relied to some extent on economic specialization. People residing near the bay probably exchanged fish, salt, shells, and other marine items to interior residents living up the Alabama River for meat and

animal skins. Maintaining this system of trade, a duty that undoubtedly fell into the hands of powerful chieftains such as Tuscaloosa, thus benefited the health and well being of individuals who composed Mobile.[77]

Over-shadowing Mobile and indeed all other Southeastern groups, chiefdoms laying along the Mississippi River appeared to members of the Soto expedition as the most densely populated.[78] The fertile flood plains undoubtedly allowed natives of the area to achieve the highest agricultural productivity levels of all Southeastern Indians, while the river and its tributaries made fish and other aquatic species easily obtainable. A wide variety of wild produce and game also existed, especially in the forests of the Yazoo Basin and Natchez Bluffs, thus providing a diversity of foodstuffs for Mississippi Valley peoples.[79]

Chiefdom development in the lower Mississippi Valley followed a chronological path similar to that of Cahokia and

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[77]Examining archaeological remains, Cailup B. Curren gives a fine account of the subsistence patterns of the Indians of Mobile Bay, particularly emphasizing the diverse activities and use of different biotic zones; see Cailup B. Curren, "Prehistoric and early historic occupation of the Mobile Bay and Mobile Delta area of Alabama with an emphasis on subsistence," Journal of Alabama Archaeology 22 (1976):61-84. That trade was a mechanism for the acquisition of food seems likely; see Charles Levasseur, "A Voyage to the Mobile and Tomeh in 1700 with Notes on the Interior of Alabama," ed. Vernon J. Knight and Sheree L. Adams, Journal of Alabama Archaeology 27 (1981): 37. Sixteenth-century accounts verify abundant agriculture in the Mobile Bay area; see "Declaration of Guido de las Bazares," in LP, II, 335.

[78]Elvas in DSC, I, 169.

[79]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), 335.

Moundville. Around 900 AD Indians began constructing pyramidal mounds and nuclear settlements. This continued for several centuries and reached its peak by 1300. Several mounds reached extraordinary heights and proportions, some standing over 20 meters high and covering 1.6 hectares. After 1300, settlements grew more dispersed as people broke away from mound centers and moved away from the river. Indians built fewer mounds and inter-regional trade declined.

Unlike the collapsed polities of Cahokia and Moundville, chiefdoms of the lower Mississippi persisted at the time of Soto's expedition. Upon their arrival at a chiefdom that they called "Quizquiz," the Spanish found a chieftain who resided on a ceremonial mound. One chronicler commented that "only by means of two stairways could one ascend to this house."[80] Further down the river, Soto found other evidence of chiefdom social organization. According to one chronicler, a chieftain, named "Aquixo," came to inquire about Soto's expedition, leading a force of men that filled 200 canoes. The size of the armed flotilla provides sufficient proof that Aquixo headed a chiefdom, but the description of the force in Spanish accounts gives even more evidence. Armed bow-men, costumed in feathers, protected their chieftain who sat in one of the canoes covered with an

awning, while other men bore shields that protected the rowers as they approached the mysterious Spaniards.[81] One chronicler commented with a bit of exaggeration that "with the awnings, the plumes of feathers, the shields, and banners, and the many men in them, they had the appearance of a beautiful fleet of galleys."[82] Indeed, only a powerful chieftain could have mustered such an impressive force.

A chiefdom that the Spanish called "Quigualtam" was perhaps the most heavily populated chiefdom of the Mississippi.[83] Indians to the north of this polity described its leader as "the greatest lord of that region."[84] When the Soto expedition approached the chiefdom, approximately one hundred canoes met the Spaniards. The chieftain apparently remained at his home, but the flotilla nonetheless displayed characteristics of a chiefdom hierarchy. According to one chronicler, the vessels of the principal men had awnings, and these men wore

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[80]Garcilasco in DSC, II, 385.

[81]Elvas in DSC, I, 112-113.

[82]Ibid., 113.

[83]Jeffrey Brain suggests that Quigualtam was "proto-Natchez" and located below the Yazoo Basin in the Natchez Bluffs area. See Brain, "Late prehistoric settlement patterning," 356-357. Charles Hudson and his associates place Quigualtam in the Yazoo Basin, thus unless the Natchez moved south after 1542 the people of Quigualtam were not their ancestors. See Hudson, "The Hernando de Soto Expedition, 1539-1543," in The Forgotten Centuries, 76-77.

[84]Elvas in DSC, I, 133.

"white and colored plumes of feathers as a device."[85] One of the leaders exclaimed that "the cacique [chieftain] of Quigualtam, his lord" sent his subjects to greet the Spaniards in peace, but apparently the Indians had no desire to host the expedition which had gained a notorious reputation for destroying villages and enslaving people. The Indians attacked the Spaniards, forcing them to flee further down the river and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico. Little else can be discerned from Spanish accounts about Quigualtam other than to suggest that its display of military organization was a product of a chiefdom-level society.[86]

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Chiefdoms such as Quigualtam, Quizquiz, Mobile, Coosa, Cofitachequi as well as others that do not figure so prominently in Spanish chronicles gave the Southeast an appearance unlike that which English as well as French explorers and settlers would later see. Nevertheless, a close examination reveals that in remote areas and along the coasts several groups existed that had levels of social organization similar to the groups that predominated in later centuries. Generally, these non-chiefdom societies can be classified as segmentary tribes, which were on the

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[85]Ibid., 155-156.

[86]Ibid., 156-159.

opposite end of social complexity in comparison to chiefdoms, and tribal confederacies, which were somewhere in between the two.

Segmentary tribes represented extremely decentralized collections of communities, each possessing a high degree of autonomy. They were organized into groups much smaller than those that composed chiefdoms and tended to be most prominent along the coasts where environmental factors curtailed chiefdom development. Lacking fresh water, fertile fields, and abundant game, coastal inhabitants could not produce surpluses nor sustain population levels needed to build societies more complex than tribes. Native groups needed mobility in order to exploit a wide variety of foodstuffs over several different biotic zones. Small tribal groups rather than chiefdoms with their large, permanent villages thus proved the most durable type of social organization to meet the challenges of a coastal environment.

Subsistence patterns of segmentary tribes varied substantially from that of chiefdoms. Coastal groups traveled to different biotic zones as the seasons changed. They began a new year by moving to estuaries in the spring where they lived off fish that had migrated to these areas to spawn. As spring progressed, they moved from the coasts short distances to plant their fields with the usual

Mississippian triad of corn, beans, and squash. Such production was limited to slash-and-burn techniques in relatively infertile land that produced little surplus and required constantly finding new fields. While families waited for crops to mature, they dispersed gathering roots and berries from the area. When crops ripened, the tribe came back together and joined in celebratory feasts. A whole summer's production was often consumed within a month because carrying food only added to the energy expenditure needed to make the next leg of seasonal migration. In late fall, tribes broke-up again into individual family groups that traveled inland pursuing game, but they only went as far as more powerful interior groups let them. As winter advanced and as game retreated further into the forests of the interior, coastal tribes experienced a period of deprivation. They migrated back to the coasts where the only foodstuffs available were roots as well as clams, oysters, and other aquatic animals that they might find. Coastal tribes generally remained idle during this period of want, waiting for spawning season to begin and for the cycle to begin over again.[87]

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[87]For an excellent description of coastal Indian subsistence patterns, see Cronon, Changes in the Land, 34-53. Indians along the southern coasts probably did not have as severe times of want as did northern tribes, but they nonetheless experienced periodic deprivation. Several primary accounts give brief mention of coastal subsistence patterns of tribes along the southern Atlantic and Gulf coasts. See Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación que dio Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*, in NAW, II, 31; René de Laudonnière, *L'histoire notable de la Floride*, in ibid., 283; and Ralph Lane, "Ralph Lane's Narrative of the Roanoke Island Colony," in ibid., III, 302.

Several factors caused variations in the general pattern of seasonal migration. Some tribes may have been prevented from moving inland to make winter hunts due to the presence of an enemy who jealously guarded its hunting territory. Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, a survivor of the failed expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez, for example, observed that a group of Indians who harvested roots from October to February instead of hunting game.[88] They most likely found this activity more productive than challenging groups who dominated inland hunting grounds. Climate differences and species availability also caused variations. Groups living in more southerly climates such as Florida and the Gulf Coast could take advantage of longer growing seasons and year around availability of exotic species such as alligators not present along the coasts of the upper South.[89] Nevertheless, all coastal groups depended heavily on seasonal migration for subsistence.

Coastal tribes probably thought of the cycle of want and plenty as a normal part of life, but sometimes deprivation could become quite severe. Their subsistence patterns were precariously balanced among a number of activities. If anyone of these activities failed, want could become starvation. A number of factors could

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[88]Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación* , in NAW, II, 31.

[89]Laudonniere, *L'histoire notable de la Floride*, in NAW, II, 283.

undermine this balance. An enemy might make hunting, gathering, or fishing unsafe. Crops could also become endangered from enemies who burned their rival's fields in order to push them out of a resource rich area. Finally, droughts, floods, and late frosts periodically endangered the balance among subsistence activities.

Although archaeological information remains sparse, one can surmise from the available evidence that individual health among coastal inhabitants differed substantially from interior chiefdoms. With smaller, more mobile societies, coastal tribes probably displayed a lower level of chronic infectious diseases than did chiefdoms. Blastomycosis in particular was certainly less severe since infection levels of this disease rose among people who worked extensively with the soil. Members of chiefdoms working in the same fields over a number of years increased their risk of contracting this fungal disease, while coastal tribes using slash-and-burn techniques and periodically creating new fields had less opportunity to become infected.

A smaller potential of chronic infectious disease did not mean better over-all health, however. Members of coastal tribes most likely suffered even more severely from nutritional stress than did functioning chiefdoms. Intensive agricultural production and distribution mechanisms allowed more sophisticated groups to distribute

surpluses in late winter and early spring, thus avoiding a prolonged period of deprivation. Their location in interior river valleys also meant that members of chiefdoms enjoyed more abundant resources such as game, nuts, and roots. With their cycles of want and lack of redistributory mechanisms to meet crises, coastal tribes probably suffered a lack of iron and other important nutrients. Periodic famine undoubtedly reduced fertility rates and increased infant mortality. Migratory cycles also took a toll on the body and its functions over an individuals lifetime, keeping the elderly weak and life expectancies quite low.

Although the Soto expedition had little interaction with segmentary tribes, the differences between coastal groups and chiefdoms were obvious to the Spanish intruders. While marching from northern Florida and southern Georgia into the piedmont, one of Soto's chroniclers claimed that interior Indians were "better supplied with maize and clothing native to the country than those of the coast." "The land along the coast is lean and poor," he reported, "and the more warlike people are [there]."[90] This differential level of social organization caused some Spaniards to become upset. At the beginning of their journey, they hoped to find large permanent villages that would provide slaves for deportation to Cuba. Instead, they

[90]Elvas in DSC, I, 78 and 170, quote on 170.

found small mobile groups that fled when the invaders approached.[91]

Later European accounts gave a clearer picture of life among segmentary coastal tribes. In some of these accounts, Europeans may have misinterpreted the annual period of want for actual starvation, but others demonstrate the precarious balance that some Indians had to maintain in order to survive. In 1570, for example, Spanish Jesuits visited the Chesapeake region and found the natives to have suffered from "six years of famine and death." Although warfare might have made subsistence activities hazardous, a severe drought appears to have been most responsible for this tragedy. Jesuit missionaries reported that the Indians had no maize and could not obtain wild berries; roots were also scarce and what few they could find were "very parched." The failure of summer subsistence activities made the coastal inhabitants fear the annual period of want coming in the winter. "They are so famished that all believe they will perish of hunger and cold this winter," a Jesuit reported, "for only with great difficulty can they find roots by which they usually sustain themselves and the great

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[91]Ibid., 63.

snows found in this land do not allow them to hunt for them."[92]

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The social organization of tribal confederacies existed somewhere between that of chiefdoms and segmentary tribes. They were composed of relatively equal communities that displayed a degree of political unity but recognized no hierarchy of settlement. In other words, confederacies had no paramount towns that made decisions for the entire populous. Villages also tended to be less nucleated, being composed of households dispersed over larger areas than among chiefdoms. In the sixteenth century, tribal confederacies tended to exist in remote areas, particularly in the southern Appalachian summit and the Pontotoc Ridge of central Mississippi.

Many of the ancestors to the historic Cherokees were important examples of people living in societies with tribal rather than chiefdom organization.[93] Specifically, Cherokees of the historic Middle Towns seem to have descended from a tribal people that archaeologists have labeled "Pisgah." Other Cherokee groups, especially those

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[92]Letter of Louis de Quiros and Juan Baptista de Segura to Juan de Hinistrosa, September 12, 1570, in NAW, II, 557.

[93]Archaeologists generally warn scholars of the limitations of linking historic Indian groups with archaeological remains, but the association of the Pisgah with the Cherokees has been commonly accepted thanks to the work of the late Roy Dickens. See Roy Dickens, Cherokee Prehistory, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976).

of the historic Lower Towns of the Savannah River tributaries, may have been functioning chiefdoms before contact, but Pisgah people living in higher elevations did not display complex social and political development. The majority of Pisgah people lived within the French Broad, Clinch, Holston, and Watauga river valleys; an area that includes what are today northwestern North Carolina, northeastern Tennessee, and southwestern Virginia. These people apparently moved after contact into the southwestern corner of North Carolina and occupied what became known as the Middle Towns of the Cherokee tribe.[94]

Pisgah social and political organization was quite distinguished from their chiefdom neighbors and contemporaries. Pisgah people adapted Mississippian agriculture by 1250 AD, but their production lagged behind that of Indians living within broader and more fertile valleys of lower elevations.[95] Settlements became more permanent with Mississippian agriculture, and some villages

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[94]Here I follow the persuasive argument put forth by Roy Dickens in "Mississippian settlement patterns in the Appalachian summit area," in Mississippian Settlement Patterns, 131; see also Dickens, "The origins and development of Cherokee culture," in The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History, ed. Duane H. King, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 3-32. Burton Purrington gives even more evidence supporting this argument; see "Continuity and change in late prehistoric settlement patterns in an Appalachian North Carolina locality: some preliminary interpretations," Tennessee Anthropologist, 7 (1982): 52.

[95]Roy Dickens, "An evolutionary-ecological interpretation of Cherokee cultural development," in Conference on Cherokee Prehistory, 81-94; and Dickens, Cherokee Prehistory, 211.

became nucleated with defensive palisades.[96] Pisgah villages, however, were relatively small, occupying generally less than three acres.[97] Small villages provided little labor for public works. Mounds were non-existent in many areas of Pisgah habitation, while those that did exist were smaller than those found at Moundville, Coosa, and other sophisticated polities.[98] Burial practices demonstrated even more evidence of non-chiefdom social organization. Pisgah people interred their deceased in simple chambers underneath their house floors. These graves, moreover, lacked exotic burial items and elaborate methods of construction such as the use of stone-boxed coffins, indicating the absence of an elite class.

Hernando de Soto traveled through the area inhabited by Pisgah people and may have encountered this tribal group. On his way from Cofitachequi to Coosa, Soto crossed the Appalachian summit which one chronicler described as "very rough" with "lofty mountains." The chronicler noted that the people living in the area were "very domestic,... quite naked, and ... very weak." He further remarked that they were not intensive agriculturists, rather they had poor land

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[96]The Warren Wilson site on which Dickens bases much of his conclusion demonstrates such settlement patterns; see Dickens, Cherokee Prehistory, especially 46-51, 100-101, and 204.

[97]Dickens, Cherokee Prehistory, 51; and Purrington, "Continuities and changes," 58.

[98]Purrington, "Continuities and changes," 59.

and lived off of deer, turkeys, and roots.[99] The description fits the archaeological record of the Pisgah, but the people that Soto encountered could have belonged to any number of non-Muskogean speaking tribes; the chroniclers referred to them as "Chalaque," a Muskogean word for "people of a different speech."

The Chalaque and Pisgah, whatever their relation, stood in stark contrast to the powerful chiefdoms that dominated much of the Southeast. When Juan Pardo, another Spanish explorer, came to the region in 1566, he likewise found people living in decentralized tribal confederacies. Rather than a single powerful chieftain, several village headmen who came from villages with Cherokee names came to meet the Spanish.[100]

The Chickasaws also appear to have descended from a tribal confederacy existing at the time of Soto's expedition. Although archaeological and documentary evidence remains sparse, northeastern Mississippi appears to have been home of people living in dispersed villages along small streams that flow out of the Pontotoc Ridge and into the Tombigbee River. Refugees from the collapsed chiefdom of Moundville probably built these settlements sometime during the fifteenth century, and reorganized themselves into a

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[99]Elvas in DSC, I, 86.

[100]This is the judgement of Charles Hudson (Hudson, "The Indians," in JPE, 67).

tribal confederacy.[101] They found the Pontotoc Ridge area unconducive to large-scale, intensive agriculture that chiefdoms practiced in broader flood plains and instead came to depend more heavily on hunting. Agriculture remained a subsistence practice, but the remote location was ideal deer habitat. Native settlements stood at the boundary between cedar glades, hardwood forests, and prairies, where deer found a year around food supply.[102]

Soto and his men apparently traveled through the Pontotoc Ridge area, calling it the province of "Chicaça." There, they found evidence of non-chiefdom social and political organization. One of his chroniclers remarked that the population was "scattered about over the field, the houses being separated from one another one or two crossbow flights." Another described the region as "well populated, though the pueblos [villages] were scattered and had few houses."[103] The town of "Chicaça" possessed a mere twenty houses.[104] Such dispersed patterns, the lack of mounds, and the fact that no powerful chieftain met the Soto expedition give strong evidence of the absence of a chiefdom.[105]

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[101]Galloway, Choctaw Genesis, 348-349, and 354.

[102]Jay K. Johnson and John T. Sparks, "Protohistoric settlement patterns in northeastern Mississippi," chap. 5 in The Protohistoric Period in the Mid-South, 66-68, 72, and 74-75.

[103]Elvas in DSC, I, 105; and Garcilasco in DSC, II, 365.

[104]Elvas in DSC, I, 105.

[105]Johnson and Sparks, "Protohistoric settlement patterns in northeastern Mississippi," 72 and 76.

If Soto had turned southwest after encountering the Chickasaws, he might have encountered another people who displayed non-chiefdom social organization. This group, ancestors to the Western Division of the eighteenth-century Choctaws, had relatively the same path of descent as did the Chickasaws and were in fact closely related to them. The Western Choctaws had been incorporated into the Moundville chiefdom but moved west, most likely splitting from the Chickasaw brethren along the way. Eventually they moved to the headwaters of the Pearl River. This remote area, known more familiarly as the "piney woods," lacked broad flood plains and had formerly been a buffer zone between Moundville and chiefdoms of the Mississippi River. The area was thus more suitably for a people who depended less on intensive agriculture and more on hunting. As a buffer zone it supported large populations of game, which sought sanctuary from hunters roaming on its borders. The Western Choctaw most likely moved into this area before the sixteenth century and although they utilized a mound, called Nanih Waiya or "mother mound," they failed to develop the elaborate political and social organization similar to that of Coosa, Quigualtam, Quizqiuz, and other neighboring chiefdoms. At the time of contact, they lived in

settlements dispersed in upland areas as did the Chickasaws.[106]

Tribal confederacies including the Pisgah, Chickasaws, and Western Choctaws most likely had significantly better levels of individual health than both chiefdoms and segmentary coastal tribes. Interior confederacies relied less heavily on maize intensive agriculture and practiced hunting to a greater extent than did chiefdoms.[107] Pisgah people in fact never fully completed the transition to maize cultivation prior to contact; they continued to grow sumpweed, a plant rapidly displaced by corn among more advanced Mississippian peoples.[108] The Chickasaws and Western Choctaws, although descending from societies that relied heavily on maize production, adapted to the remote central and northern Mississippi region and over-time developed subsistence practices that like the Pisgah included hunting as an equally important activity for survival.[109] Consequently, members of interior confederacies

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[106]Galloway, Choctaw Genesis, 267, 345, 348-349, and 353.

[107]Dickens, Cherokee Prehistory, 210; Dickens argues that each activity was equally important. Richard White argues that among the eighteenth-century Choctaw, agriculture and gathering constituted two-thirds of subsistence production with hunting making-up the other one-third. See White, Roots of Dependency, 26.

[108]Dickens, Cherokee Prehistory, 223.

[109]Galloway, Choctaw Genesis, 349.

must have experienced less incidence of iron-deficiency anemia than did chiefdoms.[110]

Tribal confederacies also most likely possessed lower frequencies of chronic infectious diseases than among chiefdoms. Their dispersed settlement patterns and smaller villages probably inhibited the spread of tuberculosis and treponematosis, while less intensive agriculture entailed less exposure to blastomycosis. Nevertheless, since they had permanent villages and practiced agriculture more than did coastal tribes, tribal confederacies probably had more experience with diseases than did their lowland contemporaries.

One advantage that tribal confederacies did have over coastal tribes involved year-around access to subsistence. Their agricultural practices, although not equaling that of chiefdoms, were more capable of producing surpluses than that of coastal tribes. Moreover, the heavily forested areas in which the Pisgah, Chickasaw, and Western Choctaw resided provided abundant food stuffs for deer, bears, raccoons, and turkeys. In winter and early spring, when coastal tribes experienced their cycle of want, interior

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[110]Examining skeletal remains of eighteenth-century Cherokees, archaeologists have determined that they suffered less severely from iron-deficiency anemia than did sixteenth-century chiefdoms. Members of sixteenth-century tribal confederacies most likely had the same diets as did the eighteenth-century Cherokee. Thus, it is not unreasonable to assume that members of tribal confederacies were better nourished than were members of chiefdoms. See Jefferson Chapman, Tellico Archaeology: 12,000 Years of Native American History, University of Tennessee Departement of Anthropology, Report of Investigations, no.43, Tennessee Valley Authority, Publications in Anthropology, no. 41, (Knoxville, 1985), 118.

tribes hunted these game animals that retreated in the deep forests.[111] With close access to a variety of foodstuffs, the villages of interior confederacies tended to be permanent, and more importantly, members of interior confederacies did not experience seasonal famine as did their coastal contemporaries.

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Despite the presence of segmentary coastal tribes and confederacies, the Southeast remained a land dominated by chiefdoms at the time of Soto's visit. But, it would not be their land forever. Sometime between the 1540s and the eighteenth century, chiefdoms collapsed and tribal confederacies became the dominant polities of the region. This transformation could have occurred due to the inherent instability of chiefdoms, which had a history of disintegrating due to environmental, political, and health problems. It remains hard to believe, however, that European invasion had nothing to do with the disintegration of the complex societies that Soto found. Some scholars in fact believe that virgin soil epidemics, either originating with early explorers or spreading from Mexico or the Caribbean, erupted in the sixteenth century bringing massive population loss and final collapse of chiefdom level

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[111]Jeannette Runquist, "Analysis of the flora and faunal remains from proto-historic North Carolina Cherokee Indian sites" (Ph.D. diss., North Carolina State University, 1979), 80, 135, 219, and 275-277.

societies. Whether an epidemiological catastrophe in the sixteenth century fundamentally transformed the southeastern social landscape will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Two:

The False Dawn of Epidemiological Holocaust, 1500-1696

When the Spanish official Marcus Delgado traveled into the Georgia piedmont in 1686, he encountered societies quite unlike those that Hernando de Soto found in the same area more than a hundred years earlier. Delgado, who sought to find an overland route from St. Augustine to Mexico, visited Indian settlements called "Tabasa," where he met with six leaders from different places. None traveled on litters carried by servants, and none ruled over powerful chiefdoms. Instead, they represented various villages within a tribal confederacy.[1] When the English established South Carolina in 1670, they too found an altered social landscape. Absent from the Carolina piedmont were leaders with power and status equivalent to the female ruler of Cofitachiqui. Similarly, the French missionary Jacques Marquette and fur trader Louis Joliet, who ventured down the Mississippi

[1]Mark F. Boyd, ed. and trans., "Expedition of Marcus Delgado from Apalache to the Upper Creek Country in 1686," The Florida Historical Quarterly, 16 (1937): 14.

reaching the mouth of the Arkansas by 1673, failed to report the existence of any polities as populous and sophisticated as those that Soto had discovered. The Southeast changed since Soto made his journey through the land of chiefdoms. The powerful chiefdoms that once dominated the region had collapsed.

The cause and timing of chiefdom collapse has intrigued scholars for years. Many claim that a series of epidemics swept the Southeast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries leading to depopulation and political decentralization. Colonial documents verify a catastrophic smallpox epidemic in 1697, but even before that event, scholars argue, Southeastern Indians faced massive population loss. Scholars offer several explanations of how lethal microbes came into the region. European explorers carried diseases with them; Indians themselves relayed pathogens along aboriginal trade networks linking the Southeastern interior with areas of sustained European settlement such as Mexico, Cuba, St. Augustine, and Jamestown; or undocumented visitors such as shipwreck victims or traders brought illnesses to coastal tribes who transmitted them farther inland.[2]

The proposed epidemical catastrophe of early European contact with the Southeast, however, remains without

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[2]Proponents of the argument expressed in this paragraph include Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, esp. 13-14, 17-19. Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 200-201 and 213-215; Ramenofsky, Vectors of Death, esp. 69; and Smith, Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change.

satisfactory proof. Many of the powerful chiefdoms that dominated the region indeed ceased functioning by the time South Carolina was established, but such collapse does not indicate the occurrence of virgin soil epidemics. Did outbreaks of diseases of European or African origin travel along aboriginal trade networks and afflict Southeastern Indians before 1697? Did the earliest Spanish intruders bring viruses, bacteria, and other lethal microbes with them that dramatically changed the Southeast? This chapter addresses these questions by examining documents of early exploration and archaeological records for evidence of possible epidemics occurring during the period of early European encounters.

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Little debate exists concerning whether diseases of European and African origin devastated the indigenous population of other regions that the Spanish contacted during the sixteenth century. Voluminous records make it clear that virgin soil epidemics devastated Native Americans living south of the Rio Grande.

Smallpox was the first major pathogen to come to the American continents during the conquest. In 1519 a member of Hernán Cortés' army contracted the acute infectious disease in Cuba and carried it to Mexico. The virus spread rapidly through the densely populated region of central Mexico, weakening the Aztecs and making it easy for Cortés to establish Spanish rule. The epidemic became a pandemic

as it traveled into Central and South America. With compactly settled societies, the Maya and Inca proved vulnerable. Indeed, when Francisco Pizarro's men approached the Incan Empire they found it in a state of disarray. Disease, which was conceivably smallpox, had killed the Inca ruler Huayna Capac and many of his subjects.[3]

As with smallpox, other diseases caused massive mortality. Measles was the second leading killer. At various times, both Indian children and adults suffered severe casualties from this illness, which was a common childhood affliction among Africans and Europeans.[4] From 1545 to 1548, a disease that some scholars believe to have been bubonic plague erupted, resulting in the highest mortality rates of any one particular epidemic.[5] In 1576 an episode of what was most likely typhus spread throughout Mexico and possibly beyond. A high death toll continued from the illness until 1580. By 1600, Indians of Central and South America experienced a reprieve; the major epidemics had passed and many diseases, especially smallpox and measles, became endemic, common childhood illnesses as among Europeans.[6] The damage had been severe. Some

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[3]Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 200-201.

[4]Hanns J. Prem, "Disease outbreaks in central Mexico during the sixteenth century," in "Secret Judgements of God:" Old World Disease in Colonial Spanish America, ed. Noble David Cook and W. George Lovell, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 20-48.

[5]Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, 18; and Merbs, "A New World of infectious disease," 21.

[6]Hanns J. Prem, "Disease outbreaks in Central Mexico," 20-48.

scholars estimate that from 1519 to 1568 Mexico's indigenous population declined by 90%.[7]

With a multitude of microbes accompanying the Spanish invasion of the Americas, it seems possible that some pathogens might have made their way from Mesoamerica into the Southeast before Europeans even ventured into the region. Some scholars in fact believe that once introduced in Mexico in 1519, smallpox traveled north of the Rio Grande and infected many Southeastern Indians, bringing an end to the famous mound-building chiefdoms.[8] Other epidemics followed, resulting in population losses of nearly 90% between 1519 and 1600.[9]

Scholars particularly note two potential avenues for the spread of diseases from Latin America to the American Southeast. One route linked Florida and Cuba. Members of the Calusa tribe who resided in the Everglades often traveled to Cuba by way of canoes and traded with natives there. Cuba, as with many Caribbean islands, experienced a constant influx of infectious parasites during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[10] It was possible therefore that Calusa traders contracted diseases in Cuba and carried them

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[7]Two demographic overviews of Spanish conquest of Latin American are Woodrow Borah, "America as model: the demographic impact of European expansion upon the non-European world," *Actas y Memomorias del XXXV Congresso Internacional de Americanistas* (Mexico, 1964), III, 379-87; and Dobyns, "Estimating aboriginal American population," 395-416.

[8]Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 210-215.

[9]Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, 267 and 287; and Ramenofsky, Vectors of Death, 171.

[10]Crosby, Columbian Exchange, 45-47 and 57; and Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, 260.

back to the mainland, where they spread up the peninsula and along the coast. The second route of aboriginal trade included a path along the Gulf Coast, linking central Mexico with the Mississippi River.[11] This route involved several tribes that transported goods along the coast in their canoes.

Once introduced to the Southeast, microbes could have been relayed by Indians into the interior. Trade networks extended from the coasts into even the most remote areas. The Pisgah, for example, traded material native to their homeland to people living in different areas. They mined and shaped mica found in the Appalachian summit and traded it to others for marine shells.[12] Carolina coastal Indians may have been involved in this trade. When English settlers came to Roanoke in 1585, they found a people who claimed that they acquired a very soft and pale metal from a mountainous land twenty days away.[13] Several Coosa towns in the Ridge and Valley province in eastern Tennessee also lay on trade routes connecting the interior with other regions. Towns within the Little Tennessee River obtained mica, chlorite schist, soapstone, and other minerals from people living in the Blue Ridge Mountains.[14] They procured

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[11]Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, 260.

[12]Dickens, Cherokee Prehistory, 143.

[13]Ralph Lane, "Ralph Lane's narrative of the Roanoke Island colony," in NAW , III, 298-99.

[14]Davis, Aboriginal Settlement Patterns, 26; and Polhemus, The Toqua Site, 820 and 826.

copper, most likely from Indians living near the Great Lakes, and they acquired marine shells from both the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.[15]

Nevertheless, it is questionable to use such evidence of widespread trade to over-inflate the volume of aboriginal exchange. The peak of intertribal trade occurred several centuries before contact during the height of chiefdom development in the thirteenth century. It was then that objects related to the Southeastern Ceremonial Cult became widely distributed.[16] After the thirteenth century, trade still continued but at a substantially reduced volume. Exotic items remained the most exchanged goods, but these were rare items, obtained infrequently and possessed only by elites. Everyday items such as food and ceramic vessels showed little circulation beyond the local level.[17] The number of people involved in trade furthermore was most likely minimal.[18] The only evidence of a coastal route linking Mexico with the Mississippi, for example, showed a single man paddling his canoe along the Texas shore.[19]

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[15]Polhemus, The Toqua Site, 822, 824, and 994.

[16]Jon Muller, "The Southern Cult," in Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, 15-16.

[17]Alfred K. Guthe and E. Marian Bistline. Excavations of Tomotley, 1973-74, and the Tuskegee Area: Two Reports, University of Tennessee Department of Anthropology, Report of Investigations No. 24, Tennessee Valley Authority Publications in Anthropology, (Knoxville, 1981), 119.

[18]Saul Jarcho is also critical of aboriginal trade networks as vehicles for the spread of disease. See Jarcho, "Disease in prehistoric North America," 14.

[19]David Henige, "Primary source by primary source? On the role of epidemics in New World depopulation," Ethnohistory 33 (1986): 299.

Most importantly, frequent native warfare impeded aboriginal exchange, consequently decreasing the chances that microbes traveled through trade networks. European exploration accounts describe a land full of people who seldom engaged in intertribal trade but had numerous enemies against whom they frequently warred. From the Atlantic Coast to the Mississippi River, the Southeast was a region marked by buffer zones that separated rival polities.

Florida in particular was the home of warring groups. Tribes such as the Calusa dominated the coasts and the swampy southern half of the peninsula.[20] They jealously guarded the territory from which they procured wild produce, fish, and game. Further up the peninsula, a large buffer zone likely existed between the migratory groups and the more sedentary groups. The former protected their domination of marine resources while the latter wanted to check the advance of rival hunters into river valleys that supported terrestrial fauna, especially deer. Frenchmen who sought to establish a colony in 1564 near the mouth of the St. John's River stepped into a typical conflict between coastal and interior enemies. The headman of a coastal tribe solicited French aid in the conflict with their inland rivals the "Tymanquoa" or Timicua.[21] The Timicua, a small

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[20]Lucy L. Wenhold, trans., "A seventeenth century letter of Gabriel Diaz Vara Calderón, Bishop of Cuba describing the Indians and Indian missions of Florida." Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections 95 (16), (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1936), 11-12.

[21]Report by anonymous writer in NAW, II, 362.

chiefdom, themselves battled groups even further north. The French found that warring chiefdoms and tribes blocked the path to the Apalachees of the Florida panhandle.[22] Earlier, Spanish explorers found other challengers to the Apalachees who certainly guarded the resource-rich area that they dominated.[23]

Buffer zones existed deeper in the interior. When Soto advanced into the piedmont of Georgia, he encountered the small chiefdom of Ocute, laying near the fall line of the Oconee River. It was there that the Spaniards heard of the "Lady of Cofitachequi" and her powerful polity. As the expedition setout to find Cofitachequi, they found themselves in what they described as a "desert." For one hundred and thirty leagues, they found neither people nor villages, only pine groves and large rivers.[24] The area was the valley of the Savannah River, which stood vacant due to warfare between Ocute and Cofitachequi. A century earlier the "desert" had been the home of many people, but before

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[22]René de Laudonnière, *L'histoire notable de la Floride* [1586] in NAW, II, 329-330 and 342. John Hann also notes the presence of buffer zones as deterrents of the spread of disease up the Florida peninsula; see Hann, Apalachee: the Land between the Rivers, Ripley P. Bullen Monographs in Anthropology and History, no. 7, (Gainesville: Univ. Presses of Florida, 1988), 179.

[23]Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación dio Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca* [1542] in NAW, II, 21.

[24]Elvas in DSC, I, 168; Biedma in DSC, I, 229. There were two types of leagues used by the Spaniards. One was a statue league, equaling 4.19 kilometers; the other was a common league, equaling about 5.5 kilometers. It is unclear which of the two measurements the Soto expedition used. On the problem of the Spanish league, see Ross Hassig, "Leagues in Mexico versus leagues in Florida: how good were estimates?" in The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast, ed. Patricia Galloway, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 234-245.

Soto came, the Indians had withdrawn to safer locations, creating a large buffer zone in the process.[25]

Native American rivalry undoubtedly created a maze of buffer zones throughout the Southeast. The palisaded villages that Soto encountered among towns belonging to Coosa, for example, most likely indicated warfare with rivals such as the Pisgah or groups living to the northwest. Warfare also characterized aboriginal societies within the Mississippi Valley. One Frenchman, writing in the late seventeenth century but commenting on long-standing conflict between coastal and interior groups, noted that members of several chiefdoms feared traveling into the delta region, claiming that native tribes there would "eat" any intruders.[26] Another Frenchmen reported that before the massive epidemics of the late seventeenth century Indians of the valley used a red post as a boundary marker between rivals who competed for scarce resources. The Bayagoulas and the Oumas, he wrote, "were so jealous of the hunting in their territories that they would shoot at any of their neighbors whom they caught hunting beyond the limits marked by the red post." After 1700 when epidemics had in fact struck, human depopulation fostered the multiplication of wild game herds, and the former rivals abandoned their

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[25]Anderson, "Stability and change," 208.

[26] Minet, "Voyage made from Canada inland going southward during the year 1682 by order of Monsieur Colbert Minister of State," trans. Ann Linda Bell in LaSalle, the Mississippi and the Gulf: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley, (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1982), 50-51.

animosity. "They hunt everywhere," the Frenchman claimed, "the ones with the others, and are good friends."[27]

Buffer zones and the limited nature of aboriginal trade make it difficult to believe that Indians carried acute infectious diseases of European or African origin from the coasts to the interior and even more doubtful that they transported pathogens from Mexico or the Caribbean. Thus, the 1519 smallpox epidemic or other outbreaks most likely did not spread from Latin America into the Southeast.

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A more probable source for the introduction of foreign pathogens into the southeastern environment involved direct European intrusion. Soto was not the only Spanish explorer to lead expeditions into the Southeast. Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón (1526) and Panfilo de Narváez (1528) preceded Soto, while Tristan de Luna (1559-1561) and Juan Pardo (1566, 1567-1568) followed. In addition, both the French (1562) and English (1585) attempted to form settlements on the Atlantic Coast. The documentation of these expeditions remains rather limited, but with a close examination one can assess whether they had the potential of introducing diseases that caused massive population loss among Southeastern Indians. A survey of the medical history of European visits is necessary to determine what diseases, if

[27] McWilliams, ed. and trans., Fleur de Lys and Calumet, 25-26.

any, could have reached the Southeast during the sixteenth century.

Only one reference to what appeared to be a virgin soil epidemic exists in the various accounts of early European expeditions. One of Hernando de Soto's chronicler recorded that "about the town [of Cofitachequi] within the compass of a league and a half league were large uninhabited towns, choked with vegetation, which looked as though no people had inhabited them for some time." Indians informed the Spaniards that "two years ago there had been a plague in that land and they had moved to other towns."[28] Another chronicler verified the account, calling the disaster both a "pestilence" and a "plague."[29]

The cause of this calamity remains obscure. The "plague" may have been due to crop failure associated with climatic disturbance or insect invasion, but a possibility exists that it was an epidemic that an early Spanish expedition introduced.[30] Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón led a colonizing party to the coast of Carolina fourteen years before Soto arrived in the area. Soto in fact discovered evidence of the earlier Spanish presence. He found European goods including a dagger, rosary beads, and steel axes.[31]

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[28]Elvas in DSC, I, 83.

[29]Garcilasco in DSC, II, 286.

[30]Although many scholars believe that the plague of Cofitachequi was indeed due to European introduced diseases, some argue that famine rather than disease afflicted the chiefdom. See Widmar, "Southeastern chiefdoms," 137-138; and DePratter, "The Chiefdom of Cofitachequi," 215-216.

[31]Elvas in DSC, I, 84; and Biedma in DSC, I, 231.

Conceivably, Ayllón and his followers could have introduced not only material objects but also some kind of pathogen into the environment that caused problems for Cofitachequi.

In mid-July 1526, Ayllón set sail from Puerto Rico to Carolina with six ships of approximately 600 people, most of whom were Spanish men but also some women, children, and African slaves. Ayllón, like other Spaniards, imagined he would find slaves, gold, and silver. Instead he found only disaster. One of his ships sank, ruining many of their supplies. After landing near Winyah Bay and the Santee River on August 9, 1526, several members of the expedition became sick. The Spaniards did not find much food along the infertile coasts and spent the rest of August, September, and October desperately seeking a suitable location for a colony. Exposure and famine took their toll, with many including Ayllón becoming ill and dying. One man died a particularly horrific death. After he took off his pants, "all the flesh came away from both legs from the knees downwards, leaving his bones bare." The expedition was so prostrate that the men could not fish even though marine resources were plentiful. By November, the Spaniards with only 150 survivors departed.[32]

Exposure, famine, and lack of drinking water may have caused many of the deaths, but the high mortality rates

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[32]Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, in NAW, I, 260-61 and 263. For a secondary account of the expedition, see Hoffman, A New Andalucia, 66-79.

indicate that the Spaniards probably suffered from one or more diseases. The party was fairly large and came from a Caribbean port that commonly harbored various diseases. More than one person belonging to the expedition potentially carried some type of parasite. But which disease or diseases afflicted the Ayllón expedition? And, what were the chances of the disease spreading to Native Americans throughout the Southeast?

Although Soto's chroniclers called the suspected disease that afflicted Cofitachequi "plague," that disease can be ruled out as a possible passenger aboard Ayllón's fleet. A bacteria, Yersinia pestis, causes plague in both its bubonic and pneumonic forms. The microorganism lives in fleas, which are particularly adapted to rodents including ground squirrels, rabbits, domestic cats, and domestic rats. Once the flea bites a human being, symptoms of bubonic plague will appear quite quickly—two to six days after infection. The victim experiences fever and inflammation of the lymph nodes. The case fatality rate surpasses 50% of untreated patients in modern times. As bubonic plague progresses in a victim, secondary pneumonic plague develops. In this stage, a human can transmit the disease through exhalation to another person, who is said to have primary pneumonic plague. After one to six days, the victim shows symptoms and if left untreated death is nearly certain. Infection and survival of either form of plague does not

guarantee immunity; re-infection can occur with large doses of Yersinia pestis.[33]

With a short incubation and infective period, plague would have manifested itself rather quickly among members of the Ayllón expedition. If the bacteria had accompanied them to the Southeast, one would expect passengers to come down with the illness while in transit, causing many deaths before arrival. After coming on shore, plague would have spread rapidly through the Spanish ranks. Most of the party did not seem to become sick until at least a few weeks after arrival. Ayllón himself died on October 18, a month and nine-days after first coming ashore.

Even if the Spaniards had brought plague, it would have been unlikely to spread much past the coast. Historically, plague became epidemic among people living in large and densely populated societies. Outbreaks occurred when domestic animals that lived in close contact with humans contracted the bacteria. The famed "Black Death" that ravaged Europe in the fourteenth century, for example, struck people who lived in rat and flea infested dwellings, causing extremely high casualties among people living in over-crowded conditions. Its transmission across the Atlantic is not certain until the 19th century. If ships with infected mice and other rodents brought plague at an earlier date, the disease probably became epidemic among

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[33]American Public Health Association, The Control of Communicable Diseases in Man, ed. Abram S. Benenson, (Washington D.C.: American Public Health Association, 1990), 324-326.

only the most densely populated Native American societies such as the Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas. There is thus reason to suspect that plague was responsible for the massive epidemic that struck Mexico in 1545. Coastal Indians of the American Southeast, with their scattered and migratory settlement patterns, however, made improbable agents to facilitate the spread of plague into the interior.[34]

Another acute infectious disease, influenza, seemed an unlikely candidate for transmission via the Ayllón expedition. Influenza viruses and bacteria have some of the shortest life spans of all diseases. Generally, the pathogen becomes infective after an incubation period of 1 to 2 days and remains contagious for 3 to 5 days.[35] Thus, as with plague, one would expect the disease to manifest itself during the voyage and to have spread rapidly through the Spanish ranks.

It was not medically impossible for the Ayllón expedition to have carried smallpox or measles to Carolina. These diseases have longer periods of incubation and infectivity than influenza or plague and would have a more gradual spread among non-immune people than influenza or plague. Both viruses can incubate for at most a 14-day

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[34]On plague see William McNeil, Plagues and People (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 123-127 and 165-166. Unlike Dobyns and others, McNeil doubts an early presence of Bubonic Plague in the Americas before the 19th century. William Cronon also discounts plague as a possible pathogen spread among Indians. See Cronon, Changes in the Land, 87.

[35]Primary sources do not provide a specific date for the departure of Ayllón's ships from Puerto Rico, only noting that they left during the middle of July. Their arrival on the coast of Carolina is more certain, occurring on August 9. Thus if the middle of July was sometime after the 9th, the trip lasted no more than a month. See Hoffman, A New Andalucia, 66-67.

period before symptoms appear. As symptoms emerge, the diseases become communicable to other people for fourteen to fifteen days. Communication of smallpox may occur after the fifteen days; the virus can survive in scabs up to a month after first infection and can live even longer, perhaps up to a year, on fabrics in cool and dry climates. But one central fact virtually eliminates the possibility that either smallpox or measles was responsible for the deaths that Ayllón's expedition experienced. Four hundred and fifty of the adult males died, suggesting that if an infectious disease was at work it was a non-childhood affliction.

Possibly, the Ayllón expedition could have transmitted typhus to the Southeast. Commonly called "ships fever" due to its common occurrence aboard sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century vessels, typhus is caused by a rickettsial organism (a microbe with a level of organization between the simpler virus and more complex bacteria).[36] The most severe form, Rickettsia prowazeki, is transmitted from human to human by lice. Once a louse contracts the disease, it is infective for two to six days during which time it can transmit the disease to a human by defecating on his or her skin. The human scratches the louse bite and rubs the Rickettsial-filled feces into the abrasion. The pathogen

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[36]Erwin H. Ackerknecht, History and Geography of the Most Important Diseases (New York: Hafner, 1965), 34-35. The history of typhus is told in Hans Zinsser's classic work, Rats, Lice, and History (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1935).

incubates for one to two weeks, typically 12 days, after which an onset of symptoms including headache, chills, prostration, fever, and pain occurs. On the fifth or sixth day of illness, macular eruptions, which are non-elevated spots or lesions on the skin, spread from the trunk to all of the body except face, palms, and soles. A fever may last up to two weeks. The infective period lasts for 14 to 17 days, during which time a louse can contract the disease by biting a victim. The disease can be quite lethal, but likelihood of death varies substantially according to the level of health of the victim. In modern times, 10 to 40% of untreated patients die, with the elderly showing the highest-levels of mortality. Survivors possess life-long immunity to the disease.[37]

Typhus has a longer life span than most acute infectious diseases and often survived voyages from Europe to the Americas. The Rickettsial germ can live up to 35 days before it must be transmitted to another human being for survival; this includes the twelve and seventeen day incubation and infective periods within a human being and the six-day infective period within a louse. Ships traveling from Europe to the Americas with hundreds of people cramped into tiny, louse-ridden vessels often harbored the disease for the entire journey across the

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[37]American Public Health Association, Control of Communicable Diseases, 474-476. Murine typhus fever is another form of typhus caused by a different rickettsial organism. Discussion of this disease is excluded because it is much milder and thus could not have been responsible for the high death toll experienced by the Spaniards.

Atlantic.[38] Transmission of typhus across the Atlantic may have also been due to some victims who suffered from the rare occurrence of "Brill-Zinsser Disease." This condition results when Rickettsia go into dormancy and then re-occur years after first infection.[39]

The life span of the Rickettsial pathogen indicates that the Spaniards could have transported the disease from the Caribbean to the Carolina coast. In addition, typhus, unlike influenza or plague, would have gradually worked its way through the ranks of the expedition rather than spreading rapidly, thus corresponding with the available documentation.

Still, other possibilities exist. The Spanish could have easily brought typhoid fever to the Southeast with their earliest expeditions. The bacteria, Salmonella typhi, causes this disease which involves headache, sustained fever, despondency, anorexia, slowness of the heartbeat, enlargement of the spleen, cough, rose spots on the body, and bowel problems including constipation for some and diarrhea for others. A victim contracts the disease through food or water contaminated by feces or urine. The bacteria incubate between one and three weeks before symptoms appear, and the victim can excrete the bacilli into the environment for a variable amount of time. Ten-percent of infected

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[38]John Duffy, Epidemics in Colonial America (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 229.

[39]American Public Health Association, Control of Communicable Diseases, 475.

people can transmit the disease for up to three months, while two to five percent become permanent carriers. Most commonly these permanent carriers are middle-aged women, such as "Typhoid Mary" who unknowingly exposed many Americans to the disease in the twentieth century. Immunity to the disease remains relative. One avoids contracting the disease again if only exposed to low doses of the bacteria, but high doses will break down immunity. Death rates also vary considerably according to the level of health of its victims. In modern times, mortality rates for untreated victims are ten percent.[40]

Casualties among members of the Ayllón expedition exceeded ten percent, but they may have indeed suffered from typhoid fever. If anyone carried the disease or had picked it up in Puerto Rico, the bacteria would have spread throughout the Spanish ranks. Given sixteenth-century standards of sanitation aboard ships this would not be surprising. Moreover, once ashore sanitary conditions probably did not improve. The lagoons, swamps, or springs of the Carolina coast that probably served both as a sewer and a source of drinking water provided ideal conditions for the germination and spread of Salmonelli typhi. Six hundred people camped together almost guaranteed that feces and urine contaminated drinking water. The gradual eruption of symptoms further suggests typhoid. Among a malnourished,

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[40]Ibid., 469-470.

exposed population such as the Ayllón expedition the disease could have resulted in casualties exceeding the ten-percent seen in modern cases.

Members of the Ayllón expedition may have also suffered from malaria. This disease was in fact the most likely one transmitted to the Southeast during the sixteenth century. Four types of malaria exist, each caused by a different species of Plasmodium (a genus of protozoa or single-celled organisms more complex than bacteria). These include the most severe type P. falciparum and the less severe P. vivax, P. malariae, and P. ovale. Falciparum, also called malignant tertian fever, results in headaches, fevers, chills, and sweats. It can also cause jaundice, blood clotting defects, renal and liver failure, excessive fluid build-up in the heart and brain, coma, and death. Mortality rates among non-treated individuals in modern times can exceed ten percent. Of the forms of malaria other than falciparum, vivax has been historically the most prevalent in the Americas. It is a debilitating, though rarely lethal, illness. The general symptoms include a fever that slowly rises over several days, followed by intervals of shaking chills and rising temperatures, headaches, nausea, and profuse sweating. The cycle of chills and fevers may repeat itself every day, every other day, or every third day. Relapses may occur weeks, months, or even up to two years later.[41]

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[41]Ibid., 261-264.

Transmission of all forms of malaria depends on the presence of mosquitoes belonging to the genus Anopheles. It is within these vectors that a Plasmodium undergoes a transformation into a form infective to humans. Specifically, within a mosquito a malarial parasite in its sexual stage, a gametocyte, changes into another form, a sporozoite. These sporozoites invade the mosquito's salivary glands from where they can be transmitted to a human when the insect feeds on its victim's blood. This transformation takes anywhere from eight to thirty-five days, depending on the species of both the Plasmodium and Anopheles as well as temperature. Once transmitted to a human, the sporozoites travel to the liver where they mature into schizonts; these subsequently release merozoites into the blood, approximately six to nine days after the infective bite. Merozoites mature into gametocytes within three days for vivax and twelve to fourteen days for falciparum. At this point symptoms become manifest, and the human carrier can infect mosquitoes. Falciparum victims may carry the parasite for up to a year but generally no longer. Vivax patients can transmit the disease for up to two years. Mosquitoes can carry Plasmodia and infect victims for life.[42]

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[42]Ibid., 261-264; see also Darret B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, "Of agues and fevers: malaria in the early Chesapeake," William and Mary Quarterly 3d ser. 33 (1976): 32.

The chronic nature of malaria made it highly probable that the earliest explorers carried the disease from the Eastern Hemisphere and transmitted it to the American environment wherever Anopheles mosquitoes lived. Malaria was most likely not endemic in most parts of Europe at the time of contact, although epidemics of the disease probably occurred as far back as the days of the Roman Empire.[43] It was Africa where the disease was endemic, and it was this continent that served as the main source for the spread of malaria. European vessels either stopping on the Canary Islands or picking-up slaves on the African coast certainly transported the disease to the Americas. Caribbean islands proved excellent breeding grounds for the illness; malaria quickly became endemic in this wet, tropical region due to a habitat that allowed Anopheles mosquitoes to thrive. These insects predominately resided in areas of still water including ponds, lakes, and swamps. Europeans helped foster such habitat when they harvested trees for firewood and building material; the deforestation created many inland, stagnant pools.[44]

One or more of the members of the Ayllón expedition probably picked-up malaria while waiting transport from Puerto Rico to the coast of Carolina. They most likely would have displayed symptoms during or shortly after

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[43]Ackerknecht, History and Geography of the Most Important Diseases, 90-91.

[44]Ibid., 90-91; and Mark F. Boyd, "An historical sketch of the prevalence of malaria in North America," American Journal of Tropical Medicine 21 (1941): 224.

arrival, and while ashore they may have exposed other members of the expedition to infection if Anopheles mosquitoes resided in the area where they camped.[45] Depending on the species of Plasmodium and other factors, the newly afflicted people would begin to show signs of the disease anywhere from twenty to forty-nine days after arrival.[46]

Some evidence indicates that Ayllón's party was exposed to malaria. They made landfall in an area historically known for its poor drainage and abundant insect life. They also arrived during the late summer, a time when Anopheles mosquitoes are active. The main body of the expedition camped from August 9 to early September, giving enough time for local mosquitoes to contract the malarial parasite and facilitate its transformation into an agent capable of infecting new victims. The settlers expressed their discontent with the land, perhaps due to mosquito bites, and began to experience illness within the twenty to forty-nine day period that one would expect symptoms to appear. Ayllón, for example, died forty-one days after arrival, putting him well within the range of a possible malarial infection.[47] Of course, the high mortality rates weigh

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[45]Scholars believe that Anopheles mosquitoes were indigenous to the Americas. See Jarcho, "Disease in prehistoric North America," 9.

[46]This range is based on the 8 to 35 day reproductive cycle within a mosquito plus a period of 12 to 14 days before clinical symptoms appear among victims.

[47]Hoffman, A New Andalucia, 66-76; the dates given were according to the Julian system, which is ten days behind modern calendars. Thus, the Spaniards arrived on August 19 and Ayllón died on October 28. These dates do not contradict a late summer arrival of the Spaniards.

against a diagnosis of malaria, especially vivax. But combined with famine, poor water, and other diseases, malaria could have brought many of the Spaniards to the point of death. It could also explain why members of the expedition did not obtain their own food. The disease may have incapacitated people to the point that they did not fish even though according to one account the local waters abounded with aquatic life.[48]

Malaria, typhus, and typhoid fever all had the potential to accompany the Ayllón expedition and cause the deaths of the Spaniards, but two of these three diseases had only a small possibility of becoming epidemic among Southeastern Indians. Historically typhus thrived in urban slums and among armies, both of which involved dense crowds of people living in filthy, lice-ridden conditions. A settlement group coming to America similarly possessed such characteristics. The coastal Indians that encountered the Ayllón expedition, however, did not. They lived in dispersed settlements in which typhus would have not spread far. Coastal Indians certainly would not have harbored the disease long enough to transmit it into the interior. Typhoid fever also would have remained localized. In order to contract this disease, Indians had to use the same water source as the Spaniards, but sources give no references of Indians living in close proximity to where the Spaniards

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[48]Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, in NAW, I, 263.

camped. A chance existed of Indians later coming to the area perhaps to hunt or fish, drinking water that the Spanish had contaminated, and transporting the disease to other locations. If this occurred, some population loss among local Indians would have resulted.

Of the three diseases discussed, malaria stood the best chance of causing widespread infection among local Indians. Assuming that Anopheles mosquitoes were present and members of the Ayllón expedition had malaria, the plasmodia parasite would have become a permanent part of the southeastern environment. Mosquitoes served as reservoirs for the disease, and although these insects seldom fly more than a mile away from their breeding grounds, Indians traveling through the area could have contracted the parasite and transported it to other locations.[49] Once infected the human victim can carry the disease for one to two years depending on the species of Plasmodium, a significant amount of time to transport the pathogen into a new environment. Given enough time, the disease would have become distributed throughout the Atlantic Coast and even into the interior wherever Anopheles mosquitoes lived.

Conceivably, malaria, originating with the 1526 Spanish expedition, caused the "plague" that afflicted Cofitachequi in 1538, two years prior to Soto's arrival. Even if the argument proposed above is wrong and acute

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[49]Linda A. Newson, "Highland-lowland contrasts in the impact of Old World disease in early colonial Ecuador," Social Science and Medicine 36 (1993): 1190.

infectious disease such as smallpox, measles, influenza, or plague accompanied Ayllón's party, it is doubtful that these maladies would have taken twelve years to travel from the coast to the piedmont. The nature of malaria, however, allows for a slow advance through a region. It may have taken twelve years for Indians to transport the Plasmodia to Cofitachequi and successfully infect mosquitoes there. Moreover, the description of the "plague" in Spanish chronicles fits malaria. The disease seemed to be unevenly distributed, possibly indicating that only people living in villages near swamps became infected.[50] The main town of Cofitachequi and other villages remained occupied and served as receptacles for people whose communities suffered. An acute infectious disease would have caused more widespread and uniform damage. In addition, the fact that famine accompanied the epidemic indicates malaria. The illness often strikes during the growing season, incapacitating workers needed to plant and maintain agricultural crops.[51]

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The Panfilo de Narváez expedition that came after Ayllón had similar potential epidemiological consequences for the Southeastern Indians. Sometime after February 20, 1528, Narváez with a force of four hundred men, a few women, and

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[50]Spaniards who came to Carolina piedmont in the 1560s described the land near Cofitachequi as swampy, indicating suitable habitat for Anopheles. See Juan de la Bandera, "The short Bandera relation" in JPE, 301.

[51]Elvas in DSC, I, 83-84; and Garcilasco in DSC, II, 286. On the impact of malaria on agricultural production, see Rutman and Rutman, "Of agues and fever," 55-57.

some slaves left Cuba and sailed for Florida. On April 14, 1528, they landed near present-day Tampa Bay.[52] For over a month after arrival, the expedition remained healthy while they journeyed north seeking food to steal from the Indians. The Spaniards eventually arrived at the Apalachicola River and found a town called "Aute" that the Apalachee Indians had abandoned. It was there during the summer, several months after departing Cuba, that an illness broke out among the men. Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca one of the members of the expedition wrote that "there were not horses enough to carry the sick, who went on increasing in numbers day by day, and we knew no cure...the people were unable to move forward, the greater part being ill...."[53] There had been sufficient food before the sickness erupted, but as everyone came down with the malady, few remained that could obtain sustenance. Casualties from the disease and hunger, however, were not as severe as among members of the Ayllón expedition. Only forty died from those causes.[54]

The Narváez expedition nonetheless fell apart. Without food, the expeditionary force stole from native villages and invaded oyster-gathering sites, provoking reprisals and causing many Spanish deaths. Dissension broke out, and the men decided to build boats, abandon the sick and injured,

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[52]Antonio de Herrera, *Historia general de los hechos de los Castellanos*, in NAW, II, 10.

[53]Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación dio Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*, in NAW, II, 24.

[54]Ibid., 25; and Herrera in NAW, II, 11.

and travel to Mexico. On September 22, 1528, the Spaniards departed from the Florida panhandle, and after traveling thirty days most of the Spaniards became lost, perishing somewhere off the coast of Texas. A group of eighty, however, made it ashore, camped that winter among local Indians, and in the spring began to travel over-land. Only four of these men survived. Remarkably, Cabeza de Vaca and three others straggled into a Spanish settlement in northern Mexico six years later.[55]

As with Ayllón's expedition, Narváez probably did not bring common acute infectious diseases to the Southeast. Adult males were predominate, and they did not suffer illness until months after departure, virtually eliminating the possibility that they transmitted smallpox, measles, influenza, or plague to Southeastern Indians. Narváez also probably did not bring typhus. If the disease had infected anyone, others would have shown symptoms within thirty-five days after arriving in Florida.

Just as with the Ayllón intrusion, malaria cannot be eliminated as a disease from which the Narváez expedition may have suffered. No reference to anyone having malarial symptoms existed in the account of Cabeza de Vaca, but four factors suggest that either falciparum or more likely vivax caused the malady. First, a potential for the spread of these pathogens existed when anyone traveled from a place in

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[55]Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación*, in NAW, I, 25; and Herrera, *Historia general*, in ibid. 11-13.

which malaria was endemic to another place where Anopheles mosquitoes existed. Second, the disease took over a month to manifest itself after Narváez's arrival, a period long enough for indigenous mosquitoes to contract the pathogen and for a Plasmodium to undergo its necessary reproduction cycle to re-infect humans. Third, the Spaniards traveled through northern Florida during the warm season, from April until late September, an active time for Anopheles. Lastly, fatalities according to Cabeza de Vaca numbered 40, roughly 10% of the expeditionary force, indicative of the low mortality rates seen among modern cases of the disease that are left untreated.

Typhoid fever, however, was the most likely culprit. The illness appeared to erupt only when the Spaniards reached Aute. There, they camped for a longer period than they had before, giving potential carriers of the typhoid bacteria time to contaminate local water supplies. Significantly, individuals who departed from the main camp to explore the coast avoided sickness, only to discover their fellow Spaniards incapacitated upon returning. They also found the expedition surrounded by Indians, who certainly resented the presence of the strange invaders inhabiting one of their towns.[56] Conceivably, typhoid fever broke-out among the tightly camped Spaniards, who probably contaminated their own water supply with feces and urine.

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[56]Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación*, in NAW, I, 24.

As with malaria, mortality rates of victims who suffer from typhoid and do not receive treatment are approximately ten percent.

An event that occurred during Cabeza de Vaca's journey to Mexico further indicated the possibility that the Spaniards had brought typhoid fever to the Southeast. A little over thirty-days after departing from Florida, eighty Spaniards arrived on the Texas coast, plagued severely by hunger. The Spaniards began to die rapidly, with the survivors cannibalizing their dead comrades. Shortly thereafter, the local Indians, whom Cabeza de Vaca described as poor people living off of shellfish and aquatic roots, began to suffer from the Spanish presence. "After this," Cabeza de Vaca reported, "the natives were visited by a disease of the bowels, of which half their number died." The Indians thought that the Spaniards, probably by using witchcraft, were responsible for their deaths. Cabeza de Vaca, however, convinced the Indians that if they had such power to make others ill, they would not have made their own people die. After all, only fifteen of the eighty who came among the Indians survived.[57]

The "disease of the bowels" to which Cabeza de Vaca referred may have resulted from some form of dysentery or intestinal parasites indigenous to the Gulf Coast rather than typhoid fever. Nevertheless, if members of the Narváez

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[57]Ibid., 30.

expedition had brought typhoid with them to the Southeast, they conceivably could have spread the illness to Texas. It was possible that one or more of the Spaniards carried the pathogen from Florida to Texas, a trip that according to Cabeza de Vaca took thirty-days, a time well within the infective period of the typhoid bacteria. Once ashore, the Spaniards may have defecated and urinated near local drinking water or in aquatic areas where the Indians gathered clams and oysters. Shellfish commonly harbored the disease, increasing the chances of infecting coastal Indians.

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The major Spanish expeditions before Soto's invasion could have brought diseases to the Southeast. But careful epidemiological analysis indicates that Spaniards likely introduced only malaria and typhoid. While serious afflictions, these probably did not rage uncontrolled nor cause massive depopulation. Although local outbreaks of these diseases could have caused some political destabilization, widespread damage to chiefdoms did not occur.

The observations that Soto's chroniclers made in fact described a social landscape that had escaped virgin soil epidemics prior to the 1540s. Soto, after all, found many powerful chiefdoms such as Coosa, Mobile, Quizquiz, and Quigualtam. If preceding Spanish explorers had brought highly communicable and lethal diseases, would these

polities have still existed in the 1540s? Most likely, they would not. The existence of these chiefdoms further lends support that the 1519 smallpox pandemic and other outbreaks erupting in Mexico did not spread up the Gulf Coast and into the Mississippi Valley, nor did Indians carry pathogens by canoe from Cuba to Florida. Prior to the 1540s, Southeastern Indians had not experienced an epidemiological holocaust.

But what were the potential epidemiological consequences of the Soto expedition? Could Soto's men have carried infectious diseases with them capable of causing massive destruction? Scholars believe that this expedition was most responsible for bringing population collapse and changing the Southeast from a land of chiefdoms to on in which tribes dominated. Soto and his followers, however, had even less of a probability of inflicting severe epidemiological damage than did previous Spanish invasions.

In April 1538, 600 to 650 Spanish men left the Iberian Peninsula with Soto.[58] Several slaves and women not included in the official count also accompanied the expedition to Florida.[59] Although one cannot be certain, Soto's forces probably consisted of nearly 1,000 human beings. In less than two months, Soto's ships sailed from Spain, stopped at the Canary Islands for fifteen days, and

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[58]Elvas in DSC, I, 50, 180 n.22; and Biedma in DSC, I, 225.

[59]Elvas in DSC,I, 56-57; Rangel in DSC, I, 254, 257, 261, 285, and 294; and Garcilasco in DSC, II, 315.

continued to Cuba where they arrived on June 7, 1538.[60] The expedition remained in Cuba for nearly a year, gathering supplies and preparing for their journey. Some of members of the expedition searched the countryside for food to take with them and probably contracted malaria. One chronicler reported that these men "suffered much annoyance from mosquitoes, especially in a swamp called the mash of the watering trough...."[61] On May 18, 1539 the army departed Havana, arriving off the coast of Florida near present-day Tampa Bay on May 30.

Soto's large army of people made the trip from the Caribbean to Florida in thirteen days, an amount of time short enough to guarantee that almost all acute infectious diseases would not have run their courses before arrival. Nevertheless, no immediate transmission of such illnesses seemed to occur. Members of the Soto expedition arrived healthy, and chroniclers reported no sickness during the first year after arrival.

Because the Spanish themselves did not apparently suffer from disease does not eliminate the possibility that they brought malaria with them. Arriving in Florida in May 1539, the expedition did not stop for an extended period of time until fall when they reached the Florida panhandle.[62]

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[60]Elvas in DSC, I, 51 and 180-181 n.24; Elvas gives no specific date of departure, simply noting that they left Spain in April. The voyage from the Canaries thus certainly took less than two months.

[61]Ibid., 55.

[62]Rangel in DSC, I, 267.

The expedition would have had to camp for at least eight days in order for malaria to become transmitted from one person to another. It took at least that long for Plasmodia to undergo part of its reproductive cycle within local Anopheles. Before that occurred, Soto's men moved on with none having a chance to contract malaria. The parasite, however, remained in the local environment and served as a potential hazard to Indians who traveled through the area.

Typhoid fever similarly could have entered into the environment without becoming epidemic among Soto's men. As the Spaniards advanced they left a trail of feces and urine that may have mixed with local water supplies. The invaders themselves continually marched to new areas preventing them from drinking water that they had contaminated, but indigenous people behind them faced possible infection from a new disease. Evidence indicated that the Spaniards did not carry typhoid fever, however. Soto's army eventually did establish a camp, settling in northern Florida from October 1539 through March 1540. It was at this locale that typhoid fever would have the best opportunity to germinate and infect multiple victims. If it had, one would expect a frightening sickness that would have appeared in the chronicles of the expedition, but no such mention occurred. Moreover, the number of Spanish men remained around six hundred as they left Florida and entered Georgia in the spring.[63] Malaria on the other hand cannot be eliminated

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[63]Elvas in DSC, I, 77.

for the same reasons. The season in which the Spaniards camped in northern Florida prohibited mosquitoes from spreading the pathogen among the intruders.

As the expedition advanced into the Carolinas, some evidence of infectious diseases emerged. On May 15, 1540 near the town of Xualla, many men of the expedition had become "sick and lame."[64] Later, one of Soto's horsemen traveling between the Indian towns of Xualla and Guaxule, somewhere in the Appalachian mountains, became "sick with fever" and wandered from the trail.[65] The number of ill increased as the expedition went farther. After passing over the Appalachian summit and halting at the town of Chiaha, some men became too sick to continue the journey down the Tennessee River.[66] The members may have suffered from heat, dehydration, or nutritional deficiencies, but malaria also likely prevailed. Camping for an extended amount of time in the Carolina piedmont allowed carriers of Plasmodia to infect mosquitoes and for the insects to transmit the pathogen to those still uninfected. The expedition may have even passed through areas made malarial due to Ayllón's previous invasion. Weeks prior to the first report of illness, the expedition reached Cofitachequi, where they stayed for nine to ten days. Soto's men could

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[64]Rangel in DSC, I, 281.

[65]Elvas in DSC, I, 87.

[66]Ibid., 91.

have contracted the malady there and transported it deeper into the interior. Whatever the cause of the illness, casualties remained modest in comparison to earlier Spanish invasions. By the time, Soto reached central Alabama his party had lost 102 men from illness and Indian attack.[67]

Not until May 1542 can one find more evidence of possible disease among members of the Spanish expedition. On the 21st of that month, Soto died after being "badly racked by fever."[68] Apparently, as the army advanced down the Mississippi River, Soto and others became sick.[69] One chronicler describes the expedition leader's death as an illness that began with "a slight fever" which "was slow on the first day and extremely severe on the third." The fever continued to increase until the seventh day when Soto died.[70] The description, if accurate, may refer to some form of malaria.

Later that year, Spaniards again found themselves suffering from illness. In December as they trampled through swampy areas, many came down with what one chronicler claimed were "severe and dangerous diseases which were akin to lethargy."[71] Almost all of the Spaniards'

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[67]Ibid., 104.

[68]Ibid., 134.

[69]Biedma in DSC, I, 238.

[70]Garcilasco in DSC, II, 446-447.

[71]Elvas in DSC, I, 150.

slaves died. They were certainly the most famished and poorly clothed of the expedition, but Spanish men also suffered greatly from the wet and cold. Claiming that this episode was due to disease of European or African origin is problematic. Famine and exposure could in itself account for the lethargy that afflicted the expedition. In addition, indigenous pathogens including dysentery may have wreaked havoc upon the straggling army. Nevertheless, the afflicted members of the expedition may have been suffering from malarial relapses. Typhoid fever, possibly introduced into the environment by the earlier Pánfilo Narváez expedition, also was a possibility. The illnesses apparently occurred up river from where Cabeza de Vaca and his sick men came ashore on the coast of Texas.

Soto's men may also have infected Indians with venereal diseases. To be sure, Southeastern Indians possessed treponematosis and could have infected the Spaniards, but Soto's men may have been carrying different strains of the disease, perhaps even a lethal form that spread throughout Europe after Columbus's second voyage.[72] The expeditionary force certainly possessed a number of men who had traveled

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[72]One persuasive argument holds that different strains of a Treponema species existed in America and Europe. These two different strains were generally mild but underwent DNA exchange shortly after contact, producing a more lethal variety that spread throughout Europe in the late 1400s. Columbus' soldiers could have been directly responsible for this transformation. Over 1,500 men, many of whom were seasoned soldiers as well as sailors with experience in Asia and Africa, accompanied Columbus on his second voyage. Leaving Spain in 1493, stopping in the Canary Islands, and exploring most of the major Islands of the Caribbean, these men had ample opportunity to pick-up different strains of Treponema. A DNA exchange thus might have taken place in the blood stream of one or more of the soldiers who returned to Spain and enlisted in the army of the Holy Roman Empire. It is equally possible that European explorers and settlers transported the mutant and more lethal strain back to the Americas where it caused another epidemic. See Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, 35.

through different parts of the world, including European ports, the African coast, Caribbean Islands, Mexico, and Peru. Many of these men likely had contracted a form of venereal disease at some point in their lives, and Soto's men frequently raped Southeastern Indian women. In every town they invaded, they demanded women to serve the expedition as slaves and concubines.[73] According to one chronicler, the Spaniards "wanted the women...to make use of them, and for [the Spaniard's] lewdness and lust, and that they baptized them more for their carnal intercourse than to instruct them in the faith."[74] Thus, Soto's men not only psychologically traumatized hundreds of Native American women but also potentially exposed them to new and different strains of treponematosis.[75]

Regardless of whether Soto's expedition introduced or spread novel diseases, the Spanish force inflicted substantial physical harm on Southeastern Indians. Soto planned to advance on his search for wealth by invading Native American towns, stealing their food, and enslaving Indians to serve as burdeners. Soto's men hunted for slave using dogs, an undoubtedly horrifying experience for Native Americans. One chronicler commented that conquistadors such as Soto often set greyhounds upon Indians. "To set the dogs

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[73]Elvas in DSC, I, 89, 93, and 94; Biedma in DSC, I, 238; and Rangel in DSC, I, 285.

[74]Rangel in DSC, I, 289.

[75]Patricia Galloway agrees that Soto's men frequently raped Native American women. See Galloway, Choctaw Genesis, 108.

on [an Indian]," he claimed, "is to make the dogs eat them or kill them, tearing the Indian to pieces."[76]

On September 15, 1539, one of the first large-scale attacks on Indians occurred. The Spaniards took approximately 200 Native Americans captive and put them in chains. Twenty more were sent back to Cuba to be sold into slavery, while several others were given to rival Indian groups who most likely executed them. Of those enslaved to the expedition, most failed to survive the winter.[77] Such atrocities made Indians fearful of the invaders. After traveling over a month in Florida, Soto wrote to his superiors that the "Indians of the coast, because of some fear of us, have abandoned all the country, so that for thirty leagues not a man of them has halted."[78] This allowed the Spaniards to scavenge for food, leading Soto to believe that there would be "fields of maize, beans, and pumpkins with other fruits, and provision in such quantity as would suffice to subsist a very large army without its knowing a want."[79]

The swath of destruction continued as the expedition marched through the interior. From Florida to the Mississippi and beyond, Native Americans saw their leaders

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[76]Rangel in DSC, I, 257.

[77]Elvas in DSC, I, 68-69, 72, and 74.

[78]"Letter of Hernando de Soto at Tampa Bay to the Justice and Board of Magistrates in Santiago de Cuba, July 9, 1539," in DSC, I, 375.

[79]Ibid., 376.

held captive, people enslaved, women raped, crops stolen, and villages burned.[80] In Georgia, the Spaniards filled bags full of maize.[81] At Cofitachequi, the Spaniards, looking for gold, silver, and gems, robbed the graves of the Indians. They did not stay long, however, as there was no food, "except a very limited amount for the Indians to eat, and we [the Spanish], with the horses and the people, used it up very quickly."[82]

The Spaniards especially pillaged Coosa. In the town of Chiaha, Soto put the town leader and fifteen others in chains, demanding a supply a supply of burdeners for ransom.[83] After getting their demand, the Spaniards destroyed Chiaha's entire supply of crops.[84] At the town of Coosa, Soto and his men took the leader hostage, rested twenty-five days, and consumed the surplus of the chiefdom. The invaders also acquired fresh burdeners. They "seized many Indians, men and women who were put in chains." Soto was democratic about his slave taking. Each man of the expedition "took away as slaves those he had in chains,

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[80]The chronicles of the Soto expedition are filled with accounts of Spanish brutality. I will discuss a few examples in the text that follows. For more details, see Rangel in DSC, I, 270, 275-276, 283-285, 292, 296, and 301; Elvas in DSC, I, 65, 70, 72, 74, 93,105-106, 109, 112, 154, and 156; and Biedma in DSC, I, 231.

[81]Elvas in DSC, I, 74.

[82]Biedma in DSC, I, 231.

[83]Rangel in DSC, I, 284.

[84]Elvas in DSC, I, 89.

without allowing them to go to their lands."[85] After he left the main town of Coosa, he found several villages whose people fled the marauding Europeans, leaving their crops in jeopardy.

At Mobile the Indians retaliated, expelling the Spanish from the central town of the chiefdom and killing 18 and wounding 150 of the invaders. Soto's men counter-attacked and burned the palisaded village, claiming to have killed over 2,500 Indians in the process. The numbers were probably inflated, but the damage was severe. Before leaving the chiefdom, Soto's men scavenged food from the Indians' fields and homes to last them until they reached the next village.[86]

Soto's men were no less ruthless as they explored the Mississippi Valley. At Quizquiz they took over 300 women as hostages, returning them in exchange for food.[87] After an unproductive foray into Arkansas, the expedition came back to the Mississippi, seeking sustenance from the more productive agricultural villages along the mighty river. To accomplish their purpose, the Spaniards allied with one native group and attacked the village of Anilco. The Spanish captain commanded that all men should be executed,

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[85]Ibid., 93.

[86]Ibid., 104-105; and Rangel in DSC, I, 294. Rangel places the Indian casualties at 3,000 while listing only 22 fatalities among the Spaniards.

[87]Biedma in DSC, I, 238.

resulting in as many as one hundred deaths. Eighty surviving women and children were enslaved.[88]

The expedition of Hernando de Soto brought catastrophe to Southeastern Indians. Part of this destruction may have been due to disease. The possibility exists that they brought malaria, venereal diseases, and to a lesser extent typhoid fever. These afflictions could destabilize what were already fragile chiefdoms without causing major population loss. Soto's men, however, may have only carried these maladies after contracting them from areas that the previous expeditions of Ayllón and Narváez infected. Whatever the expedition's epidemiological consequences, it seems more certain that the destruction wrought by Soto was due more to enslavement, violence, theft, and crop destruction than to disease. These non-epidemiological stresses could in themselves explain the disintegration of some chiefdoms.

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The potential for the introduction of new diseases into the Southeast continued after Hernando de Soto's failed attempt to find wealth. With a force of 500 men, 1,000 serving people, and 240 horses, Tristán de Luna sailed from San Juan de Ulúa, Mexico to Florida in an attempt to establish a string of missions connecting Pensacola with Coosa and Cofitachequi. The expedition left June 11, 1559 and reached

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[88]Elvas in DSC, I, 135-136.

Mobile Bay on July 17, where the Spanish obtained water as well as wood. The main body of the expedition finally came ashore at Pensacola on August 15. Luna's voyage apparently went well; no deaths or illness among the passengers were reported.[89]

Soon thereafter, the Spaniards good fortune disappeared. On September 19 Luna reported that a "hurricane" destroyed three of his ships which lay anchored off the coast. Most supplies went down with the fleet, and the rains ruined what food the Spaniards had managed to bring ashore.[90] Luna sent a letter for Spanish officials to send more supplies, but only one ship arrived from Cuba.[91]

Desperate, the Spaniards sought food from the Indians. The expedition moved into the interior to an Indian town called Nanipacana, most likely located on the lower Alabama River.[92] Native Americans, enlightened about the nature of Spanish conquest by the previous Soto expedition, refused to aid Luna's party. One survivor reported that the Indians "have gone from their houses, and have cut down and burned and pulled up all the fields, as we who have passed through them have seen."[93] By May 1560, the expedition experienced

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[89]LP, II, 210-211; and Hoffman, A New Andalucia, 157-159.

[90]Tristan de Luna to Philip II, September 24, 1559 in LP, II, 245-248.

[91]Hoffman, A New Andalucia, 159.

[92]Ibid., 169-170.

[93]LP, I, 163.

extreme hunger. The married soldiers who had brought their families along and Mexican Indians pressed into service demanded that Luna allow them to return to Mexico.[94]

Members of the Luna expedition received some supplies from Cuba and Mexico during the summer of 1560.[95] These were not enough; famine reduced Luna's men to eating grass and leather.[96] By spring 1561, the Spanish were ready to abandon attempts to settle the Gulf Coast and instead turned their attention to the Atlantic. Spanish officials relieved Luna of his command and sent Angel de Villafañe to retrieve the survivors of the expedition. In April, Villafañe arrived at Pensacola, where he collected 230 soldiers. The new Spanish commander left 60 to 70 soldiers to garrison a fort; these soldiers disappeared from the records.[97]

Although scholars attribute the suffering that the expedition went through to influenza, the available evidence indicates that Luna's party landed on the Florida mainland without acute infectious diseases. One argument in particular holds that Luna's men inevitably carried the flu bug with them since an epidemic of that disease was occurring in Latin America at the time of their departure.

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[94]Married Soldiers to Don Tristán de Luna, May 11, 1560, in LP, I, 132-135; other letters confirmed famine, see LP, I, 132-197. No specific mention of disease is found. One letter refers to "*la enfermedad*" translated by Priestly as "illness," but from the circumstances, famine was what plagued the expedition. (LP, I, 180-181).

[95]Hoffman, A New Andalucia, 170 and 172.

[96]Ibid., 173.

[97]Ibid., 173-174.

The report of influenza, however, was from Nueva Granada, or present-day Colombia, far distant from where Luna set sail.[98] Even if they had been carrying the disease, sickness would have been apparent during the voyage or shortly after landing at Pensacola. It was nearly ten months after arriving that members of the expedition reported illness, well past the time in which influenza or for that matter any other acute infections such as smallpox, measles, or plague would have run their course. The illness, moreover, was clearly associated with famine and not acute infectious disease.

Of course, the Luna expedition could have brought pathogens other than influenza. Typhoid fever was a possibility, although if present one would expect casualties among the famished and exposed expedition to have been higher. Chronic diseases such as syphilis and tuberculosis could accompany the soldiers, but Indians were already exposed to these. Malaria too was probably part of the southeastern environment by the time Luna arrived. The Spaniards, however, may have transported Plasmodia into Pensacola Bay and into the lower Alabama River for the first time.

The significance of the Luna expedition to the disease history of the Southeast is not so much what they did but what they saw. Lacking support from coastal Indians, Luna

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[98]Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, 18-19.

sent a party of 150 foot soldiers, 50 cavalrymen, and a few missionaries to find Coosa, hoping this rich chiefdom would supply the Spaniards with food. Without Luna, who remained with the main camp at Nanipacana, the expeditionary force departed in April 1560, traveled northeast, crossed central Alabama, and entered the region of the Coosa Chiefdom by the end of July. Along their way, the Spaniards discovered a land whose inhabitants had learned to fear the Spanish; the Indians abandoned their homes and hid their food.[99]

Upon reaching "Ocachiqui," a town belonging to Coosa, the party finally met Indians who did not flee their approach.[100] Luna's men carefully avoided alienating the Indians; they camped at a distance from native villages so that their horses did not destroy crops; they did not ask for slaves; and they did not steal food, despite being quite hungry. The people of Coosa allowed the Spaniards to stay near them, although as one friar reported they were "not so confident as to neglect to put their property and women in safety."[101] The Spanish and the people of Coosa thus coexisted in a peaceful, yet tense, manner. The expeditionary party remained with the Indians for an unknown amount of time before they returned to the main body of Luna's forces.[102]

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[99]Fray Domingo de la Anunciación and others to Tristán de Luna, August 1, 1560, in LP, I, 235.

[100]Ibid.

[101]Ibid., 237.

[102]Sources do not indicate when the expeditionary party rejoined Luna's group.

A few Spaniards wrote back to Luna describing the conditions they encountered, and it is from these accounts that scholars can garner clues to the epidemiological impact of the previous Soto expedition. The evidence is mixed but indicates some population disruption. Some Spaniards claimed the Coosa region remained well peopled, being much more densely populated than the coast. The military leader Mateo del Sauz, for example, reported that they had traveled through "a thickly populated country."[103] A missionary priest, Fray Domingo de la Anunciación, wrote back to Luna that the "people of this land are more numerous than in [the Gulf Coast], for the towns from fifteen or sixteen leagues back of where we now are and from here to Coosa are, according to what the Indians say, near to each other." The priest went on to claim that the towns lacked the population of Nanipacana but judging from the fields and roads that he saw the land was well populated.[104]

Fray Augustín Davíla Padilla, however, wrote an account that portrayed Coosa as poorer and less populated than it was when Soto visited it. Padilla received his information from Anunciación thirty years after Luna had ventured into the Southeast, but gives the most detailed telling of the visit to Coosa. He described the chiefdom as being "poor

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[103]Mateo del Sauz to Tristán de Luna, July 6, 1560, in LP, I, 219.

[104]Fray Domingo de la Anunciación et al to Tristán de Luna, August 1, 1560, in LP, I, 223 and 225.

and the villages few and small."[105] The Friar furthermore cited some men who accompanied both Soto and Luna as authorities. These men, according to Padilla, "declared that they must have been bewitched when this country seemed to them so rich and populated [in 1540]...."[106] The Soto expedition it seemed had drastically changed Coosa.

One episode in Padilla's account particularly stands out as evidence of the disruption that Soto caused. Coosa was involved in violent conflict with the Napochies, a former tributary group that rebuked their subjugation. "In ancient times the Napochies were tributaries of the [Coosa]," Padilla wrote, "because [Coosa] was always recognized as head of the kingdom and its lord was considered to stand above the one of the Napochies." The Spanish Friar claimed that "a few years back" Coosa lost control because of population loss. Padilla reported that "the people of [Coosa] began to decrease while the Napochies were increasing until they refused to be their vassals."[107]

The presence of Soto's army of strange white men, wearing armor and riding beasts that Indians had never seen before, could by itself account for collapse of the Coosa Chiefdom. After all, how could priestly chieftains, claiming descent from the Sun, protect their legitimacy

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[105]Fran Augustín Davíla Padilla, *Historia de la fundación y discurso de la provincia de Santiago de Mexico de la Orden de Predicadores* in NAW, II, 241.

[106]Ibid., 240.

[107]Ibid., 241.

during Spanish invasion? Nevertheless, Padilla's account gives good reason to believe that novel diseases, as many historians claim, also weakened the Coosa Chiefdom.[108]

Several pieces of evidence indicate that the pathogen most likely afflicting Coosa was malaria. First, as argued above, Plasmodia seemed the most likely parasite that Soto's men carried. It would have been medically impossible for common acute infectious diseases to accompany Soto. Second, Luna's men did not indicate massive population loss. The land they saw seemed well peopled, suggesting that a debilitating disease such as malaria was at work. Third, population loss occurred gradually. Rather than immediately after Soto departed, the Napochies broke away from Coosa "a few years" before Luna's men arrived. Over time, malaria would cause population loss, weakening the body's resistance to other diseases, increasing infant mortality rates, and lowering fertility of women of reproductive age. Fourth, the disease had an uneven spread. The Napochies did not decrease as did Coosa; according to Padilla they increased, indicating a territorially limited illness. If for example Soto brought some acute infectious disease, one would expect it to have spread through the Napochies who at the time were a tributary group in close communication with Coosa. Malaria on the other hand becomes prevalent only where Anopheles existed. The people of Coosa likely inhabited an

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[108]Charles Hudson, "A Spanish-Coosa alliance," Georgia Historical Quarterly 72 (1988): 623.

environment where these insects flourished while the people of Napochie did not.

The Napochie's rebellion should not be used to inflate the epidemiological impact of early European exploration of the Southeast. While malaria could have significantly affected sixteenth-century Southeastern Indian societies, by itself it would not result in massive population loss. Moreover, chiefdom political and social organization could possibly survive the new disease.

With Coosa, one can see the continuation of chiefdom characteristics. A chieftain still resided at Coosa who mobilized 300 warriors to join the Spaniards against the Napochies. Hierarchy characterized this army. Before attacking their rivals, Coosan warriors conducted ceremonies typical of chiefdoms. According to Padilla,

> One day,...eight Indians, who appeared to be chiefs,...passed the Indian camp and arriving at the rear guard where their cacique was, took him down from his horse, and the one who seemed to be the highest in rank among the eight, put him on his shoulders, and the others caught him, both by his feet and arms, and they ran with great impetuosity back the same way they had come.

The chieftain's subordinates carried him to a platform constructed of wood. He climbed the steps, mounted the stage, and performed his sacred duties of seeking divine favor in the upcoming battle. He possessed what Padilla called "a most beautiful fly flap...made of showy birds' plumes of great value." The chieftain pointed the sacred object towards the Napochies and ground up four seeds in his

mouth. Padilla claimed the leader to have stated, "our enemies will be conquered and their strength broken, like those seeds which I ground between my teeth."[109] The Spaniards laughed at what they thought was a "grotesque" pagan ceremony, but what they had witnessed was an event demonstrating the continuation of a religious world view and military organization associated with a hierarchically-arranged chiefdom society. With the aid of Luna's soldiers, warriors of Coosa attacked the Napochies and forced them back into tributary status. The Coosa Chiefdom, it seemed, was on its way to recovering from the damage of the Soto expedition.

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After the disintegration of the Luna expedition, the focus of European contact with the Southeast and its native peoples switched to the Atlantic Coast. The frequency of European contact with the region increased in the 1560s as France and England began to challenge Spanish domination. The possibilities of new diseases coming into the Southeast rose precipitously.

The French made a small yet significant attempt to establish a colony on the Atlantic coast in the sixteenth century. Lead by Jean Ribault, two ships of 150 men set sail from France on February 18, 1562 and arrived over two months later in Florida. Immediately after departure, a

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[109]Padilla, *Historia de la fundación*, in NAW, II, 243.

sickness erupted among the crew, but the French expelled their ill passengers in Britain before continuing their journey. Taking a northern course, they made no stops in the Caribbean and sailed directly to Port Royal Sound, in present-day South Carolina. There, twenty-six men disembarked and built a colony they called Charlesfort. Apparently, whatever sickness that earlier plagued the expedition had ceased to exist before arriving. Ribault reported that none of his men were ill and that the land was healthy.[110]

The French failed to remain at Charlesfort. In 1564, the Spanish sent a ship to locate the French whom they thought were still at Port Royal. They only found one man, living among the Indians. Nearly starving, the garrison of men decided to build boats and leave Port Royal. Apparently, they perished somewhere at sea. The abandoned Frenchman gave no indication that either his party or the Indians suffered from any sickness. In addition, the Spanish themselves did not find any evidence of epidemics. The Frenchman did tell them that Europeans had killed the Indians of "Suye," 30 leagues north of Port Royal, about two and one-half years ago.[111]

The French again returned to the Southeast in 1564, but this time they may have brought disease with them. Unlike

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[110]Jean Ribault, "The true discoveries of Terra Florida," in NAW, II, 291-292.

[111]René de Laudonnière, *L'histoire notable de la Floride*, in NAW, II, 311-312 and 315.

the first venture, the French took a more southerly route to the Americas. On April 22, 1564, three ships left France, sailed to the Canaries, and fifteen days later arrived in Dominica. On June 22 the two hundred Frenchmen arrived in Florida near the mouth of the St. John's River.[112] By late August, nearly all the French were ill. According to one French account, a fire and a drought left many fish dead, causing a "putrefaction in the air" and widespread sickness among the expedition.[113]

Rather than "putrefaction in the air," a more realistic diagnosis indicates malaria. This disease may have become endemic along the Atlantic coast by the time the French arrived, or they may have carried the pathogen to the area themselves. The French stopped in the Caribbean where the disease was endemic, and some of the members could have contracted a Plasmodia parasite, carried it to Florida, and transmitted it to local mosquitoes. After a period in which Plasmodia underwent part of its reproductive cycle, other members of the expedition became vulnerable to infection. This could have easily occurred within the two-month period between when the French first arrived and when widespread illness occurred. Everyone recovered from the disease, further indicating a debilitating but not fatal disease such as the vivax form of malaria. The following summer malaria

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[112]Ibid., 320-321.

[113]Ibid., 332.

again seemed to afflict the colony. In August 1565, one man reported that he "fell into a great continual fever which held me eight or nine days."[114] Malaria in all likelihood had become endemic in Florida by the 1560s.

In 1565, the Spaniards expelled the French from Florida and in the process established St. Augustine. The infant colony immediately sought to expand its influence up the Atlantic Coast and west to Mexico. In December 1566, the Spaniards sent an expedition through the piedmont and Appalachian Mountains, seeking an overland route to Zacetecas in central Mexico. Juan Pardo led the Spanish return to the interior. With little more than 100 hundred men, he headed from the coast of Carolina to the foothills of the Blue Ridge, where he left a small detachment before returning back to the coast by March 7, 1567. On September 1, 1567, Pardo set out again along the same course, reaching the soldiers who had earlier remained and continuing over the Appalachians. The Spaniards marched along the western slope of the mountains, arriving at Indian towns along the Little Tennessee River. Some ventured southwest, reaching Coosa and then returning. Coosa was as far as any of his men went; Pardo's forces returned to the coast of Carolina by March 2, 1568.[115]

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[114]Ibid., 356.

[115]All of the known records of both of Pardo's expeditions have been translated and are found in Charles Hudson, ed., The Juan Pardo Expeditions (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990). [Cited as JPE.] Hudson himself gives an insightful written account and provides a detailed analysis that reflects his expertise and years of work in recreating the sixteenth century Southeast.

As with the Luna expedition, Pardo's men apparently remained healthy throughout the trip. The expedition was quite small, when compared to preceding ones, thus having even less of a probability of bringing contagion. Also the expedition sailed directly from Spain to St. Augustine, a voyage that took nearly three months, too long a period for any acute infectious diseases to have survived the journey.[116] Because they did not stop in the Caribbean, Pardo's forces probably did not carry malarial parasites with them either. By the 1560s, however, this may have been irrelevant as pockets of the disease undoubtedly existed in the Southeast. In any event, the records of the Pardo expedition listed only one Spanish death, and that was due to an Indian attack.[117]

Pardo encountered many of the same Indian societies that Soto saw over twenty-years earlier and recorded some evidence of chiefdom collapse. The Spaniards visited the central town of the Cofitachequi Chiefdom, and instead of a powerful chieftain such as the female ruler who met Soto, Pardo found several leaders of what seemed to be independent villages.[118] Accounts of the Pardo expedition described only one polity east of the Appalachian Mountains that resembled a chiefdom. At the town of Guatari, the Spaniards

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[116]Juan Pardo, "Relation of Pardo" in JPE, 310.

[117]Juan de la Bandera, "Long Bandera relation" in JPE, 294.

[118]Bandera, "Short...relation," in JPE, 301; and Pardo, "Relation," in JPE, 311.

discovered "two chieftanesses who are the lords and not unimportant in comparison to the other chiefs because in their going about they are served by pages and ladies."[119]

The absence of powerful chieftains does not prove the occurrence of massive population loss due to disease. Members of the Pardo expedition advanced from village to village without encountering deserted areas, indicating evidence of a densely-populated land. They found neither abandoned villages, such as those that Soto had, nor any that were suffering from pestilence. If malaria had visited the Carolina coast and piedmont, the Indians had recovered from the disease and probably learned to move away from areas that harbored the pathogen. Pardo described Cofitachequi as having "a great number of caciques and Indians...."[120] Another member claimed that the area of Guatari was "a rich land" that retained the features of diverse social landscape that one could see before contact. "Good houses and humble, round huts, as well as very large and very good [huts] are [to be found] in all the settlements," he reported.[121]

Some of the Indians that Pardo described as having "great numbers" included ancestors to tribal groups that would dominate the historical record of the eighteenth

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[119]Bandera, "Short...relation," in JPE, 302.

[120]Pardo, "Relation" in JPE, 311.

[121]Bandera, "Short...relation," in JPE, 302.

century. He met Siouan speakers whom he called "Cataba," "Ysaa," and "Uchiri."[122] These undoubtedly were the peoples that settled on the headwaters of the Catawba River, coalescing to form the nation of that name. Pardo visited the town of "TocaE," most likely related to the eighteenth century Cherokee village of Toqua. There, he greeted several leaders from other familiar Cherokee villages, including "Neguase," "Estate," "Tacoru," "Utaca," and "Quetua."[123] These correspond with the eighteenth-century Middle and Lower Cherokee villages of Nequasse, Estatoe, Tugaloo, Watauga, and Kituwa.

The most populous region that Pardo visited was eastern Tennessee, the home of many of the towns of the Coosa Chiefdom. The first Spaniards to arrive in the area belonged to a party that Pardo had left at the town of Joara during his first expedition. They visited Chiaha and described it in much the same way as Soto's chroniclers did. It was a fortified town with 3,000 warriors within its palisades. Women and children, most likely hiding from the Spaniards whom the Indians learned to distrust, were absent.[124] The following year when Pardo returned to the area he himself led the expedition into eastern Tennessee. One member of the party similarly cited Chiaha as a well-

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[122]Bandera, "Long...relation" in JPE, 264.

[123]Bandera, "Long...relation" in 267; and Pardo, "Relation" in JPE, 314.

[124]Francisco Martinez, "Martinez relation" in JPE, 320.

populated town, led by a chief with a Muskogean title "Ola Mico." Pardo visited other towns in the area, including "Chalahume" and "Satapo," which he claimed had "many Indians." One of Pardo's soldiers visited "Cosaque," probably the town of Coste, which Soto visited. There, he learned from Indians about Coosa, which he described to another member as "a large town, the largest there is" with "150 householders."[125] The Spaniards referred to the Chieftain of Coosa as "the grand cacique" of the region.

Coosa may have declined somewhat since Soto's visit, but some evidence of its expansive powers still existed at the time Pardo visited eastern Tennessee. Perhaps remembering their brutal treatment at the hands of Soto's men, Indians of this region united to oppose the Spaniards. Coosan towns refused to greet Pardo and rebuked his demands for food.[126] At Satapo, the Spanish leader learned that Indians from the towns of Chiaha to Coosa conspired to ambush the expedition.[127] If in fact the conspiracy was real, a degree of political centralization still united the towns of Coosa even after Soto had pillaged his way through the area.

Still, Coosa bore the marks of some disintegration that possibly can be traced to the Soto expedition. Accounts of

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[125]Bandera, "Short...relation" in JPE, 303.

[126]Pardo, "Relation" in JPE, 314; and Bandera, "Long...relation" in JPE, 271.

[127]Bandera, "Long...relation" in JPE , 270-271; and Pardo, "Relation" in JPE, 315.

the Pardo expedition described the region between Satapo and Coosa, an area that the chronicles of the Soto expedition characterized as well populated, as "lightly inhabited." In addition, "Olitifar" one of the Coosan towns had at one point become abandoned.[128] The possible eruption of malaria that Soto's men conceivably brought into eastern Tennessee and northwestern Georgia could account for this depopulation. The continual occupation of the Tennessee and Coosa river systems indicates the occurrence of diseases with relatively low mortality rates; and the survival of some highly-populated towns while others were abandoned leads one to suspect that if any disease struck the region it was malaria.

Nevertheless, the apparent decline of Coosa cannot be attributed to virgin soil epidemics alone. Internal and external violence also created havoc for Coosa. The chiefdom had been faced with a violent rebellion from one of its tributary groups shortly before Luna arrived, and confronted many rivals in the Appalachian summit. The Pisgah and other mountain peoples most likely kept Coosan towns on their guard. Pardo in fact discovered a violent rivalry between Indians who lived on opposite sides of the Appalachians.[129] Both built palisaded villages and

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[128]Bandera, "Short...relation" in JPE, 303.

[129]Bandera, "Long...relation" in JPE, 267; and Martinez, "Relation" in JPE, 320.

undoubtedly warred with each other over possession of fertile river valleys and hunting grounds.

Fearing an attack by Indians on his greatly outnumbered forces, Pardo decided to cease his planned march to Zacatecas and to head back to the Carolina coast. He thought he might return to the area later and left five garrisons manned with Spaniards along his return path, but Indians quickly destroyed these outposts, probably because they grew tired of Spanish demands for food.[130]

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Pardo's departure marked the end of major European exploration of the Southeast. Southeastern Indians would not see white men in such large numbers until after 1670, when English traders out of South Carolina invaded the region seeking deerskins and slaves. European influence remained in the region before then. The Spaniards kept St. Augustine permanently inhabited, and they built a string of missions in northern Florida and coastal Georgia. They also sent a few small parties into Georgia during the seventeenth century. The English landed at Roanoke on the coast of North Carolina three times in the 1580s. After failing to establish a colony there, they achieved success in 1607 by building Jamestown. By the 1650s, Virginian traders had ventured into the Carolina Piedmont. Possibilities thus existed of diseases spreading through Southeastern Indian

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[130]This is the judgment of the editor, Charles Hudson, JPE, 176.

populations prior to documented episodes beginning in the 1690s.

Apparently, several instances of virgin soil epidemics occurred among coastal Indians who directly encountered Europeans. In 1585, Thomas Harriot, one of the members of Roanoke colonizing party, for example, toured several Indian villages along the coast of Carolina and observed some unknown disease. He wrote:

> within a few days after our departure from every Towne, the people began to die very fast, and many in short space, in some Townes about twentie, in some fortie, and in one sixe score, which in trueth was very many in respect of their numbers. This happened in no place that we could learne, but where we had bin....The disease also was so strange that they neither knewe what it was nor how to cure it, the like by report of the oldest men in the Countrey never happened before, time out of minde.

None of the Englishmen died from the affliction nor were any "specially sicke."[131]

With few details of symptoms, one cannot make a certain diagnosis of the disease. The fact that only Indians became sick narrows the possibilities, but the particular disease cannot be determined. It was not measles, influenza, and plague, because only people with active infections can transmit these diseases. A remote possibility exists that smallpox viruses clung to the clothing of the Englishmen, but the hot and humid environment of the Southeast would have decreased the chances that the parasites could have

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[131]Thomas Harriot, "A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia," (1588) in NAW, III, 152.

survived outside human hosts. Typhus remains a possibility, if one of the English happened to be a permanent carrier and the rest of the party had developed immunity to the disease. Typhoid fever is indicated by the way in which the illness spreads. The English could have defecated near local drinking water and left before Indians had a chance to display symptoms. Malaria is also a possibility. Many of the English were experienced seamen who had the disease within one to two years prior to coming to Roanoke. Before arriving on the coast of Carolina, the party also spent a month in the West Indies, where they suffered from mosquito bites.[132] Ralph Lane commented that some members of the Roanoke colony were sick when they landed, but that they recovered within a couple of months.[133]

Another unknown disease visited the Atlantic Coast in 1585. While raiding Spanish ships in the Caribbean, members of Sir Francis Drake's fleet contracted a sickness in Santo Domingo. Over 400 Englishmen succumbed to the illness, and one man who had a particularly severe fever died.[134] After the epidemic subsided, Drake's fleet arrived at St. Augustine where they raided the Spanish outpost. There, they passed the disease to local natives. The journal of

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[132]NAW, III, 284-285.

[133]Ralph Lane to Sir Francis Walsingham, August 12, 1585, in NAW, III, 290.

[134]"A report on Drake's voyage and of the return of the Roanoke colonists," in NAW, III, 308.

one of Drake's ships recorded that "the wilde people at first comminge of our men died verie fast, and [the Indians] saide amongest themselves, It was the Inglishe God that made them die so faste...."[135] After sacking St. Augustine, Drake ventured up the coast and picked-up the Roanoke colonists. No record of the disease spreading to Carolina exists, however.

Some scholars suggest that the disease that Drake brought was the first epidemic of yellow fever to hit the Southeast.[136] Like malaria, yellow fever depends on an insect vector for transmission, but the two diseases have different natures and patterns of spread. The mosquito, Aedes aegypti, transmits the virus that causes yellow fever. Once infected, a human will show symptoms four to five days later and then can communicate the disease for only three days. The illness is more severe than malaria; it involves jaundice, high temperature, vomiting blood, bloody urine, and damage to the liver and kidneys. Mortality rates vary considerably in modern cases depending on the health of the victim. Chances of death can exceed 80%. Immunity is life-long.

Yellow fever has a much more limited geographical distribution than malaria. The virus incubates in a human

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[135]"The Primrose journal of Drake's voyage to Florida and Virginia," in NAW, III, 306.

[136]Duffy, Epidemics in Colonial America, 139.

host three to six days and then becomes infective for three to five days. This short incubation and infective period hinders the spread of the disease, but most importantly, the restricted habitat of Aedes aegypti curtails the disease from spreading beyond waterfront areas. This particular mosquito only lives year-around in areas where the temperature does not fall below 71 degrees Fahrenheit. It is also a domestic animal, living only in close association with humans.[137]

Despite its restrictions, yellow fever was a possible traveler aboard Drake's fleet. Aedes aegypti can carry the yellow fever causing parasite for up to sixty days. The mosquitoes also frequently lived aboard ocean going vessels, which often transported the insects to seaports of colonial America where they multiplied during the warm season. This process resulted in several epidemics that afflicted Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Charles Town during the eighteenth century.[138] Thus, if Drake's men suffered from yellow fever and his ships brought the particular mosquito, an epidemic with massive casualties could have resulted among Spanish and Indian settlements along the coast.

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[137]On the nature of yellow fever, see American Public Health Association, Control of Communicable Diseases, 486-487; and Ackerknecht, History and Geography of the Most Important Diseases, 51-55.

[138]Ackerknecht, History and Geography of the Most Important Diseases, 52.

Nevertheless, yellow fever would not have spread beyond the coast and would have disappeared when the warm season ended.

Other scholars suggest that Drake's men suffered from typhus and transported that disease not only to Indians near St. Augustine but also to those along the coast of Carolina where the English ships stopped to pick-up the Roanoke passengers.[139] Nothing in the available information contradicts this conclusion, but nothing confirms it either. In addition, there is no reason to rule out the possibility that Drake's raiding activities introduced typhoid fever, falciparum malaria, or a combination of diseases.

Potentially more deadly pathogens made their first recorded appearances in the Southeast at St. Augustine. The Timicua and Apalachee Indians of northern Florida and the Guale of the coast of Georgia were particularly susceptible to a variety of infections that the Spanish brought to their colony. By 1657, the first recorded outbreak of smallpox erupted. One Spanish official reported that "there are very few Indians in [Guale and Timicua] because they have been wiped out with the sickness of the plague ["*peste*"] and smallpox which have overtaken them in the past years, and in [Apalachee], which similarly has declined."[140] In 1659, an

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[139]Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, 21.

[140]John H. Hann, ed. and trans., "Translation of Governor Rebolledo's 1657 visitation of three Florida provinces and related documents," Florida Archaeology 2 (1986): 111.

epidemic identified as measles afflicted the Timicua and likely spread to the Apalachee.[141]

The same diseases similarly made appearances in Virginia. Three epidemics of unknown illness erupted during the winters of 1623, 1635, and 1688.[142] It was not until sixty-years after Jamestown's founding, however, that smallpox made its first documented arrival. A lack of children in the colony before the 1660s probably accounts for the absence of the disease, but in 1667 the sickness erupted with a localized fury.[143] In that year, a smallpox-stricken sailor was expelled from a passing ship on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake peninsula. He wandered among some of the local Indians, igniting an epidemic that destroyed several tribes of the area.[144] Fortunately, the disease did not spread across the bay; no record of smallpox in Jamestown exists until 1696.[145]

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While it seems certain that the 1667 smallpox epidemic did not spread far beyond the Chesapeake, it is not clear whether other diseases remained confined to Virginia,

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[141]Hann, Apalachee, 177.

[142]Wyndham B. Blanton, Medicine in Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (Richmond: The William Byrd Press, 1930), 55-56.

[143]Ibid., 60-61.

[144]Thomas B. Robertson, "An Indian king's will," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 36 (1928): 193.

[145]Blanton, Medicine in Virginia, 60-61.

Florida, or coastal areas that sick Europeans may have visited. Because there were no European observers present in the southeastern interior to provide written documentation, scholars cannot make firm conclusions about the disease history of the region. Buffer zones most likely curtailed the spread of diseases into the interior, but such obstacles do not negate the possibility of region-wide epidemics. Archaeological records and documents dated to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, however, do suggest that no pandemics occurred and that Indians of the interior suffered no major population upheaval prior to the founding of South Carolina.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, several major river valleys remained permanently inhabited by a stable population. Excavations and surveys of the Black Warrior Valley, for example, reveal that Indians continually resided in the area until enemy tribes forced them to evacuate in the 1690s. The inhabitants of the valley had been associated with Moundville and showed little evidence of rebuilding a powerful chiefdom after the sixteenth century, but their population remained stable and perhaps even grew to such an extent that they surpassed the carrying capacity of the land.[146] Apica, a town on the Coosa River that Luna visited, as well as two towns that Soto visited, Talisa on the Tallapoosa River and Mauvilla on the

[146]Peebles, "Paradise lost, strayed, and stolen," 32-34.

Alabama, also remained permanently inhabited, displaying no signs of population loss.[147] Similarly, archaeologists have observed no differences between a pre-Columbian site in Georgia with a post-Columbian site that suggest the occurrence of virgin soil epidemics. These sites, Etowah and King, lay near the center of the Coosa Chiefdom [148] Farther down the Coosa Valley and along the lower Tallapoosa in eastern Alabama, several towns displayed no population loss through the seventeenth century.[149] Most likely, the Indians that inhabited these archaeological sites were the enemies of coastal Indians and Indians who resided at Spanish missions. Buffer zones probably protected these people from exposure to diseases that had visited the inhabitants of Florida.

Thus what appears to have happened among many southeastern chiefdoms during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was collapse of their political and social structures without major population loss. This was most evident in the case of the Ocute chiefdom located on the Oconee River in eastern Georgia. Soto traveled through this polity on his way to Cofitachequi, and after he left, chiefdom political and social organization faded, mound construction ceased, and settlement patterns became more

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[147]Little and Curren, "Conquest archaeology," 174 and 177.

[148]Blakely and Blakely, "The impact of European diseases in the sixteenth century Southeast: a case study," Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology 14 (1989): 62-89.

[149]Vernon Knight, "The Formation of the Creeks," in Forgotten Centuries, 384.

dispersed. It appears that Indians quit their allegiance to their god-like chieftains after the Spaniards had undermined their power. The chieftain of Ocute, after all, did not stop Soto and his men from robbing, raping, and pillaging their war through the region. People of the Oconee were vulnerable to some diseases disseminating from Spanish missions along the coast of Georgia; population began to decline in 1630s. Abandonment of the valley, however, did not occur until after 1670, when Indians allied with Carolinian traders raided the area for slaves.[150]

Native societies in the lower Mississippi Valley also probably experienced some disruption due to Europeans before the 1670s but no major depopulation. Archaeologists know that the region experienced population loss prior to the eighteenth century, but none have successfully demonstrated that such loss predates the 1690s.[151] The observations of Marquette and Joliet in 1673 support the idea that the Mississippi had been depopulated at an early date. The French explorers traveled as far south as the mouth of the Arkansas and found the valley largely uninhabited. The area had been home to heavily populated chiefdoms in the 1540s,

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[150]Mark Williams, "Growth and decline of the Oconee Province," in Forgotten Centuries, 191-193; Mark Williams, "Indians along the Oconee: the beginning of the end," Early Georgia, 10 (1982): 33-36. Some scholars believe that chiefdom collapse was a direct result of demographic collapse. See Smith, Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change, esp. 89.

[151]Two scholars who address this issue are Ian W. Brown, "An archaeological study of culture contact and change in the Natchez Bluffs Region," in LaSalle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1982), 176-193; and Jeffrey P. Brain, "Late prehistoric settlement patterning in the Yazoo Basin and Natchez Bluffs Regions," 331-368.

but apparently they had disintegrated sometime after Soto's departure. There are reasons to believe, however, that the apparent abandonment of the valley did not result from virgin soil epidemics of acute infectious diseases and consequent massive depopulation. Chiefdoms could have disintegrated due to indigenous causes, or they could have collapsed due to the introduction of malaria. Malaria could have weakened Indians who lived near the river, decreasing labor available to cultivate corn and thereby undermining the economy of particular chiefdoms. The affliction also could have forced Indians to retreat from the river's banks into the healthier environment of the interior.

If Marquette and Joliet had advanced to the Yazoo Basin, they would have found societies that had not disintegrated. Some scholars believe that this area experienced massive depopulation in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but such assumptions do not correspond with observations that LaSalle and other Frenchmen made while traveling down the Mississippi in the 1680s.[152] LaSalle and his followers noted that a number of densely populated societies in fact inhabited the Yazoo Basin. One of La Salle's compatriots, Henri de Tonti, for example, identified four groups living on the Yazoo,

[152]This is the argument of Brown and Brain. See Ibid.

including "the Ionica, Yazou, Coroa, and Chongue."[153] At the junction of the Yazoo with the Mississippi, another companion to LaSalle remarked that "as this river and land is very fertile in these places, it is densely populated with many different nations."[154]

The survival of the Natchez provides the last bit of evidence that Indians of the Southeast did not experience a major population collapse prior to the 1690s. If the Southeast had been faced with repeated epidemics of smallpox, plague, measles, and other lethal disease, would a group like the Natchez have survived to greet the French? Most likely, the answer is no. If aboriginal trade networks facilitated the spread of disease, Indians along the largest river system in North America, the Mississippi, would have been most vulnerable to disease. But as it was, the Natchez functioned as a large and powerful chiefdom into the late seventeenth century. Indians in the early eighteenth century could remember the power that the chiefdom possessed. Native informants told Antoine Le Page Du Pratz that the Natchez were "the most powerful nation of all North America, and were looked upon by the other nations as their superiors...."[155] The Natchez possessed villages all along the Mississippi and even into the lower Ohio. It was

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[153]Henri de Tonti, "Tonty's account of the route from the Illinois, by the river Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico," in HCL, I, 82.

[154]Minet, "Voyage Made from Canada" in LaSalle, the Mississippi and the Gulf, 49.

[155]Du Pratz, History of Louisiana, 299.

sometime after the French came, however, that such power broke down. The Natchez and other Indian groups could remember that before the French came they maintained elaborate practices, typical of chiefdom social and political organization. According to Du Pratz, "when the French first arrived in the colony, several nations kept up the eternal fire, and observed other religious ceremonies."[156] Years later, such practices would be lost.

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The period between the first colonization attempt by the Spanish in 1526 and the 1690s was indeed a false dawn to epidemiological disaster. Certainly, European intruders introduced some diseases to the region. Typhoid, typhus, and malaria were the most likely companions of the major Spanish expeditions. The latter illness probably became widespread and created new hardships for Indian peoples. Population collapse, however, would not have followed the introduction of any of these diseases. The most lethal parasites such as smallpox, measles, plague, influenza, and yellow fever, although devastating native populations in Virginia, Florida, and some coastal areas, most likely did not enter the interior until after the founding of South Carolina.

The archaeological and documentary evidence furthermore indicates no major population collapse before the 1690s.

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[156]Ibid., 333.

Several river valleys and Indian towns showed neither signs of abandonment nor a decline in number of inhabitants. Moreover, some chiefdoms did not immediately disintegrate as a result of European intrusion. The Natchez, for example, displayed characteristics of chiefdom political and social organization and persisted into the 1690s. Some chiefdoms collapsed, but these societies could have dissolved for a number of reasons other than virgin soil epidemics of acute infectious diseases. First, they may have succumbed to indigenous stresses that had historically plagued Southeastern Indians. Second, the introduction of malaria could have undermined a chiefdom without creating major casualties. And, finally, the psychological shock and physical destruction of European invasion, particularly associated with Soto's expedition, could have undermined a chieftain's legitimacy and caused his subject villages to break away. For over one hundred years following Soto's journey, then, socio-political change rather than epidemiological holocaust characterized the southeastern social landscape.

In the years after the English established the colony of South Carolina, the false dawn came to a close and the reality of a new disease environment descended on Southeastern Indians. The Carolinians transported to the Southeast the most prevalent disease carriers—children, particularly young African slaves. The Englishmen, eager to bring Indians into an expanding trading network, extended

their influence all the way to the Mississippi River by the 1690s. Shortly thereafter, the French explored the Mississippi and colonized the Gulf Coast, bringing the mighty river into constant communication with the Caribbean and Canada. It was in the decade of the 1690s, as we will see in the next chapter, that the seeds for the most severe epidemical disaster that the Southeast ever experienced were sown.

Chapter Three:

The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, 1696-1700

Producing a horrific illness and immense suffering, smallpox terrified people for much of human history. Today, the universal availability of an effective vaccine allows us to live without fear of what was once a frightening illness, but for people before the nineteenth century, little could be done to combat this deadly disease. After inhaling the virus, victims did not experience symptoms until 12 to 14 days later, but the day after this period of incubation they suffered from the rapid onset of headaches, back pains, chills, fevers, and malaise. On the second day of illness, victims remained incapacitated with temperatures as high as 104°F; delirium and coma probably accompanied the fever. If they survived the second day, the symptoms abated during the third and fourth day with a slight rash appearing. The illness flared-up again after the fourth day with high fever returning while the characteristic pox sores formed. These

began at the mouth and throat and were quite painful; they spread to the face, forearms, upper arms, trunk, and then to the back. The body, especially the face, became a swollen mass of bloody and pus-filled lesions. The eyes were particularly vulnerable; if the virus attacked them, blindness resulted. The closer together the pox marks formed the more deadly the consequences, and mortality was almost certain for those whose sores bled under the skin or from the nose and mouth. Within two weeks of the eruption of fever, the virus ran its course and was no longer communicable through exhalation. Those fortunate enough to survive generally achieved immunity from later exposures to the disease.[1]

In the late 1690s ghastly scenes of smallpox infection occurred throughout the Southeast. In 1696, the English colony at Jamestown lay prostrate as its inhabitants came down with the dreaded infection. Within a year, many English settlers and their African slaves in South Carolina contracted the virus. It did not take long before Native Americans living in the piedmont succumbed to the fatal malady. Indians who lived hundreds of miles beyond Charles Town suffered. By the fall of 1698, the virus reached the Mississippi valley, where it devastated aboriginal societies into 1700. Sweeping its way from the Atlantic Coast to the Mississippi and leaving few non-immune people untouched, the

[1]Joel N. Shurkin, The Invisible Fire: the Story of Mankind's Victory over the Ancient Scourge of Smallpox (New York: Putnam, 1979), 26-27.

outbreak was indeed a widespread disaster that merits an appellation as the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic.

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Much of the blame for the furious spread of smallpox in the 1690s can be placed on the pernicious trade in American Indian slaves. This trade established an extensive communication network that crossed tribal boundaries, involved hundreds of people moving from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, and created conditions ripe for the rapid spread of smallpox throughout the Southeast. Before examining this epidemic, the extent and impact of the slave trade must be surveyed.

Although the Southeast served as a source of slaves from the early sixteenth century, slaving remained limited until the late seventeenth century. In the sixteenth century, explorers, pirates, and others cruised the coasts and lured Indians aboard ships bound for Caribbean slave markets. The same Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón who led an attempt to colonize the Southeast in 1526, for example, developed an interest in the region after capturing approximately 60 Indians off the coast of Carolina five years earlier.[2] Spaniards indeed desired Indians to work their mines and plantations on their island estates, where disease, starvation, and death "systematically depopulated"

[2]"Gomera on the first voyage sponsored by Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón (1521)" in NAW, I, 257-258.

the Caribbean Islands of their native inhabitants.[3] Slaving forays to the southeastern coasts increased in the mid-to-late seventeenth century as Dutch, French, and English colonists and pirates joined the Spanish in the Caribbean.[4]

The extent of sea-born slave ventures is difficult to assess. Such activity was usually unofficial, often resulting in little or no documentation. Europeans found it difficult to obtain slaves from both the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, however. Without an intimate knowledge of the land, sailors discovered that it was troublesome to approach the region, and once there, they found scattered tribes that either fled or attacked the intruders. In 1684, for example, French pirates told La Salle of the hardships they faced in attempts to reach the Gulf Coast. They warned the explorer, who was then trying to locate the mouth of the Mississippi by ship, that from October to January northern winds made it hard to approach the coasts, while in the summer, winds blew from the South often forcing ships aground. Moreover, the coasts were swampy and only accessible by canoe, and the Indians were less than desirable captives. According to the pirates, they were "miserable savages who live on roots."[5]

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[3]Peter Martyr, *De orbe novo decades* [1530] in NAW, I, 265. On early Spanish desires for slaves, see Carl O. Saur, Sixteenth Century North America: the Land and the People as Seen by the Europeans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 272.

[4]Robert Weddle, Spanish Sea: the Gulf of Mexico in North American Discovery, 1500-1685 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985), 406.

[5]Minet, "Minet's Journal: the Cruise of the Joly," in LaSalle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf, 89.

Not until the English and Dutch established settlements in North America did a major trading network involving Indian slaves develop. These European powers formed alliances with Indian tribes in which captives would be exchanged for manufactured goods, including firearms. Indians highly valued these new products. Commenting well after the development of this trade, one Englishman among the Chickasaw claimed in 1708 that "no imployment pleases the Chicasaws so well as slave Catching." "A lucky hit. . . besides the Honor," he claimed, "procures them a whole estate at once." One slave netted "a Gun, ammunition, horse, hatchet, and a suit of Cloathes, which would not be procured without much tedious toil a hunting."[6]

Guns were especially valuable due to the advantage that they offered over aboriginal weapons. Typical trade muskets broke-down quite often, making their use problematic, but when working well they were a weapon of terror. Unlike an arrow, bullets traveled too fast to be seen. They penetrated cloth with relative ease and inflicted wounds more traumatic than any that Indians had ever experienced. To be sure, the range and accuracy of trade guns may not have differed from an aboriginal bow-and-arrow, but muskets had another advantage that increased their demand. As with many goods that Europeans introduced, firearms were labor saving devices. Manufacturing bows and especially arrows

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[6]Thomas Nairne, Nairne's Muskhogean Journals: the 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River, ed. Alexander Moore, (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1988), 47.

were arduous tasks that took considerable time. Acquiring a gun, bullets, and powder from a trader for deerskins or slaves certainly required less effort.[7]

European trade revolutionized aboriginal practices of warfare. Before contact, Indian warfare generally resulted from competition over hunting territories, thus creating the maze of buffer zones that impeded the spread of contagious diseases. Occasionally, male warriors took captives, but they found it most honorable and courageous to take other men, resulting in a low volume of prisoners. Frequently, particular families tortured or killed male captives to avenge past grievances, while occasionally men were often adopted to replace lost kinsmen.[8] After Indians became trading partners with Europeans, the numbers, ages, and genders of captives changed significantly. The demand for guns increased the volume of captives taken, and many more women and children became captives. Because men tended to run away, European slave masters particularly sought women and children. Carolinian planters were especially notorious for seeking native women and children. One planter even

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[7]Much debate exists whether European firearms had real advantages over bow-and-arrows. Francis Jennings argues that the fact that Indians demanded these new items indicates that guns were in fact better weapons. See Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 278. Richard White argues that guns were advantages because they allowed Indians to hunt more as individuals than as part of a community. See White, Roots of Dependency, 44. Others downplay the gun as a significantly more deadly weapon. See Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 36. The argument that guns were a labor saving device is entirely mine.

[8]Merrell, The Indians' New World, 37; and Theda Perdue, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 3-18.

recommended that masters acquire Indian women to serve as wives for African male slaves.[9]

Changes in the nature of Indian captive taking began to accelerate in the mid-seventeenth century at the instigation of the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy—the Mohawks, Cayugas, Oneidas, Onondagas, and Senecas. Their involvement stemmed in large part from trading relations with the Dutch and later the English out of New York, both notorious participants in the international slave trade. Virgin soil epidemics also played a role. Smallpox and other diseases struck the Great Lakes and New England much earlier than the South. The 1660s and 1670s were particularly severe years. Faced with demographic decline, northern Indians heightened their raiding activities, seeking captives including men, women, and children to augment declining populations.[10]

Between 1649 and 1670, gun-wielding Iroquois warriors expanded their influence farther into the Ohio valley and down the Appalachian Mountains.[11] The Shawnees were some of the first victims to their raids. Perhaps possessing as many as 38 villages in 1673, the Shawnees lived on the perimeter of the Southeast along the Ohio and Cumberland

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[9]Verner Crane, The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 113n.; and Peter Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 55.

[10]Daniel Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse: the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Contact (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1992), 60 and 145.

[11]Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.

rivers. Iroquois war parties, at times numbering over 400, attacked these settlements, seeking captives and domination of lucrative hunting grounds.[12] One French traveler commented that the Shawnee were "the people the Iroquois go far to seek in order to wage an unprovoked war upon." "These poor people," he claimed, "cannot defend themselves."[13] Within ten years, the Shawnees were scattered throughout the East. Some continued to live along the Cumberland River; one group migrated to the Savannah River to trade with the Carolinians; and others sought refuge with the Creeks and Chickasaws. Most, however, migrated north of the Ohio River. In 1689, one group made its way to New York where it sought the protection of the Iroquois. "We have been everywhere, and could find no good land," they complained to northern Indians.[14] As one Englishman stated, they were reduced to "poor ramblers."[15] Another Englishman observed that he "knew some Indian Nations that have changed their settlements many hundred miles, sometimes no less than a thousand, as is proved by the [Shawnee] Indians...."[16]

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[12]Father Zenobius Membré, "Narrative of Zenobius Membré..." in Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley: the Original Narratives of Marquette, Allouez, Membré, Hennepin, and Anastase Douay, ed. John G. Shea, 2ed., (Albany: Joseph McDonough, 1903), 159.

[13]Father Claudius Dablon, "Relation of... Marquette," in ibid., 45.

[14]Quoted in Jennings, Ambiguous Iroquois, 198.

[15]Nairne, Muskhogean Journal, 45.

[16]Lawson, A New Voyage, 180.

Other Southeastern Indians faced Iroquois raids. As early as 1693, Iroquois traveled south, recruited allied warriors from the Susquehanna Valley including Susquehannas, Delawares, and Shawnees, and ventured into the homelands of the Cherokees, Catawbas, Saponis, and others.[17] These raids probably began after the destruction of the Shawnee and certainly continued into the early eighteenth century. In 1700, one Englishman reported that all Indians of Carolina were "in great danger of the Sinnagers or Iroquois, who are mortal enemies to all our Indians, and very often take them captives or kill them."[18] Seven years later, one piedmont tribe faced a devastating raid that perhaps was an example of many such events that had preceded it. According to Carolinians, approximately 130 Seneca and Shawnee allies, armed with guns and metal tipped arrows, attacked an enemy village and carried off 45 women and children.[19]

Eventually, southern tribes became direct trading partners with the English. Southeastern Indians desired guns to protect themselves from the Iroquois and willingly exchanged slaves to acquire this item. Since the 1650s, Englishmen out of Virginia led teams of packhorses carrying trade items to Indians of the piedmont. By the 1670s, they had amply supplied some tribes including the Tuscaroras and

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[17]JCHASC, (1693), 14; and Jennings, Ambiguous Iroquois, 278.

[18]Lawson, A New Voyage to Carolina, 181.

[19]JCHASC, (1707), 45.

Westoes with guns and ammunition. These groups jealously guarded their privileged access to European items and strove to keep Virginian traders from traveling south and west into the interior. In 1670, John Lederer, for example, came upon a Tuscarora town he called "Katearas." He claimed that the town was "a place of great Indian Trade and Commerce" and that the chief was a "haughty emperor" who demanded that Lederer surrender his guns and shot to the town. Indeed, the Tuscaroras seemed to dominate a thriving trade. They "decked themselves very fine with pieces of bright copper in their hair and ears, and about their arms and neck."[20] They may have obtained this copper from Indians west of the Appalachian mountains in exchange for European items including rum.[21]

Indians allied with Virginians used their newly acquired guns to dominate their enemies. The earliest Carolina settlers reported in 1670 that the Westoes, described as "a ranging sort of people," had destroyed several Indian tribes near St. Helena by enslaving them and burning their crops.[22] In the same year, the Virginian Lederer reported that the "Oustack," which scholars believe to have been the Westoes, were "so addicted to arms, that

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[20]John Lederer, Discoveries of John Lederer, ed. William P. Cumming, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1958), 33.

[21]John Parramore, "The Tuscarora Ascendancy," North Carolina Historical Review, 59 (1982): 310-311; and Lawson, A New Voyage to Carolina, 238.

[22]Nicholas Carteret, "Mr. Carteret's relation of their planting at Ashley River, 1670" in Narratives of Early Carolina, ed. Samuel Alexander Salley, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 118.

even their women come into the field, and shoot arrows over their husbands shoulders who shield them with Leathern Targets."[23] Four years later, an Englishman ventured into the Westoe town of "Hickauhaugau" and discovered that the Indians were well supplied with guns and ammunition. They obtained these "from the northward [Virginia] for which they truck drest dear skins, furs, and young Indian slaves."[24]

Events in Virginia also increased the volume of the Indian slave trade. In the spring of 1676, Englishmen under the leadership of Nathaniel Bacon began a war upon Native Americans without the approval of the colonial governor, William Berkeley. Bacon and his force, composed mostly of former servants seeking land and slaves, thought they were doing the colony a favor by destroying several Indian tribes, including the Occaneechis who became almost completely enslaved. Governor Berkeley, however, declared the marauders outlaws. The rebellion culminated in the burning of Jamestown and fizzled shortly after Bacon died of dysentery. Despite its anticlimactic conclusion, Bacon's Rebellion had profound impact on both Englishmen and Native Americans. The Virginia elite was aware of the rebels' demands for labor, and in a series of laws enacted from 1676 to 1682, Virginia made it more lucrative to acquire Indian slaves. Formerly, Virginians could only purchase native

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[23]Lederer, Discoveries of John Lederer, 30.

[24]Henry Woodward, "A faithfull relation of my Westoe voiage" in Narratives of Early Carolina, 133.

prisoners from Indians themselves, and such captives could only remain enslaved for twelve years or until the age of thirty when the slave was taken as a child. But as a result of the development of legalized slavery based on race, the settlers could conduct raids themselves and keep Indians as slaves for life.[25]

After Bacon's Rebellion, Virginia extended its influence into the interior. Formerly the Occaneechis, fearing that interior rivals would obtain guns and ammunition, blocked English traders from contacting tribes located in the Appalachian mountains and beyond. Bacon and his rebels crushed this Indian group, thus facilitating the spread of English traders down the piedmont and even into the interior seeking slaves.[26]

The founding of South Carolina further accelerated the Indian slave trade in the Southeast. In 1670, Englishmen from Barbados came to South Carolina, bringing with them a slave-based economy. At first they found it difficult to produce a marketable agricultural commodity but discovered profits by exporting labor. Sugar production in the Caribbean provided an insatiable demand for workers. European planters predominately purchased enslaved Africans,

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[25]Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery American Freedom (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), 254-270 and 328-330.

[26]W. Neil Franklin, "Virginia and the Cherokee Indian trade, 1673-1752," Tennessee Archaeologist 37 (1981): 7.

but they bought Indians as well.[27] When South Carolina developed rice production after the 1690s, the market for Indian slaves increased even more.[28]

Sometimes, South Carolinians obtained Indian slaves by fighting Native Americans themselves. Two coastal groups, the Cusabos and Stonos, were the first natives of South Carolina to face enslavement and deportation on a large scale. After the Indians had allegedly killed livestock that had invaded their crops, the English attacked them and sold them to West Indian planters.[29]

More commonly, Carolinians exploited intertribal rivalries to acquire captives. By the mid-1670s, Carolinians were venturing into the piedmont seeking Indians who would give them captives for trade items. In 1674, Henry Woodward traveled to the fall line of the Savannah River and contacted the Westoes and Savannahs (a group of Shawnee who fled the Iroquois and eventually settled on the river bearing their name). Woodward received a young male prisoner and told the Indians that he would give them presents if they continued to supply him with "deare skins,

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[27]Most slaves taken in the early decades of the pernicious trade probably went to Caribbean plantations. Richard Dunn downplays the numbers of such slaves, but is comparing the quantity of Indians with that of Africans who were certainly more numerous. In any event, the sugar industry created a massive need for labor, some of which was fulfilled by Indian slaves. See Richard S. Dunn, Sugar and Slaves: the Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 19, 21-22, 74, and 224.

[28]Wood, Black Majority, 36-37.

[29]Alexander Hewatt, An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia, [1779] in HCSC, I, 74; and William Robert Snell, "Indian Slavery in Colonial South Carolina, 1671-1795" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alabama, 1972), 1-14.

furrs, and younge slaves."[30] The captives most likely came from Muskogee, Chickasaw, and Cherokee groups residing in the interior. Woodward observed that the Westoes warred continuously with the "Cowatoe" (perhaps a reference to Coweta, a major town of the Creek Confederacy) and the "Chorakae" (the first English record of that nation) who lived on the Savannah's tributaries.[31] He also learned that other Muskogee towns along with Chickasaws "were intended to come downe and fight the Westoes."[32]

In addition to interior groups, Spanish mission Indians on the Georgia coast and in Florida felt the sting of the Westoes and their Savannah allies' attacks. By 1675, the Spaniards at St. Augustine became aware of English-inspired raiding activities. One Indian informed the Spaniards that Carolinians were "united and in league with a hostile tribe of Indians who are called Chichimecos [a Spanish term indicating a tribe not affiliated with a mission] for the purpose of making war upon the natives now converted to the Catholic religion." These Englishmen furthermore "were teaching them to use firearms with the purpose in view of coming to attack [St. Augustine]." The English at that time may not have had any plans to strike St. Augustine, but they

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[30]Woodward, "A faithful relation of my Westoe voiage," 134.

[31]Ibid., 133.

[32]Ibid., 134.

did seek to capture mission Indians.[33] A bishop visiting Florida complained that the slave raiding Indians were "heathen so savage and cruel that their only concern is to assault villages, Christian and heathen, taking lives, and sparing neither age, sex nor estate, roasting and eating the victims."[34] Of course what the bishop did not mention was that this "savage" activity was inspired by Englishmen seeking to profit from the sale of human beings to sugar planters in the West Indies.

In the 1680s and 1690s, Carolinians expanded the trade in Indian slaves. In 1683, the Westoes fell-out with the English and were crushed by Carolinians and Savannahs.[35] The Savannahs remained major participants in the trade and continued to raid extensively into the 1690s, but increasingly the powerful Indian groups of the interior became dominant partners with Carolinians. In 1685, Henry Woodward ventured west into Georgia and Alabama. He visited Indians living on the Chattahooche and Tallapoosa rivers. Later, some of these Indians moved east to develop even more extensive trade contacts with the English. They built settlements on the Ocmulgee River and its tributary Ochese Creek, from which the English applied the name "Creeks" to the myriad of Indians living in the Georgia and eastern

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[33]Katherine Reding, ed. and trans., "Plans for the colonization and defense of Apalachee 1675," Georgia Historical Quarterly (1925): 173-175.

[34]Gabriel Calderón, Bishop of Cuba to Her Majesty, [1675], in "Letter of Calderón," 11.

[35]Crane, The Southern Frontier, 19-20.

Alabama interior. Woodward's efforts did not stop with the Creeks; he sent traders farther west to establish ties with the Chickasaws. According to one later account, the Carolinian doctor inaugurated trading relations with interior groups that persisted into the eighteenth century.[36] The highlight of this contact occurred in 1698. In that year, Thomas Welch set-out from Carolina, traveled into Creek and then Chickasaw territory along an Indian trade route that became known as the "Upper Path," crossed the Mississippi, and descended to the mouth of the Arkansas. Welch mapped his journey, showing the way for many other traders to follow.[37]

When the French colonized the Gulf Coast and Mississippi Valley in the late 1690s, they discovered an English-inspired trade network firmly in place. In 1699 the governor of the new French colony, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, found several traders doing an "extensive" business in Alabama and Mississippi.[38] At Mobile Bay, one native informant told a French officer that British traders frequently visited villages up the Alabama River and its tributaries, the Coosa and Tallapoosa. Thirty-six "nations" or towns resided in these river valleys, including many recognizable members of the eighteenth-century Creek

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[36]Nairne, Muskhogean Journals, 50; and Crane, The Southern Frontier, 30.

[37]Crane, The Southern Frontier, 46-47.

[38]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 119 and 132.

Confederacy.[39] English slave dealers also utilized the Tennessee as a trade route. In 1700, Iberville learned that British traders had descended the Tennessee, entered the Mississippi, and reached the Arkansas.[40] One year earlier, a French missionary reported that an Englishman, perhaps Thomas Welch, lived among the Quapaw Indians at the mouth of the Arkansas at least since 1698. The trader took two Quapaw wives and supplied his adopted people with two to three guns and "a lot of merchandise."[41]

The Quapaws' enemies, the Chickasaws, were the most important allies to the English. One particular Englishman took a major role in inspiring Chickasaw slave raids. "For several years this Englishman has been among the Chicachas where he does a business in Indian slaves," Iberville complained, "putting himself at the head of Chicacha war parties to make raids on their enemies and friends, and forcing them to take prisoners whom he buys and sends to the islands to be sold."[42] Most likely, the Englishman sent his captives over-land to South Carolina, but before the French established themselves in the area, British ships rendezvoused with traders along the Gulf.[43] One of these

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[39]Levasseur, "A Voyage to the Mobile and Tomeh," 32-56.

[40]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 144.

[41]Father James Gravier, "Journal of...Gravier" in Early Voyages up and Down the Mississippi, 126-127.

[42]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 110.

[43]Daniel Coxe, "Coxe's account of the activities of the English in the Mississippi Valley in the seventeenth century," [n.d.] in The First Explorations of the Trans-Allegheny Region by the Virginians, 1650-1674. ed. Clarence Walworth Alvord and Lee Bidgood, (Cleveland: Arthur Clark, 1912), 246-248.

ships made the mistake of entering the Mississippi at the same time that Iberville's forces were building their colony. French officials interrogated the English captain who informed him that his ship was not the first British vessel to penetrate the river. "Several years before," he claimed, English ships from South Carolina came to the area seeking to link-up with traders among the Chickasaws. These ships failed to meet their objectives and departed from the river, but they represented an example of the intensive efforts of British subjects to establish a slave-trade network stretching from the new colony of South Carolina to the Mississippi Valley.[44]

A reliable estimate of the number of Native Americans sold into slavery will probably never be determined. One scholar calculates that between 1680 and 1720 over 20,000 Indian slaves or 500 per year were exported from Carolina.[45] These are conservative figures. They do not account for Indians taken to Virginia or other colonies. Most of the transactions that Europeans made to acquire Indian slaves, moreover, remained undocumented, complicating any attempt to determine a precise figure.[46]

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[44]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 107-109; and De Sauvole de la Villantray, The Journal of Sauvole [1699-1701], ed. Prieur Jay Higginbotham, (Mobile: Colonial Books, 1969), 35.

[45]Peebles, "Paradise Lost, Strayed, and Stolen," 36. Peebles bases his estimates on Crane, Southern Frontier, 110-112 and Snell, "Indian Slavery," 126.

[46]Two scholars found such records in Virginia to have been sparse and that the first reference to Indian slaves being purchased dated 1682. See Helen C. Rountree and E. Randolph Turner III, "On the fringe of the Southeast: the Powhatan Paramount Chiefdom in Virginia" in The Forgotten Centuries, 368 and 372 n.41.

Qualitative rather than quantitative evidence sheds more light on the extensive nature of the Indian slave trade. Colonial governments tried to regulate the practice but ultimately failed to curtail an activity that frequently occurred surreptitiously. By 1695, for example, the trade became so prevalent among Carolina's leading settlers that the colonial governor, John Archdale, and others worried that the Indians would revolt and destroy the young colony. Archdale tried to stop the trade, but too many powerful men profited from enslaving Indians and refused to cease.[47] The trade persisted into the eighteenth century, causing many settlers to worry that it would result in an Indian war. One group of colonists complained that the slave dealers turned the fur trade into "a Trade of Indians or Slave-Making, whereby the Indians to the South and West of us already involv'd in Blood and Confusion, a Trade so odious and abominable that every Other Colony in America (atho' they have equal temptation) abhor to follow."[48] Virginia did follow the practice, however, and according to one prominent historian, as a result of laws following Bacon's Rebellion "many more Indian slaves than has usually been recognized" found themselves imprisoned on English plantations.[49]

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[47]Hewatt, An Historical Account in HCSC, I, 119-120.

[48]"Documents of 1705," in NCCR, II, 904.

[49]Morgan, American Slavery American Freedom, 330.

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The number of American Indians shipped to the West Indies or enslaved on Virginian or Carolinian plantations was considerably smaller than the number of Africans imported to America. Nevertheless, the significance of the slave trade to Southeastern Indian history should not be underestimated. Many Indian groups responded to the heightened threat of enslavement by moving their settlements great distances. They not only sought safer places of habitation but also confederates who would ally with them and defend them against slave-raiding tribes. Out of this movement of peoples came many tribal confederations that played prominent roles in the history of the Southeast in the eighteenth century. Tragically, these migrations also set the stage for the spread of a highly lethal virus.

Population movements associated with the slave trade were instrumental in shaping the geo-political structure of the eighteenth-century Cherokees. Lower Cherokee settlements along the headwaters of the Savannah River displayed little disruption prior to the eighteenth century, but the Pisgah seemed to migrate south and west during the height of slave raiding activity in the late seventeenth century. It was during the 1680s and 1690s that the historic Middle and Overhill settlements of the Cherokee Nation began to take shape as Pisgah people moved seeking protection from their enemies.

Some Cherokees suffered from early raids. The Westoes, Tuscaroras, Esaws, Congarees, and especially the Savannah preyed on Cherokee settlements. In 1681, for example, Carolina exported several "Seraquii" slaves.[50] Later in 1691, Englishmen themselves attacked the Cherokees, murdering several people in the process.[51] British officials worried that such provocation would jeopardize the safety of their young colonies, but two years later, the Cherokees faced even more violence from English-inspired assaults. The Savannahs attacked a Cherokee town, found its young men absent, killed the old men and captured the women and children. They later sold these captives to Carolina slave traders.[52]

To curtail the violence done to their people, the Cherokees strove to form an alliance with the Carolinians, urging the English to cease purchasing their tribal members as slaves and to return those already captured. In 1693, twenty Cherokee headmen traveled to Charles Town bearing presents for the governor. They asked protection from Esaws and Congarees, who according to one eighteenth-century account, had "destroyed several of their towns, and taken a number of their people prisoners." Most likely the Esaws and Congarees, two small tribes living on the piedmont, had

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[50]Crane, Southern Frontier, 40.

[51]BPROSC, XXII, 146.

[52]JCHASC, (1693), 12.

an ample supply of guns, while the more remote Cherokees had few if any firearms. The Cherokees complained most vehemently about the Savannahs. This tribe had committed "outrages" by "selling their countrymen" to Carolinians. South Carolina's Governor informed his visitors that he could not return any of the captives for they were "already gone, and could not be recalled," perhaps meaning that they were shipped to the West Indies. Smith did promise the Cherokees, however, that he would strive to encourage raiding parties to halt their assaults on them.[53]

The Pisgah Cherokees found the best solution was to move. Before the growth of slave trade, Pisgah concentrated their settlements north of the French Broad River, even in the Clinch and Holston valleys of northeastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia. Archaeologists have recorded their presence there and have noted the simultaneous movement and cultural transformation of the Pisgah into a people they call "Qualla."[54] The Qualla built villages in an area of southwestern North Carolina, including the Tuckasegee and upper Little Tennessee valleys, where the so-called Middle settlements of the Cherokee nation would remain during most of the 18th century.[55]

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[53]Hewatt, An Historical Account in HCSC, I, 116.

[54]Roy Dickens, Cherokee Prehistory, especially 214; and Keel, Cherokee Archaeology, especially 216.

[55]This interpretation follows from the work of Roy Dickens. For a concise summary of his argument of Cherokee movement south and west, see Dickens, "Mississippian settlement patterns in the Appalachian Summit area: The Pisgah and Qualla Phases" in Mississippian Settlement Patterns, 115-139. On eighteenth-century settlement locations, see Gary Goodwin, Cherokees in Transition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Dept. of Geography), 31-45.

Oral tradition collaborates archaeological evidence of Pisgah movement south and west to escape their enemies. For example, in the early nineteenth century, a Mohawk leader of Cherokee ancestry, Major John Norton, discussed early Indian history with several informants. One Cherokee reported to Norton that "the earliest traditions say, that our ancestors inhabited near the heads of this river: (the Tennessee or its branches of Holston)."[56] Norton also recorded stories of repeated Iroquois raids on Cherokees living and hunting in the upper Holston. This had occurred during a time when the Mohawks had guns while the Cherokees used only bow-and-arrows.[57]

Oral tradition also reports movement to avoid attacks by piedmont groups, especially the Catawbas. The Catawbas were a heterogeneous tribe that formed out of several piedmont groups that fled slave raids and migrated up the Catawba River, where they coalesced and created a new society.[58] Some of the constituents of this new tribe included the Congarees and Esaws, the very tribes that the Cherokee complained had destroyed their towns. Working with informants in the late 19th century, James Mooney recorded that the Cherokees originally occupied the headwaters of the

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[56]John Norton, The Journal of Major John Norton, ed. Carl F. Klinch and James J. Talman, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1970), 46.

[57]Norton, Journal, 263.

[58]Merrell, The Indian's New World, 10.

Catawba River but when the Catawba acquired firearms they forced the gun-less Cherokees from the area. Eventually, the two rivals agreed to a boundary. The Cherokees would remain to the West of the Broad River while the Catawbas would settle to the East.[59]

Initial Cherokee movements west of the Appalachian divide into eastern Tennessee began during the height of English-inspired slave raids.[60] Both Soto and Pardo visited this area in the sixteenth century and found towns bearing Muskogean names affiliated with the Coosa Chiefdom.[61] Archaeological evidence shows that during the sixteenth and probably most of the seventeenth centuries a non-Cherokean people inhabited the lower Little Tennessee Valley.[62] Labeled "Dallas," the culture of these people was quite different from eighteenth-century Cherokee culture in the region labeled "Overhill." Variations in ceramic designs

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[59]Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 380-381.

[60]Scholars have long debated Cherokee origins in eastern Tennessee. Marvin Smith argues for a late movement of Cherokean-speaking people into eastern Tennessee, while Gerald Schroedl suggests that Overhill Cherokee culture evolved from Dallas. See Smith, Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change, 83-84 and 133-134; and Gerald F. Schroedl, "Toward an explanation of Cherokee origins in east Tennessee," in Conference on Cherokee Prehistory, 122-138. For a review of this debate and summary of the archaeological findings that suggest a post-contact movement of Cherokees into the area, see Chapman, Tellico Archaeology, especially 99-100. My interpretation follows that of Smith, but it seeks to refine the argument in one key area. Smith believes that Dallas movement out of east Tennessee began due to the presence of Spaniards and the diseases they carried in the sixteenth century. Such movement continued when slave raids occurred in the late seventeenth century. I think that most if not all of the major population movements occurred primarily due to slave raids and before massive epidemics hit the area.

[61]Hudson, "Some thoughts on the early social history of the Cherokee," 146-148.

[62]The Little Tennessee lies in both North Carolina and Tennessee. I refer to the portion that lies in North Carolina as upper and that which lies in Tennessee as lower. Cherokees may have resided along the Upper Little Tennessee long before they lived farther down the river.

were the most distinguishing features, but settlement patterns also differed. Dallas people lived in compact, nucleated, and palisaded villages with uniform building styles, while Cherokees had houses of various styles scattered throughout the valley.[63]

A visit by two Virginians to the Little Tennessee gives further evidence that Dallas and not Cherokees inhabited the area as late as the 1670s. In 1673, James Needham and his servant Gabriel Arthur set-out from Abraham Woods' plantation at the fall line of the Appomattox River, seeking to lure Indians of the interior to travel to Virginia to trade. They ventured over the mountains and made their way into the Little Tennessee Valley, becoming the first Europeans to visit the area since the Juan Pardo expedition. Indians that the English identified as "Tomahitans" hosted Arthur and Needham in their fortified town. On his return trip, the Occaneechis Indians killed Needham, but his servant Arthur remained with the Tomahitans, even accompanying their war parties to attack Spanish missions.

Arthur survived to tell his story to Wood, who recorded it in a letter he sent to another associate.[64] Although containing sketchy information, the letter gives some

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[63]Guthe and Bistline, Excavations at the Tomotley Site, 94-122; Chapman, Tellico Archaeology, 115; and Davis, Aboriginal Settlement Patterns, 255.

[64]This letter has been reproduced in the following two sources: Samuel C. Williams, ed., Early Travels in the Tennessee Country (Johnston City, Tn.: Watauga Press, 1930), 24-38; and R.P. Stephens Davis, Jr., "The Travels of James Needham and Gabriel Arthur through Virginia, North Carolina, and Beyond, 1673-1674," Southern Indian Studies 39 (1990): 31-55. Davis takes a critical stance against scholars who believe the Tomahitans to have been Cherokees.

evidence that may identify the Indians as a group other than Cherokees. First, Arthur's reference to the Tomahitans' familiarity with the Spanish corresponds with archaeological record of Dallas society. The villages of these people contained Spanish items that the Indians may have obtained from Soto, Pardo, or raids such as the one in which Arthur participated.[65] Second, and more convincing, the name of the town, "Tomahita," corresponds with an account by an 18th-century trader, James Adair, who cites the "*Ta-mé-tah*" as a remnant group that had joined the Creek Confederacy.[66] Most recently, scholars lean toward the view that sixteenth and seventeenth-century residents of eastern Tennessee were not Cherokees but instead Muskogean-speaking people, perhaps descendants of the Coosa Chiefdom that Soto had encountered.

The exodus of Dallas people from eastern Tennessee began by the 1680s. In 1686, the Spanish official Marcus Delgado found refugees already coalescing on the lower Tallapoosa, lower Coosa, and Chattahoochee rivers. He came upon one town he called "Qusata," probably referring to the Koasati, a prominent group related to the Alabamas and a constituent of the eighteenth-century Creek Confederacy. This group, he claimed, "was of an unknown nation which came a great distance from the north, fleeing from the English and the Chichumeco people which are the greatest conquerors

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[65]Polhemus, The Toqua Site, 956, 958, 968, and 970.

[66]Adair, History of the American Indians, 274.

...among all the nations of Florida." The "Chichumeco" were probably Iroquois raiders traveling down the Appalachians, but Cherokees may have also put pressure on the Koasatis. Later, Delgado found another town of "Qusata" people, called "Tubani." This group "came from the north because of persecution from the English and Chichumecos and another nation called chalaque, which obliged them to flee from their lands in search of a place to settle, finally arriving at the margins of the river of Mobila."[67]

Other evidence of continued migrations of people from Tennessee into Georgia and Alabama exists. In 1693, South Carolinians learned that some "northerne Indians" had settled among the "Taskegus" and that others intend next summer to settle among the "Cowataws" and "Cussetaws."[68] The Cowatas and Cussetaws certainly refer to the Creek town of Coweta and Kasihta on the Chattahoochee. These towns historically welcomed refugees, and both formed the core groups around which the Lower Creeks developed. The "Taskegus" or Tuskegee themselves were probably recent refugees. The names "Tasqui" and "Tasquiqui" appeared in sixteenth-century Spanish accounts of the Soto and Pardo expeditions as belonging to the Coosa Chiefdom. Sometime after Pardo's foray, perhaps at the advent of the slave

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[67]Report of Marcus Delgado October 30, 1686, in "Expedition of Delgado," 26.

[68]JCHASC, (1693), 12.

trade, some of the Tuskegees moved south and allied with the Creeks.[69]

The Cherokees stepped into and occupied areas that some constituents of the Creek Confederacy had evacuated, producing the historic Overhill settlements of the Cherokee nation. To be sure, not all the original inhabitants of eastern Tennessee moved. Some stayed and became incorporated into the Cherokees, perhaps accounting for the cultural differences seen between the Overhill and other divisions of their nation. Some Tuskegees, for example, remained in the area, and a town bearing their name frequently appeared in colonial records. The Cherokees, moreover, have a tradition that the Tuskegees were an ancient people with different customs and language.[70]

The transformation of eastern Tennessee was not complete by the time smallpox struck the Southeast, but the initial pressures on Indians to seek protection from slave raids by moving south left some areas abandoned. The Cherokees probably began to move down the lower Little Tennessee Valley in the 1690s, but at that time they were not particularly powerful nor were they able to complete the conquest of the area. English traders had yet to penetrate significantly the Appalachians, and Cherokees lacked firearms. The first record of a Carolinian trading with

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[69]Smith, Archaeology of Aboriginal Cultural Change, 138.

[70]Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 389.

Cherokees occurred in 1698, when Joseph Cooper bought from them an Indian slave who had run away from his master in Virginia.[71] Sporadic trading probably occurred between Cherokees and Englishmen as well as Indian middlemen, but it was not until after 1700 that the Cherokees became a heavily armed people capable of conquering eastern Tennessee from their rivals. Iroquois and other Indian tribes allied with northern English colonies or Virginia began raiding the Tennessee and Little Tennessee valleys in the 1690s, and Cherokees may have expanded somewhat into vacated areas. When Cherokees themselves acquired firearms, they continued the process of expelling ancestors of the Creeks from their homelands.[72]

The Creek Confederacy also developed in large part due to slave raids and the migration of refugee groups into Alabama and Georgia. Many towns that came to compose this powerful Indian polity profited more than suffered from the slave trade. A core of towns lay along the Coosa and Tallapoosa junction as well as along the Chattahoochee well before European contact. These towns, which were at various times in their histories part of powerful chiefdoms that had dissolved before the 1670s, escaped the ravages of English slave raids. Their survival allowed them to host refugee groups from the north seeking protection, and it was their

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[71]JCHASC, (1698), 30.

[72]Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 382; and Norton, Journal, 112.

languages, Muskogee and Hichiti, that became the dominate speech of the Confederacy.[73] According to Creek tradition, the four major towns around which the Confederacy formed included Tukabatchee, Abihka, Kasihta, and Coweta. Indeed, these towns were present in Georgia and Alabama before slave raids disrupted Southeastern Indian societies. In 1675, a Spanish account located "Cazîthto" (Kasihta) and "Cabita" (Coweta) up the Chattahoochee River, while locating "Tiquipachi" (Tukabatchee) and "Achichepa" (Abihka) on an adjacent river, most likely near the junction of the Tallapoosa and Coosa.[74] Kasihta and Coweta were the key towns of the Lower Creeks, while Tukabatchee and Abihka were the main centers of the Upper Creeks.

Many different groups from various areas moved near the Muskogee towns. As previously mentioned Dallas people of the Little Tennessee sought refuge among the Muskogees. Writing in 1686, a Spanish official reported that refugees also streamed in from the West. He found the towns of "Pagna," "Qulasa," and "Aymamu" which were composed of people who "fled from the interior to avoid the chata with which they had much war."[75] These peoples were probably Alabamans fleeing the Choctaws with whom the Creeks warred continuously during the 1680s. Even groups, most likely

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[73]Knight, "The formation of the Creeks," 374.

[74] Gabriel Calderón, Bishop of Cuba to Her Majesty, [1675], in "Letter of... Calderón," 10.

[75]Report of Marcus Delgado October 30, 1686, in "Expedition of Delgado," 26.

Shawnees, living as far north as present-day Wheeling, West Virginia moved south. The Mohawk-Cherokee soldier, Major John Norton, wrote of an attack by the Onondagas, Cayugas, and Ondowagas on "the people of the Ohio, who they stile the people with wooden fortification." "Some of these people went to live with the 'Muscogui,'" Norton claimed, "others if not killed, taken prisoner, and adopted."[76]

The migration of remnant groups of people into the Creek homeland was not the only way the Confederacy grew. Muskogee people went on the offensive themselves and forced smaller groups to come under their hegemony. The traveling naturalist William Bartram learned of such conquest while touring Georgia in the 1770s. Muskogee informants told him that at the time the English established Carolina they migrated east and established themselves on the Ocmulgee River, building a town of that name. Along the way they conquered several groups and incorporated them into the Confederacy.[77] One of these groups included the Oconee, who had composed the chiefdom of Ocute that Soto encountered.[78] Muskogees remained on the Ocmulgee and its tributary Ochese Creek until the Yamasee War in 1715 when they moved back to the Chattahoochee.

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[76]Norton, Journal, 14.

[77]William Bartram, Travels of William Bartram, ed. Mark Van Doren, (New York: Macy-Masius, 1928), 68-69.

[78]Adair, History of the American Indians, 274.

Slave raids and population movements, to a lesser extent, helped the Choctaws coalesce as a confederation before the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic. Most of the groups that formed the Choctaws came together after 1700, but in the 1690s two of the four divisions of this confederacy began to concentrate their settlements in central Mississippi. For the most part, they remained numerous and strong enough to thwart the English-allied Indian slave raiders; little population loss and migration occurred. But the beginnings of the Choctaw Confederacy took place as villages increasingly allied to protect themselves against common enemies.

The Choctaw faced many enemies that kept them from contacting either the Spanish or English in the late seventeenth century. By 1675, Spanish officials had learned from Indians of Florida that a "great and extensive province of the Chacta which includes 107 villages" existed to the West of the Creeks.[79] The "Chacta" probably included many different but ethnically similar tribes inhabiting what is today Mississippi and western Alabama. In other records, the Spanish used the name "Chata," an Indian word meaning "flat head" given to the Choctaw for their practice of cranial deformation. During the 1680s, many of these Choctaws engaged in war with the Upper Creeks and Indians of the Pensacola region.[80] One particular Choctaw group, the

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[79]Gabriel Calderón, Bishop of Cuba to Her Majesty, [1675], in "Letter of Calderón," 10.

[80]Teniente Antonio Matheos to Governor Cabrera, August 21, 1686, in "Expedition of Delgado," 13.

Mobile, was particularly hostile to Creeks who lived up the Alabama River.

War between Choctaws and Creeks fueled Spanish fears that the English instigated such violence to extend their influence. In 1686 they sent Marcus Delgado into the Upper Creek towns to make peace among the Indians and bring them under the influence of Spain. Delgado managed to secure peace between the Mobiles and Upper Creeks, but he learned that the Choctaw who lived deeper in the interior were implacably hostile. Both the Creeks and Indians of Mobile who joined the Spanish official for a council warned him not to travel into central Mississippi. "They told me," Delgado reported, "that they thought it unlikely that the Chata desired friendship with the Spaniards and that on the first rumors that we traveled for their territory, a large number of warriors would set out to form ambuscades in the woods."[81] Indeed, several refugees had fled attacks from the Choctaws and sought protection with the Upper Creeks.[82]

As late as 1686 the Choctaws stood firm against their eastern enemies. But trouble began to mount to the North as Chickasaws became heavily armed. Since the time of Soto, the Chickasaws lived in the Pontotoc Ridge area along the tributary streams of the Yazoo and Tombigbee. It was there that the French first located them in 1682 when La Salle

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[81]Marcus Delgado to Governor Cabrera, October 15, 1686, in ibid., 19-20.

[82]Ibid., 26.

descended the Mississippi. At that time they dominated much of northern Mississippi and western Tennessee, but faced fierce attacks from northern groups already engulfed in European trade. Once Carolinians began supplying the Chickasaws with guns in the 1680s and 1690s, however, such raids came to a halt. "Formerly when the Iroquois troubled these parts," an Englishman learned in 1708, "they drove the Chickasaws out of their Towns and made great Havock of them, but haveing attempted the like since they were furnished with Gunes, [the Iroqouis] found so warm a reception, that they thought fitt never to return since."[83]

The weapons were not only aimed at Iroquois but also the Choctaws. In 1699, the French first took note of the Choctaw, learning from native informants that they were "very numerous" and had forty-five villages. They also learned that the English bought Choctaws that the Chickasaw and other Indians had captured. This infuriated the Choctaw and fueled a war that would continue through much of the eighteenth century.[84] In 1702, Iberville tried to forge peace between the two warring groups and bring them into an alliance with France. The French Governor claimed that raids were futile, arguing that while the Chickasaws took 500 Choctaw slaves and killed another 1,800 over the last eight to ten years, they lost 800 lives themselves. Only

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[83]Nairne, Muskogean Journals, 37.

[84]Journal of Sauvole, 36.

the English profited from such violence, Iberville maintained, by selling the captives at slave markets in St. George and other Caribbean Islands.[85]

The wave of violence encouraged the Choctaw people to coalesce in central Mississippi. Although not complete by the time smallpox struck the region, the Choctaw Confederacy began to take-shape as Indians increasingly settled at the heads of the Pearl and Tombigbee, forming the Western and Eastern divisions of the Choctaws. In 1702, when Henri de Tonti traveled into central Mississippi to treat with both the Choctaws and Chickasaws he listed several towns belonging to eighteenth-century Eastern and Western divisions. Indians had long lived in the area, especially the Western Choctaw who had come into the region after the collapse of Moundville in the fifteenth century. This group hosted the Confederacy and provided it with what one historian calls "the public language." In other words, the dialect of the Western Choctaw became the dominant speech of the confederacy, especially in matters of inter-village politics and international diplomacy.[86] The confederacy of course would continue to grow after the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, but its beginnings lay in the tumult that English-inspired slave raids created.

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[85]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 172.

[86]Galloway, Choctaw Genesis, 172-173, 193, 197-198, 203, 345, and 356.

By the mid-1690s, English slave raiding had dramatically reshaped the Southeast. Traders contacted groups from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi. Raids affected even the most remote people including Indians living in the Southern Appalachians, the Tennessee River, and central Mississippi. At any one time, hundreds of captives must have passed along the extensive trade network. Multiple population movements and mergers occurred, and new confederacies began to form. Once introduced into this environment of people on the move, trading, warring, and coalescing, the deadly smallpox virus spread from the Atlantic Coast to the Mississippi River.

The first signs of the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic appeared in Virginia in 1696. Except for a localized outbreak in 1667, smallpox seemed absent from the colony for most of the seventeenth century. By the 1690s, however, the dynamics of Virginia's population began to change, facilitating the rapid spread of disease. English males previously predominated, but with the expansion of slavery after Bacon's Rebellion, the increasing importation of Africans, and the development of native-born families, the number of children and others never exposed to smallpox substantially increased. When introduced to the colony from an unknown source in 1696, the virus caused a major epidemic. It spread throughout the population and

especially Jamestown, forcing the colonial assembly to recess.[87]

By February 1697, smallpox broke out in South Carolina. Some representatives to the assembly could not meet in February and into March because they, their families, or servants were sick.[88] The disease continued to rage throughout the year. In March 1698, colonial officials reported back to Britain that "We have had ye Small Pox amongst us Nine or ten Months, which hath been very Infectious and mortall, we have lost by the Distemper 200 or 300 Persons."[89]

The worst casualties occurred among Indians. Carolinian officials reported: "the Small-pox hath killed so many of [the Indians], that we have little Reason to Believe they will be Capable of doing any Harm to us for severall Years to Come, that Distemper haveing Swept off great Numbers of them 4 or 500 Miles Inland as well upon ye Sea Cost as in our Neighbourhood."[90] One Carolinian commented further that "Smallpox...has been mortal to all sorts of the inhabitants & especially the Indians who tis said to have swept away a whole neighboring nation, all to 5 or 6 which

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[87]Edmond Andros to Duke of Shrewsbury, 27 June 1696, C.O. 5:1307, p.83; and Blanton, Medicine in Virginia, 61.

[88]JCHASC, (1697), 9-12.

[89]Joseph Blake and Council to Lords Proprietors of Carolina, March 12, 1698, in Commissions and Instructions from the Lords Proprietors of Carolina to Public Officials of South Carolina, 1685-1715, ed. Alexander S. Salley, (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Department of History and Archives, 1916), 103.

[90]Joseph Blake and Council to Lords Proprietors, April 23, 1698, in ibid., 105.

ran away and left their dead unburied, lying upon the ground for the vultures to devouer."[91] For Carolinians worried about the slave trade causing an Indian rebellion, the epidemic was a blessing. Because so many Indians died, colonial officials realized that the trade would diminish and that they had "no Reason to Expect any Mischeif from ye Indian Trade."[92] The colonial governor, John Archdale, even looked on the event as divine act to absolve the English from their brutal treatment of Indians. "But again, it as other times pleased Almighty God to send unusual Sicknesses amongst [the Indians], as the Smallpox, &c to lessen their Numbers," Archdale wrote, "so that the English in Comparison to the Spaniard have but little Indian Blood to answer for."[93] Obscured from the Governor of course was the fact that the noxious trade in Indian slaves facilitated the rapid spread of a deadly disease throughout Southeastern Indian societies. Nevertheless, he saw what he thought was "the Hand of God...thinning the Indians, to make room for the English."[94]

Indians of the coast and piedmont of Carolina suffered severely. A year before smallpox reached Charles Town, the

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[91]Quoted in Edward McCrady, History of South Carolina, 4 vols., (New York: MacMillan, 1897-1902), 308.

[92]Joseph Blake and Council to Lords Proprietors, April 23, 1698, in Commissions and Instructions, 105.

[93]John Archdale, "A new description of that fertile and pleasant province of South Carolina," in HCSC, 12. Archdale emphasized "Spaniard" and "Indian."

[94]Ibid.

disease traveled from Virginia into North Carolina. Archdale reported that in 1696 "a great Mortality" struck tribes living in North Carolina near the Pamlico River.[95] The destruction could be seen as late as 1701 when the Englishman John Lawson toured the area. Lawson discovered that the epidemic almost obliterated Sewees, Congarees, and other piedmont tribes in communication with the British. "Neither do I know," he wrote, "any savages that have traded with the English, but what have been great losers by this distemper." The traveler estimated that "the Small-Pox and Rum have made such a Destruction amongst them that, on good grounds, I do believe, there is not the sixth Savage living within two hundred Miles of all our settlements, as there were fifty years ago."[96]

With an extensive trade network extending all the way to the Mississippi River, it did not take long before smallpox spread throughout the Southeast. In 1699, Iberville and his men witnessed the results of the epidemic on the Gulf Coast. At Mobile Bay they discovered, according to one Frenchman, such "a prodigious number of human skeletons that they formed a mountain."[97] Iberville thought that the Indians had died in a massacre, hence naming the island, "Massacre Island."[98] One Frenchman later learned

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[95]Ibid., 89.

[96]Lawson, A New Voyage, 17-18, 34, and 237-238.

[97]McWilliams, ed. and trans., Fleur de Lys and Calumet, 11.

[98]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 38.

that the Indians belonged to "a numerous nation who being pursued and having withdrawn to this region, had almost all died here of sickness."[99]

The identity of the sickness became more obvious as the Frenchmen visited other villages along the Gulf Coast. Iberville came upon the Mougoulacha and Bayogoula Indians, who lived near present-day Biloxi, Mississippi, and described these people as two nations "joined together and living in the same village." They probably did so to combine forces and defend themselves against slave raids. Smallpox, however, decimated them both. "The smallpox, which they still had in the village," Iberville reported, "had killed one-fourth of the people." The scene was horrifying; the stench of rotting bodies made the French sick.[100] A year later, Iberville found even more deserted villages in the area. The French governor reported that the Biloxi Indians, whom he described as "formerly quite numerous," had contracted disease in 1698 and by 1700 had deserted their village.[101]

The massive epidemic also visited the Mississippi Valley. In January 1699, French missionaries descended the lower Mississippi and found smallpox among Indians. Upon arriving at the Quapaws and other Arkansas tribes, a

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[99]McWilliams, ed. and trans., Fleur de Lys and Calumet, 11.

[100]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 59.

[101]Ibid., 139.

Catholic priest wrote: "We were sensibly afflicted to see this [Arkansas] nation once so numerous entirely destroyed by war and sickness. It is not a month since they got over the smallpox which carried off the greatest part of them. There was nothing to be seen in the village but graves."[102] The death scene continued as the missionaries traveled even farther south. After departing the Quapaws, they arrived at the Tonicas, where one priest reported that the Indians "were dying in great numbers."[103] The missionaries unfortunately caught smallpox themselves and helped spread the disease farther down the valley.[104]

Documentary evidence makes it clear that smallpox raged in an extensive area between 1696 and 1700; the virus appeared in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, the Gulf Coast, and the Mississippi Valley. It is also certain that many indigenous people who inhabited the piedmont, both the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and the Mississippi Valley perished. What is less clear, however, is the impact of the disease on the Indian confederacies forming in the interior.

The Chickasaws and Creeks most likely experienced the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic. Their heavy involvement in slave raids and frequent communication with

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[102]J.F. Buisson St. Cosme, "Letter to Bishop of Quebec, 1699," in Early Voyages Up and Down the Mississippi, 73.

[103]Thaumer de la Source, "Letter of Mr. Thaumer de la Source, 1699" in ibid., 81-82; and DeMontigny, "Letter of Mr. DeMontigny, January 2, 1699," in ibid., 78.

[104]Source, "Letter of Mr. Thaumur de la Source, 1699," 81-82.

Carolinian traders made them vulnerable to exposure. Moreover, the massive number of people moving into the dominions of the Lower Creeks and Upper Creeks provided another opportunity for the disease to spread into the interior. Unfortunately, documentation dating to the 1690s concerning both the Creeks and Chickasaws remains sparse and prevents a definite conclusion that smallpox struck them during that time. Thomas Nairne, an English official traveling through the Creek and Chickasaw in 1708, however, did report that sometime before his visit the deadly virus had afflicted Indian towns of the interior. Smallpox and other calamities, Nairne claimed, obliged the Creeks and Chickasaws "to break up their Townships and unite them for want of inhabitants."[105]

It is even more difficult to determine if the Choctaws and Cherokees suffered from smallpox during the late 1690s. Their large size relative to others indicates that their remote location and minor participation in trade may have safeguarded them from the disease outbreak. These two groups were primarily victims of early slave raids and thus their villages were not in continuous communication with the English or their Indian allies. Still, this did not preclude them from becoming exposed to smallpox. Nevertheless, both groups lived in the most remote areas of the Southeast that took several days to reach, decreasing

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[105]Nairne, Muskhogean Journals, 63.

the chances that any persons carrying smallpox would arrive among their villages before the virus either ran its course or the carrier died.

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While one cannot be sure whether interior groups suffered from smallpox, it is certain that a number of factors combined to favor their survival over that of Indians living in the coastal plain, piedmont, and Mississippi Valley. These tribes not only faced smallpox but also other, more localized, diseases that worked together to jeopardize survival.

By the 1690s, malaria became endemic in many places in the Southeast. As has been shown, the earliest explorers introduced this disease which remained a permanent part of the environment, afflicting later travelers and colonists who came to the region. The swampy lowlands of South Carolina were especially rife with malaria. Promoters of the new colony tried to emphasize the healthy environment, but even they had to admit that malaria was present. In 1682, Thomas Ash, for example, declared that "in July and August [the colonists] have sometimes touches of Agues and Fevers [a common name for malaria], but not violent, of short continuance, and never fatal."[106] Other settlers do not remember their bouts with disease as being as mild as Ash claimed. In 1731, Peter Purry wrote "that [the

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[106]Thomas Ash, "Carolina; or a description of the present state of that country...(1682)," in HCSC, II, 63.

colonists] had at first very fatal Beginnings, being afflicted with Sicknesses, and even the Plague, which daily diminished the number of people."[107] Certainly, malaria played a role in increasing the deaths to which Purry referred. In addition, the disease spread as colonists cleared the land of timber, creating new pools and ponds, ideal habitat for anopheles mosquitoes.[108]

Malaria was also endemic in the coastal plain of the Gulf region. While traveling through northern Florida and southern Georgia in the summer of 1686, Marcus Delgado's men came down with fevers before arriving among the Creeks. Although many of the Appalachee Indians accompanying Delgado fell ill, the Creeks failed to contract similar fevers while the Spanish party remained with them.[109] When the French arrived at Mobile and Biloxi, they too experienced the ravages of malaria, which had probably been introduced to the area many years prior to their arrival. Iberville could hardly keep his garrisons supplied with men, who rapidly perished in the disease-ridden, swampy environment that they attempted to colonize.[110]

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[107]Peter Purry, "Proposals by Mr. Peter Purry of Newfechatel, for encouragement of such Swiss Protestants...and a description of the Province of South Carolina, (1731)," in HCSC, II, 128. For a more thorough treatment of this subject, see H. Roy Merrens and George D. Terry, "Dying in paradise: malaria, mortality, and the perceptual environment in colonial South Carolina," Journal of Southern History, (November 1984): 533-550.

[108]Boyd, "An historical sketch of... malaria," 237; and Cronon, Changes in the Land, 125.

[109]Marcus Delgado to Governor Cabrera, September 19, 1686, in "Expedition of Delgado," 16-17.

[110]Paul S.J. du Ru, Journal of Paul du Ru: [February 1 to May 8, 1700] Missionary Priest to Louisiana, trans. and ed. Ruth Lapham Butler, (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1934) 62, 64, and 68; Iberville's Gulf Journals, 118, 120, 134, 136, and 142; and Journal of Sauvole, 68.

The Mississippi Valley was especially rife with malaria. On his return trip up the Mississippi in July 1682, La Salle, for example, "fell ill with delirium" and suffered for forty days.[111] Symptoms of delirium, the length of the illness, and the time it occurred suggest malaria. Later French travelers provided more evidence that the insect-born disease was endemic in the Mississippi Valley. In July 1690, Henri de Tonti arrived at the junction of the Arkansas with the Mississippi where he fell desperately ill with a fever which lasted for over a month. Previously, Tonti had been exploring the Mississippi River below the Arkansas for several months. Mosquitoes of this region probably infected him with malaria.[112] Later in 1700, another French party reported outbreaks of "tertian fever," another common named applied to malaria, as they descended the Mississippi.[113]

The prevalence of malaria helped shape the impact of the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic. In most cases, malaria in itself is not a lethal disease, but it can debilitate humans making them less able to survive infections of other diseases. This factor accounted in part for the high mortality rates experienced by Indians who

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[111]Minet, "Voyage Made from Canada," 62; and Membré, ""Narrative of Zenobius Membré" in Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley, 182.

[112]Henri de Tonti, "Memoir 1691" in HCL, I, 78.

[113]Gravier, "Journal of the Voyage of Father Gravier...February 16, 1701," in Early Voyages up and Down the Mississippi, 118-119 and 121-122.

lived near still water during the late 1690s. Many Southeastern Indians, particularly coastal tribes, exploited inland ponds and swamps for aquatic food supplies. They also hunted alligators, bears, and waterfowl that inhabited these environments. Normal subsistence routines thus made many tribes vulnerable to infection. Already weakened by exposure to malaria, Native Americans particularly along the coastal plain and Mississippi Valley experienced catastrophic population loss when smallpox struck.[114]

Indians who lived above the fall line, however, and especially those who lived in mountainous or hilly areas suffered less from malaria. Some pools of standing water and anopheles mosquitoes existed in the interior but to a far lesser extent than below the fall line. Generally, rivers ran rapidly as they descended the Appalachian mountains and traveled through the piedmont, thus producing fewer pools of stagnant water. Southeastern rivers slowed down substantially as they entered the coastal plain, where swamps abounded. Consequently, Indians who belonged to confederacies forming in the interior faced less exposure to malaria and were generally less debilitated from the disease than their lowland contemporaries.

Other diseases followed quickly after smallpox and helped determine which Indians survived and which perished.

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[114]Other scholars have noted the role that malaria played in exacerbating epidemics of other diseases that Native Americans faced. See Newson, "Highland-lowland contrasts," 1190; and Albert Hurtado, Indian Survival on the California Frontier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 53.

In 1699, a disease that in all probability was yellow fever struck Charles Town.[115] In that year, colonial officials reported that ships sailing from the islands of Barbados and Providence brought "a Most Infectious, Pestilentiall & Mortall Distemper." Over 160 people in Charles Town died but officials reported that the disease did not travel beyond the colonial capital.[116] Such limited distribution corresponded with the nature of yellow fever; the affliction was restricted to human settlements along coasts, the normal habitat for the Aedes mosquito. The impact of yellow fever on Indians thus would not have been widespread, but those living near Charles Town or enslaved in the port town, waiting transit, may have been infected.

The yellow fever epidemic of 1699 may have also ravaged the Gulf Coast and Mississippi Valley. The deadly disease was becoming endemic in the Caribbean at the same time the French were attempting to establish a colony. Beginning in 1699, French ships made several voyages to the Southeast from the Caribbean, especially Haiti. The spread of yellow fever was a possibility, but lack of descriptive evidence prevents making a firm conclusion. In one instance, Iberville recorded that "on all our ships we have a great many sick, several men being sick of the plague."[117] The

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[115]Duffy, Epidemics in Colonial America, 142-143. Philadelphia also experienced yellow fever in 1699.

[116]To Lords Proprietors of Carolina, January 17, 1700, in Commissions and Instructions, 129.

[117]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 20-21.

illness erupted in January, however, making it less likely that the French successfully transmitted the disease, if it indeed was yellow fever, to the Gulf Coast where the temperature probably averaged lower than 71°F during the winter. Later accounts corresponded more closely to yellow fever. In April 1700, ships arriving from the Caribbean carried "the disease of France," which according to some scholars was yellow fever. Constant communication with the Caribbean made it highly likely that yellow fever was introduced to Louisiana at an early date. It was possible that the severe malady afflicted Indian settlements along the coasts and in the major river valleys.[118]

While yellow fever's impact on Southeastern Indians can only be conjectured, it is certain that outbreaks of one or more forms of intestinal diseases among Native Americans occurred. Typhoid fever was always a possibility; with thousands of Europeans and Africans coming to the Southeast and establishing settlements near Indians, typhoid bacteria most likely germinated in local water supplies. Some of the frequent references to fever by the English and French may have been due to this disease. Dysentery is even more identifiable in colonial documents. Commonly referred to as the "bloody flux" during the colonial period, dysentery produces frequent diarrhea often containing blood, mucous, or pus. Illness occurs rapidly after ingesting water

[118]For an overview of the disease history of the colonial Louisiana, see John Duffy, ed., The Rudolph Matas History of Medicine in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 3-28.

contaminated with certain kinds of bacteria, protozoa, or other parasites. Besides diarrhea, other characteristics include fever, dehydration, and occasionally death among poorly nourished or otherwise immuno-deficient people.[119]

The French appear to have introduced many dysentery causing parasites into the Indians' water supply. The resulting epidemic that followed in the wake of malaria and smallpox was devastating. In February and March 1700, the French reported that an Ouma town, a tribe of the lower Mississippi Valley, suffered severe casualties. "There has been a great mortality here," the missionary Paul du Ru claimed, "so we found the village in mourning."[120] Iberville stated that "the disease diarrhea which had been in this village for five months, had killed more than half the people."[121] Further up the river, the French observed other Indians stricken with dysentery. The Natchez, according to Iberville, were "suffering from diarrhea which is an illness fatal to almost all Indians." The Natchez were particularly distraught because "the chief [was] dying and all his people grief stricken."[122] Their neighbors, the Taensas, especially

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[119]American Public Health Association, Control of Communicable Diseases in Man, 56-57 and 391-394; and Duffy, Epidemics in Colonial America, 215-216. Cholera often is indistinguishable from dysentery, but the former disease most likely did not make its appearance outside of India until the 19th century. In that century it came to the United States. See Roy Rosenberg, The Cholera Years: the United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962 and 1987).

[120]Du Ru, Journal, 26.

[121]Iberville's Gulf Journals, 122.

[122]Ibid., 125 and 132.

suffered. Father de Montigney wrote that the Taensas had "very big fields" and "a very fine location" and were once a "a large nation, but now they are no more than three hundred men."[123] Although no evidence of similar epidemics of dysentery occurring among Indians along the Atlantic Coast exists, it can be reasonably assumed that they too experienced severe outbreak of diarrhea as Englishmen and Africans introduced new disease-causing parasites into their water supplies.

The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, thus, was not catastrophic because of smallpox alone. It was particularly devastating because many other diseases both preceded and followed the deadly virus. To make matters worse, many of the Indians who confronted disease also faced continued slave raids and subsequent famine. Slave raids prevented many Indians from hunting, gathering, and harvesting. A village's warriors feared going on their winter hunts, for if they did their rivals would come and steal their women and children. In addition, hunting and gathering grounds were often places that slave seekers visited, knowing they could obtain captives there. Crops also went unguarded. Normally, Indians sent young boys and girls as well as women into the fields during the day and night to ward off scavengers such as birds and squirrels as well as herd animals such as deer and bison. Outside of the village and

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[123]Ibid., 128.

often alone these youths were easy targets. In response to this, many Southeastern groups confined themselves within palisaded villages.[124] This prevented people from doing their normal activities necessary to acquire food and also facilitated the rapid spread of contagion through poorly nourished and crowded village populations.

In itself hunger could have caused the deaths of many Southeastern Indians. Combined with disease the situation was catastrophic. Many diseases are nutritionally dependent; that is, malnutrition lowers an individual's ability to fight off a particular infection. While smallpox is not one of these diseases, other illness, known to have been present during the late 1690s, were made worse because of malnutrition. Malaria, dysentery, typhoid fever as well as indigenous diseases such as blastomycosis and tuberculosis became even more lethal when their victims suffered from hunger. Tribes which faced problems hunting, gathering, harvesting, or fishing thus experienced even higher casualty rates than those who could protect themselves from slave raids and continue their normal subsistence patterns.[125]

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[124]Lawson, A New Voyage, 53 and 56.

[125]Ann G. Carmichael, "Infection, hidden hunger, and history, " in Hunger and History: the Impact of Changing Food Production and Consumption Patterns on Society (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 51-66. Other historians have noted the combined impact of famine and disease among Native Americans. See, Newson, "Highland-lowland contrasts," 1193; White, Roots of Dependency, 3,4,7, 155-156, and 205-206; Cronon, Changes in the Land, 88 and 107; and Hurtado, Indian Survival on the California Frontier, 53, 105, and 144.

Several groups heavily afflicted by slave raids faced starvation and high death tolls during the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic. The French, for example, found that hunting among the Quapaw virtually ceased in 1699. "As for hunting, being crushed by sickness and in constant fear of their enemies," a Catholic missionary reported, "we saw no signs of any in their village."[126] Food production also broke-down among a neighboring and disease-stricken tribe, the Colapissa. A French priest claimed that "the buffalo and deer eat the crops and the people do not have enough spirit to kill them for food." Another people experiencing extreme hunger were the Dallas people who lived in the Little Tennessee Valley. In their abandoned villages, archaeologists have found skeletons showing severe cases of iron-deficiency anemia. Such nutritional crisis probably emerged in the 1680s and 1690s when Iroquois and Cherokees raided eastern Tennessee.[127]

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Although the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic created bewildering circumstances, Indians responded to the catastrophe by using native rituals in efforts to halt diseases. Unfortunately, these practices were not designed for highly contagious acute infectious diseases and in many cases made matters worse. A French missionary found that

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[126]St. Cosme, "Letter to Bishop of Quebec, 1699," 73.

[127]Parham, "Toqua skeletal biology," 431-551. Parham does not conclude when nutritional crisis occurred. That it happened during the late seventeenth century is my interpretation.

the Ouma also employed traditional cures. "When a sick person is at the point of death," he reported, "and [the Oumas] see that all their incantations are useless, [they] crowd closely around him and breathe through his mouth, ears, etc., as strongly as they can."[128] Such practices certainly exacerbated the impact of the disease and spread pathogens more thoroughly through the village.

The virulence and multiplicity of diseases and the inability to effect a cure left some Indians vulnerable to acculturation. According to Lawson, the first epidemic of smallpox encouraged Indians to abandon the practice of using traditional cleansing ceremonies to treat patients. "Now [the Indians] are become a little wiser," Lawson reported seven years after the epidemic began, "but formerly [smallpox] destroyed whole Towns, without leaving one Indian alive in the Village."[129] Mississippi Valley groups entertained Catholic missionaries, believing that they possessed special knowledge of medicine. A Bayogoula chief suffering from a "flux" welcomed the French priest Paul du Ru, received a crucifix, and placed it on his chest thinking it would heal him. The entire Bayogoula tribe considered moving near a French Fort, where they could receive Catholic instruction.[130] Other sick Indians accepted baptism that missionaries gladly bestowed on them.[131]

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[128]Du Ru, Journal, 27.

[129]Lawson, A New Voyage, 237.

[130]Du Ru, Journal, 23.

Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to conclude that Native Americans experienced a spiritual holocaust in the wake of the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic. In some cases diseases hit so swiftly that few remained to tend to the dead, but in other cases, mourning rituals and religious beliefs continued to be practiced. Catholic missionaries commented voluminously on human sacrifice among the Natchez and Taensas. These Indians had maintained this characteristic of chiefdom-level society by executing servants, retainers, and kinsmen after the death of particularly powerful chieftains.[132] French priests tried to persuade the Indians to abandon this practice in the midst of the epidemic but to no avail. Similarly, a missionary encouraged the Ouma to quit their traditional mourning practices. Father Paul du Ru was annoyed that the Indians "began to howl...in a most horrible manner" and that a "singer joined them and sang a dirge over the tomb of the dead, perfumed it with tobacco and did not stop before a full half hour of ceremonies." The ethnocentric Du Ru devalued the Oumas ritual that certainly gave them spiritual comfort in the wake of the disaster. His protests against the ceremonies went unabated. The Oumas continued to drink

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[131]Source, "Letter of Mr. Thaumur de la Source, 1699," 81-82; and DeMontigny, "Letter of Mr. DeMontigny, January 2, 1699," 78.

[132]Source, "Letter of Mr. Thaumer de la Source, 1699," 82.

special beverages prepared with herbs and to present the dead offerings of food and other gifts.[133]

A common response among Indians to the epidemiological disaster was for afflicted groups to merge. Native peoples did this especially to protect their depleted societies from slave raids that continued during and after the disease crisis. Up and down the Mississippi Valley and along the Gulf Coast, the French noticed small groups building their settlements near each other after suffering depopulation.[134] Sometimes, different tribes tried to keep their own leaders and ceremonial structures. According to Du Ru, for example, one Indian town had "two temples of about equal size. The one belongs to the Mougoulachas, the other to the Bayogoulas, for the village is composed of these two tribes."[135] In other cases, the Indians lacked qualified leaders and became politically integrated. The Mougoulachas themselves had earlier accepted remnants of another decimated people, the Quinipissa. Probably because their leaders had died from disease, the Mougoulachas accepted a Quinipissa as chief.[136]

The same phenomenon of merging also occurred in the Carolina piedmont as it did in the Mississippi Valley and

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[133]Du Ru, Journal, 28-29.

[134]St. Cosme, "Letter to Bishop of Canada," 72; Journal of du Ru, 19; and Journal of Sauvole, 19 and 29.

[135]Du Ru, Journal, 19.

[136]Journal of Sauvole, 31.

the Gulf Coast. Lawson observed depopulated tribes such as the Tutelos, Keyauwees, and Saponis joining together to strengthen their resistance against Iroquois war parties.[137] The Enoes, Shoccories, and Adshugheans also banded together under the leadership of an Enoe chief.[138] The merger of Siouan groups that formed the Catawbas remained less complete, but the English traveler found that Esaws, Sugerees, and Catawbas had established settlements near each other along the upper Catawba River.[139] These groups struggled to retain their separate ethnic identity, but they found it nearly impossible to avoid integration with others. The ravages of disease made intermarriage and integration a necessity. Lawson claimed that "there is nothing more coveted amongst [Indian men], than to marry a woman of their own nation." But, "when the nation consists of a very few people (as now a days it often happens) so that they are all of them related to one another, then they look out for husbands and wives amongst strangers."[140] Thus in the piedmont, a "kaleidoscopic array of mergers," as one historian states, followed in the wake of the worst demographic disaster that the Southeast ever experienced.[141]

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[137]Lawson, A New Voyage, 53

[138]Ibid., 61-62.

[139]Ibid., 49.

[140]Ibid., 193.

[141]Merrell, The Indians' New World, 22-23.

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By 1700, it was clear that the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic had a catastrophic impact on many Native Americans. Coming in the midst of a myriad of population movements and mergers due to the slave trade, smallpox spread rapidly through the region and created massive casualties among what were certainly virgin populations. If smallpox had acted alone, Southeastern Indians may have been able to recover within a generation. However, the occurrence of other diseases, especially malaria and dysentery, as well as slave raids and resulting famine made recovery difficult. Population mergers and the formation of new societies helped some groups to survive into the future, but continued epidemics, intertribal violence, and subsistence collapse eliminated the possibility of full recovery for coastal, piedmont, and Mississippi Valley peoples who bore the brunt of the disease holocaust.

The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic was a turning point in southern history. The series of diseases substantially depopulated indigenous societies, leaving a widowed land for European and Africans to inhabit. The decline in Indian population also changed the dynamics of the slave trade. The enslavement of Native Americans continued into the early decades of the eighteenth century, but the number of Indians available for capture dramatically declined. By 1720, the Indian slave trade had virtually disappeared, and Africans would overwhelmingly make-up the

slave population in the colonial South. The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic indeed solidified the emergence of South Carolina as a colony based on African slavery, but it did not mean that Native Americans would vanish from history. For some Indians the epidemic was a new beginning. It changed the social landscape of the region, forming the contours of the eighteenth century southern frontier. The interior confederacies, the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, survived the catastrophe and rose to a position of power and prominence that they held for most of the eighteenth century.

Chapter Four:

The Differential Impact of Eighteenth-Century Epidemics

For many of the original peoples of the Southeast, there was no reprieve from the nightmare of the 1690s. After the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, a series of seven major outbreaks (1718-1721, 1728-1733, 1738-1742, 1747-1750, 1759-1760, 1764-1765, and 1779-1783) swept the region. Many of these epidemics came in the wake of the great imperial wars between European powers. During these conflicts, British, Spanish, and French navies dramatically increased the volume of human traffic coming into Charles Town, St. Augustine, Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans. The imperial wars also involved thousands of European and Native American armies marching through North America,

bringing even the remotest areas into the vortex of disease exchange.[1]

While eighteenth-century epidemics struck Southeastern Indians severely, they did not produce uniform damage among all native peoples. Due to their geographic location and the nature of pathogens involved in particular outbreaks, the Four Nations had certain advantages over coastal, piedmont, and Mississippi Valley tribes. Typically, eighteenth-century outbreaks were much like the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic. They consisted of multiple diseases erupting in rapid succession. Since each pathogen had its own unique nature, however, not all people within a region experienced an epidemic equally. Environmental factors and the length of a parasite's infectious period both affected which diseases became widespread and which remained localized. Some groups faced many illnesses simultaneously, while others suffered infection from a smaller variety of pathogens. Mortality rates also varied considerably according to the prevalence or absence of endemic diseases. People who lived in areas notorious for

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[1] Even if acute infectious diseases occurred before the 1690s as others have argued, such epidemics would have occurred infrequently due to the lack of sustained contact with Europeans and Africans. Thus, Southeastern Indians could have recovered lost population before another epidemic occurred, making it even more difficult to believe that population loss among Southeastern Indians was as high as 90% as proposed by Dobyns and Ramenofsky. The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic is significant in that other epidemics frequently followed, making the 18th century and not earlier centuries the time of population collapse.

malaria and typhoid necessarily had weakened defenses against epidemic illness, while individuals who lived in healthier environments were able to fight off infection more effectively.

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During Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), the number of people and their germs traveling from Europe to the Caribbean and then to southern colonial ports rose substantially. Smallpox again visited Charles Town, but the virus failed to ignite a widespread epidemic for the next several years. A ship with passengers carrying the disease arrived in South Carolina in 1700, but the previous years' experience with smallpox provided most colonists and slaves with immunity.[2] Without non-immune residents, the virus did not germinate and spread among the southeastern population, including Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans, for at least a generation.

Other deadly diseases did afflict the region, however. In 1704, the French reported that 23 sailors contracted a "plague" at Havanna and died in transit to Mobile. French soldiers stationed on the Gulf Coast caught the disease and two-thirds of them perished.[3] Two to three

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[2] Joseph Blake et al to Lords Proprietors of Carolina, June 13, 1700, in Commissions and Instructions, 135.

[3] Bienville to Pontchartrain, September 6, 1704, MPAFD, III, 24.

years later, a "general sickness" that the French could not identify revisited Mobile.[4] South Carolina suffered from similar outbreaks. In 1706, a disease killed several of their leading men, including the slave dealer James Moore, while five years later a "pestilential distemper" descended on Charles Town.[5]

How extensively the diseases spread and their identity remain unclear. While few reports of Native Americans experiencing infection exist, some Native Americans certainly succumbed to infection. The Tohomes, who inhabited the Alabama Valley near the confluence of the Tombigbee, contracted a deadly pathogen in 1704. One French observer claimed that this small tribe was "almost annihilated," dwindling from 800 to 90 men.[6] Historians have interpreted the sicknesses as yellow fever, but a virulent form of malaria such as falciparum or other afflictions such as typhoid or influenza were also possible.[7]

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[4] King Louis XIV to DeMay, June 30, 1707, in MPAFD, III, 56.

[5] JCHASC, (1706), 3 and 5; Nathaniel Johnston to Lords Proprietors, March 8, 1707, in Commissions and Instructions, 189; and Duffy, Epidemics in Colonial America, 177.

[6] Sieur de Bienville, "Memoir of Louisiana, the Indians and the Commerce that can be carried on with them," [1726], in MPAFD, III, 537.

[7] Crane, Southern Frontier, 87; and Duffy, Epidemics in Colonial America, 177.

Due to their close proximity to French, English, and African settlers, coastal, piedmont, and Mississippi Valley tribes were particularly vulnerable to infection, but Creeks and Chickasaws also experienced diseases. Thomas Nairne visited the Creeks and Chickasaws in 1708 and reported that virgin soil epidemics had taken a toll on the interior confederacies. While among the Chickasaws, Nairne discovered that the interior had been "a little more populous than at present." He also found that the Creeks and Chickasaws had modified their settlements as a result of disease. "Since the use of fire arms, the fatell small pox and other European distempers, came among them," Nairne claimed, "they're obliged to break up their Townships and unite them for want of inhabitants."[8] Living along the trading path from Carolina to the Mississippi River, both the Creeks and Chickasaws were vulnerable to infection. Most likely, Creek and Chickasaw villages contracted some of the new illnesses that Europeans imported during the early eighteenth century.

Concluding whether diseases struck the Cherokees and Choctaws in the first decade of the eighteenth century is more difficult. Both traded with Europeans. Direct trade routes linked the Cherokees with Charles Town and the

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[8] Nairne, Muskoghean Journals, 63.

Choctaws with Mobile, indicating a possibility that pathogens flowed from European settlements into the most remote Indian villages in the region. Nevertheless, no record of epidemiological misfortune among either the Choctaws or Cherokees exists until the 1730s.

Epidemiological catastrophe accelerated in 1718, when smallpox again became widespread in the region. In that year, the dreaded virus appeared in South Carolina. It had been nearly 20 years since the last major epidemic, allowing a generation of non-immune people to come of age. The virus thus became epidemic in the vicinity of Charles Town and threatened nearby Indians. On April 12, Carolinian officials recorded that "for some time past, the trade in Charles Town with our neighboring Indians hath abated in a very great measure, supposed to be chiefly occassioned by the smallpox, its being in the same."[9] Carolinians did not want the Catawba to contract and spread the disease and ordered that a delegation then approaching the colonial capital halt outside of town.[10] Available records do not indicate whether efforts to curtail the

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[9] JCIT, 266.

[10] JCIT, 272-273.

spread of smallpox spared Native Americans living farther away from Charles Town.

The 1718 outbreak was a precursor to a more widespread epidemic three years later. In 1721, Boston experienced one of the worst epidemics in its history. Carolinians received intelligence of the outbreak and ordered that all ships arriving from New England perform quarantine for at least 10 days. The quarantine began in August 1721 and continued into 1722.[11] No reports of Carolinians suffering from the disease exist, but this may be attributed to the 1718 outbreak more than the effectiveness of the quarantine. Since the virus erupted three years earlier, it found few, if any, non-immune people in which to germinate.

Smallpox did find its way to the Mississippi Valley, however. Although the French failed to establish a colony in Louisiana as highly populated as English settlements on the Atlantic Coast, thousands of French settlers and slaves poured into the Mississippi Valley between 1717 and 1721. In these years, immigration peaked with over 7,000 European colonists arriving. Many died en route and others shortly after arriving, but if ever a "great migration" of French

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[11] Journal of Upper House of Assembly, August 31, 1721, September 1, 1721, January 4-5, 1722, C.O. 5:425, n.p.

occurred to Louisiana, it happened during these five years.[12] Tragically, they brought diseases with them, most likely including the smallpox virus, which was circulating in great quantities during the same time period.

As they did in the late 1690s, Mississippi Valley tribes faced another epidemiological nightmare. The Quapaws, who suffered immensely during the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic, again contracted the virus. Charlevoix reported that this tribe was in "greatest tribulation" after a Frenchman came down with the illness and transmitted it to an entire Indian village.[13]

The Natchez, once a powerful chiefdom that dominated much of the Mississippi Valley, also found themselves struggling against smallpox. Afflicted Natchez, according to Antoine Le Page Du Pratz, "destroy themselves, from an abhorrence of the blotches of their skin." Many plunged themselves in cold water, while native doctors were "baffle[d]." The relatively dense settlements of the Natchez and failure to implement quarantine made mortality rates even higher. Du Pratz reported that families were crowded into huts together, producing "great havock."[14]

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[12] Duffy, ed. History of Medicine in Louisiana, 22.

[13] Charlevoix, "Historical Journal," in HCL, III, 127.

[14] Le Page Du Pratz, History of Louisiana, 291-292.

According to Charlevoix, the Natchez could field 4,000 warriors in 1715, but by 1721 the number of warriors had dropped to 2,000.[15]

Several other diseases exacerbated the disaster. Malaria and some form of water-borne illness such as dysentery or typhoid had become endemic in the Mississippi Valley. Charlevoix learned that the waters from the Mississippi, particularly at the mouth of the Yazoo, "give the bloody-flux to those who drink them." He also reported that the air of the valley was "very unwholesome," a description Europeans generally used to describe malarial environments. Other diseases occurred epidemically during the period of peak migration. Charlevoix reported that Indians attributed their decline to "contagious diseases, which in these last years have made a great ravage among them."[16] A later commentator also claimed that more than one disease was involved. The tribes of the Mississippi Valley, according to Bienville, were "feeble remnants which are diminishing every day because of the different diseases

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[15] Charlevoix, "Historical Journal," in HCL, III, 162.

[16] Ibid.

that the Europeans have brought into the country and which were formerly unknown to the Indians."[17]

As did the 1718-1721 epidemic, the next major outbreak also involved multiple diseases, both epidemic and endemic, working in conjunction to drive-up mortality rates among certain groups. Charles Town served as the starting point of the 1728-1733 epidemic. Yellow fever struck in the summer of 1728, killing many inhabitants of the colonial capital.[18] If Native Americans had been living near Charles Town, they too would have experienced casualties. But few Indians remained near the coast, and interior Indians were spared infection from this geographically circumscribed illness.

By January 1729, Carolinians reported an "epidemical distemper" raging in their colony that was most likely associated with a measles outbreak in the interior.[19] Measles' fourteen-day incubation period and equally long period of communicability makes it similar to smallpox and allows it to spread through rural populations more easily than most acute infectious diseases. In February and March 1729, the Creeks succumbed to the virus. An English

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[17] Bienville, "Memoir, [1726]," MPAFD, III, 527.

[18] Hewatt, An Historical Account, in HCSC, I, 273-74.

[19] Journal of [South Carolina] Upper House of Assembly, Janaury 29, 1729, C.O. 5:430, n.p.

official reported that over 500 villagers along the Tallapoosa perished.[20] The disease also struck the Chickasaws. According to one source, however, mortality rates were much lower than those sustained by the Creeks, suggesting that the Chickasaws had previous experience with the disease while the Creeks had not.[21]

Two years later another outbreak occurred that affected the Choctaws and remaining tribes of the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast. In February 1731, the Choctaws reported many losses from a disease that they apparently contracted from the Chickasaws. Some Choctaws responded as other Indians who experienced disease for the first time. Families from the infected villages fled their homes seeking refuge in an unexposed village.[22] By May, illness—probably the same one that plagued the Choctaws—struck French troops and allied Indians. The disease was still virulent in December, leading one French official to lament that not "a single small nation" on the Mississippi River could render his colony service.[23]

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[20] Charlesworth Glover, "Journal," in BPRSC, XIII, 108 and 117.

[21] Ibid., 170.

[22] Régis du Roullet to Périer, February 27, 1731, in MPAFD, IV, 58-62.

[23] Périer to Maurepas, December 10, 1731, in MPAFD, IV, 106.

The 1731 illness that caused so much turmoil remains a mystery. The French blamed it on recent flooding, thereby associating it with a water-borne disease such as typhoid.[24] But it might have been measles. Measles could have lingered for a couple of years in the region after first infecting the Creeks and Chickasaws. The lengthy period of illness reported by the French indicates a disease with a nature similar to measles, which has a slow rate of spread for an acute infectious disease. Moreover, the persistence of the disease into December contraindicates a seasonal malady such as malaria or yellow fever.[25]

Regardless of the identity of the epidemic of 1731, a disease that colonial observers could easily identify erupted in 1732. In that year, smallpox alarmed South Carolinian officials, who re-issued quarantine laws to prevent the introduction of "infectious distempers."[26] In the early months of 1732, ships arrived with infected African slaves and performed quarantine.[27] Such efforts,

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Poison also cannot be ruled out. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the Choctaws blamed the disease on poisoned trade items they obtained from the English and Chickasaws. Joseph L. Peyser makes a strong case that English did in fact circulate poisoned rum among the Miami Indians at about the same time that the Choctaws became ill. See Peyser, "It was not smallpox: the Miami deaths of 1732 re-examined," Indiana Magazine of History, 181 (1985): 159-169.

[26] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council in Assembly, July 6, 1731, C.O. 5:431, n.p.; and "Instructions to Bienville from the King," February 2, 1732, in MPAFD, IV, 543.

[27] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council in Assembly, March 8, 1732, C.O. 5:434, p.4.

however, failed to keep the virus contained. By March, a community of English settlers suffered infection, and the colonial assembly adjourned while the threat of smallpox loomed.[28] Reports of the disease continued through January 1733, when hundreds of settlers had arrived in the new colony of Georgia.[29]

Again, other diseases followed in the wake of smallpox. From May to October 1732, yellow fever inflicted heavy casualties on residents of South Carolina.[30] The increased migration to the Southeast with the formation of Georgia spread even more pathogens. In 1733, one Englishman reported that the new colony had lost many of its people, "who died very suddenly."[31] He attributed the deaths to the hot weather and brackish water. The newcomers, he lamented, "began to die so fast that the frequent firing of the canon, and our small arms, [in tribute to the dead] struck such terrour in our sick people (who knowing the cause concluded they should be the

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[28] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, March 11, 1732, C.O. 5:434, n.p.; South Carolina Gazette, March 11-18, 1732, no. 11; Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, December 7, 1732, C.O. 5:431, n.p.

[29] South Carolina Gazette, January 13-20, 1733, no. 53

[30] David Ramsay, Ramsey's History of South Carolina from Its First Settlement in 1670 to Year 1808, 2 vols., (Newberry, S.C.: W.J. Duffie, 1858), II, 47.

[31] Peter Gordon, Journal, 1732-1735 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1963), 45.

next)."[32] The rapid mortality of the epidemic indicates an acute infectious disease, but without descriptions of symptoms a more precise diagnosis remains impossible.

Following their experience with measles in 1729, the 1732-33 epidemic devastated the Creeks. In 1733 the Yamacraw, a tribe of the Creek Confederacy, according to one English account, had "lately been much reduced by the Small pox."[33] The same account claimed that the Yamacraw could muster only 50 warriors and the Creeks as a group only 600. These numbers were probably too low due to a failure to include all Creek villages, and they also reflected the loss of warriors due to war with the Cherokees. The account nonetheless gave an estimate quite lower than those recorded in the next several decades, which placed the number of Creek warriors in the thousands.[34]

The extent that smallpox and other diseases decimated other Southeastern Indians in 1732 and 1733 remains unclear, but the efforts of South Carolinian officials may

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[32] Ibid., 45-46.

[33] Robert G. McPherson, ed., The Journal of the Earl of Egmont, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), 57.

[34] The Creeks also at this time raided Carolina plantations for slaves, killed livestock, and murdered a couple of traders. Perhaps the raids reflect efforts to replace lost kinsmen, while the murder of the traders was a result of Creeks blaming the English for spreading the disease, possibly through witchcraft. (Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, August 16, 1732, C.O. 5:434, n.p.)

have curtailed the spread of pathogens.[35] In August 1733, the Governor forbade visiting Chickasaws from entering Charles Town, "on account of the sickness in town."[36] In January 1733, the Governor banned the Cherokees from receiving their presents in Charles Town, informing them that "ill consequences" would result from their visit.[37] At the same time, the South Carolina assembly re-issued laws, "Preventing the further Spreading of the Small Pox in the settlement."[38] It remained undisclosed whether Carolinians feared that the Cherokees would re-introduce disease into the colony or whether they wanted to prevent exposing the Cherokees. By early May 1733, illnesses in Charles Town had abated and the Cherokees were allowed to make their visit.[39]

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Quarantine efforts may have spared the Cherokees from infection during the 1729 to 1733 epidemic period, but they were not so lucky during the next major outbreak.

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[35] At roughly the same time, Indians living in Illinois suffered from smallpox. This outbreak may or may not have been linked to the epidemic among the Creeks. See Emily J. Blasingham, "The depopulation of the Illinois Indians," Ethnohistory 3 (1956): 193-224 and 361-412.

[36] South Carolina Gazette, August 5-12, 1732, no. 30.

[37] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, January 26, February 2, 1733,C.O. 5:431, n.p.; Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, February 2, C.O. 5:431, n.p.

[38] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, January 31, 1733, C.O. 5:431, n.p.

[39] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council in Assembly, May 2, 1733, C.O. 5:431, n.p..

Beginning in 1738 and continuing through 1742, smallpox and other diseases again wreaked havoc in the Southeast. The smallpox virus spread from Charles Town to the Cherokees inflicting on them what was most likely their first virgin soil epidemic of the most deadly of all imported diseases.

The colony of South Carolina itself suffered greatly from the epidemic. On April 13, 1738, the virus arrived in South Carolina aboard a slave ship. Several Africans had the disease and were disembarked without notice of officials. Once discovered, the South Carolina Council ordered the slave traders to move their human cargo back to their ship and keep their vessel quarantined.[40] Such actions were too late. The disease spread rapidly through the English and African population. "There was scarcely a house in which there had not been one or more deaths," according to one Carolinian. [41]

Many English resorted to inoculation, a practice that probably spread the disease even more thoroughly. Inoculation involved placing smallpox-laden material in a small incision on a patient's body. An infection resulted that was generally less severe than if one inhaled the

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[40] South Carolina Gazette, May 4, 1738, no. 223 and May 11, 1738, no. 234.

[41] South Carolina Gazette, October 5, 1738, no. 245.

virus. Nevertheless, individuals not quarantined after inoculation could transmit the disease to others through exhalation, giving them a severe case of smallpox. By October 1738, a combined 1,675 Africans and English were naturally infected and 437 inoculated. Two hundred ninety five individuals died from natural cases, while sixteen inoculated people perished.[42]

In past outbreaks, colonial officials strove to keep diseases from spreading to Indian allies, but in 1738 they were unable to contain the epidemic. James Adair, an English trader then among the Cherokees, claimed that the Cherokees received the pathogen via "infected goods."[43] Indeed, traders could have transported the disease, but the Cherokees themselves may have been victims of "bad timing" and transmitted the virus themselves. In late March, a delegation of over 70 Cherokees visited the Governor in Charles Town.[44] Evidence of how long the delegation remained does not exist, but typically such negotiations lasted several weeks, making it possible that the Cherokees stayed in the colonial capital long enough to be exposed.

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Adair, History of the American Indians, 244.

[44] South Carolina, Gazette, March 16-23, 1738, no. 217; JCHASC, (1738), 548-561.

However the virus reached the southern Appalachians, the disease ravaged the Cherokees from 1738 into the fall of 1739. Adair reported that smallpox "reduced" the Cherokees by "almost one half."[45] Other sources corroborate severe mortality. An official from Georgia visited the Cherokees in 1739 hoping to enlist them in an assault on St. Augustine, but was rebuked because they had "lost most of their young men by the small pox." The Cherokees further explained that "the living were scarcely sufficient to bury the dead, [and] that those few who remained alive were out off hunting."[46]

Such heavy casualties alone suggest that this was the Cherokees' first experience with the disease, but their response also indicates that they had never before suffered from smallpox. Adair stated the illness was "foreign" and "strange" to the Cherokees and that many responded with extreme measures. "A great many killed themselves," Adair reported, because they could not bear the disfiguring pustules. "Many threw themselves with sullen madness into

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[45] Adair, History of the American Indian, 244.

[46] Thomas Eyre to Robert Eyre, December 4, 1740, in General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733-1743, 2 vols., (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1975), II, 506-507.

the fire, and there slowly expired, as if they had been utterly divested of the native power of feeling pain."[47]

Outside of the Cherokees and South Carolinians, smallpox had little impact on other inhabitants of the Southeast in 1738 and 1739. Since the Creeks experienced smallpox six to seven years earlier, they had few non-immune people in which the virus could germinate. Thus, one would not expect the disease to become epidemic among them. Thomas Eyre, a colonist from Georgia, visited Coweta in the fall of 1739 and failed to mention any sickness among the Creeks.[48] Similarly, no evidence suggested smallpox afflicted the Chickasaws and Choctaws, even though eighty-six members of both of these nations visited Charles Town in December 1738.[49]

While the Cherokees experienced severe mortality rates in 1738 and 1739, they escaped infection from yellow fever that plagued the region at the same time. Yellow fever, which exacerbated the impact of smallpox among coastal and Mississippi Valley tribes in 1699 and 1700 and 1728 and

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[47] Adair, History of the American Indians, 244-245.

[48] Thomas Eyre to Robert Eyre, December 4, 1740, in Colonial Letters, II, 499-510.

[49] South Carolina Gazette, January 4, 1739, no.257. An older but still cited source, claims that the 1738-39 epidemic swept through all of the major Southeastern groups, including the Creeks, but offers no primary evidence. See Joseph Jones, "Exploration of the aboriginal remains of Tennessee," Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge 22 (1876): 97. See also Parades, J. Anthony Parades and Kenneth J. Plante, "A Reexamination of Creek Indian Population Trends, 1783-1832," American Indian Culture and Research Journal 6 (1983): 13.

1732, again struck the Lowcountry with severity. In the summer of 1739, the illness erupted in Charles Town, which according to one Carolinian "cut off the hopes of many flourishing families." By October, the pathogen had made a deadly appearance in the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast. A French official reported that a "contagion continues to make great ravages at New Orleans and takes from us daily persons of every age and of both sexes." The official claimed that the disease arrived aboard French ships bringing soldiers from Santo Domingo. The death toll was severe, with 150 soldiers dying shortly after arrival. French troops traveling up the Mississippi to prepare an assault on the Chickasaws also came down with the illness.[50]

The high volume of troop movement in 1739 and 1740 brought even more diseases, including some that were capable of being transported inland. In the summer of 1740, both the English and the Spanish mobilized over a thousand men in a contest for northern Florida. General James Oglethorpe of Georgia led an expedition of settlers, Creeks, Chickasaws, and some Cherokees against St. Augustine, but while encamped near the coast sickness

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[50] Loubey to Maurapas, October 12, 1739, MPAFD, I, 404-409.

erupted among his troops.[51] "The flux and fever raged," one Georgian wrote, "especially among the Indians in the camp."[52] The illness may have been one or a combination of a number of diseases including dysentery and typhoid that Indians could have transported back to their villages. The sickness could also have been a result of endemic malaria or a lack of fresh water.

A more deadly outbreak occurred in the Mississippi Valley. Over one thousand French regulars and northern Indians traveled from Montreal to the Mississippi, where they joined with a large force of French, Indians, and African-Americans near present-day Memphis.[53] The French again hoped to destroy the Chickasaws, who had been preying on trading expeditions in the area. A "contagion," however, circulated through the French forces, destroying members of all races and even spreading north into Illinois. Nearly all the French marines who entered the camp hospital died. [54] The outbreak occurred in the late fall, making yellow fever an unlikely culprit. The severe

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[51] Francis Moore to Harman Verelst, July 3, 1742, C.O. 5:654, p.88; and Hewatt, An Historical Account in HCSC, I, 339.

[52] Thomas Jones to John Lydes, September 18, 1740, in Colonial Letters, II, 474.

[53] Joseph L. Peyser, "The Chickasaw wars of 1736 and 1740: French military drawings and plans document the struggle for the Lower Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History 44 (1982): 11.

[54] Louboey to Maurepas, January 4, 1740, in MPAFD, I, 412-413.

death toll and rapid spread indicate some type of acute infectious disease. With their numbers depleted, the French failed to dislodge the Chickasaws from their homeland.

No evidence suggests that the Chickasaws contracted the illness that the French carried, but an epidemic among the Choctaw in 1742 may have been related in some way to the movement of troops through the Mississippi Valley. The French governor hoped that the Choctaws would march "in a large body" and accomplish what the previous expedition could not do. The Choctaws disappointed the governor, informing him that "an epidemic disease that has carried off many of their children" had kept them from going to war.[55] Some scholars believe the outbreak to have been diptheria, a severe throat ailment that was especially mortal among the young. Diptheria was in fact epidemic in Europe and in North America in the late 1730s and 1740s and could have accompanied soldiers coming from Montreal or the West Indies.[56] Other illnesses cannot be ruled out. If the Choctaws had experienced measles or smallpox in recent years, for example, then the majority of individuals susceptible to both viruses would have been children.

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[55] Bienville to Maurepas, June 18, 1742, in MPAFD, III, 769.

[56] Duffy, ed. History of Medicine in Louisiana, 41.

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Following the sickness among Choctaw children in 1742, the Southeastern Indians experienced a five-year reprieve from epidemics. Beginning in 1747 and continuing into 1750, however, several diseases again spread throughout the region.

In 1747, outbreaks first erupted among Indians allied with the colony of French Louisiana. "The measles mixed with the smallpox has made great ravages in this [Choctaw] nation," a French official reported in February 1748, "where up to the present a thousand or twelve hundred have died."[57] Shortly after, intelligence reached Charles Town, confirming a widespread epidemic among the Choctaws.[58] By March, most of the remaining tribes of the Mississippi Valley came down with the deadly afflictions. "I have received some [news] today from the Arkansas. . .that the nations of this continent have been attacked by diseases that have greatly diminished their number," Philippe de Rigault de Vaudreuil, the Governor of Louisiana stated. "It has been the same among all the small nations of this river." Facing the numerically superior tribes allied with

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[57] Louboey to Maurepas, February 16, 1748, MPAFD, IV, 313.

[58] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, May 3, 1748, C.O. 5:456, p.231.

the British, including a substantial portion of the Choctaws who began trading with the better supplied English, the French Governor greeted the epidemic with enthusiasm. "It is to be hoped that no more of them [Native Americans] will be left, particularly of the sorts that are most numerous," he exclaimed.[59]

Although failing to meet Vaudreuil's greatest expectations, smallpox and perhaps measles ravaged the interior confederacies. At the time the outbreak began, the Choctaws were engaged in a violent civil war between pro-French and pro-English factions. Pro-English Choctaws, attempting to persuade other confederacies to come to their aid, inadvertently spread disease to the Chickasaws and Creeks.[60] James Adair reported that the illness had made its way nearly into South Carolina, afflicting a party of Chickasaws as they approached the colony in 1749.[61] Traveling Chickasaws may have introduced the pathogen to Indians living along the Savannah River. One village,

[59] Vaudreuil to Maurepas, March 20, 1748, MPAFD, IV, 316.

[60] Adair, History of the American Indian, 356.

[61] Adair, History of the American Indian, 295. The South Carolina Gazette does not report smallpox in Charles Town or its immediate surroundings in 1749.

composed of Chickasaws who had earlier fled their homeland in Mississippi, suffered from the disease into 1750.[62]

The Cherokees too succumbed to infection. In the spring of 1748, villages along the Hiwassie River, known as the Valley Towns, experienced a disease that may have been smallpox. In June, the Raven of Hiwassie Town informed Governor Glen of South Carolina that he could not come to Charles Town because "there was still a great sickness in his town and likewise almost a famine throughout the Nation."[63] One cannot be sure that smallpox created the "sickness" in the Raven's town, but the virus apparently had great currency in the Southeast and some Cherokees were later reported to have had the disease.[64]

With smallpox raging in the interior, South Carolinians took efforts to prevent the disease from spreading into English settlements. British officials at Fort Moore, an outpost on the Savannah across from present day Augusta, Georgia, were in charge of arresting the progress of smallpox. These officials examined Native Americans who desired to visit Charles Town and forbade them to proceed if they had an active infection. Fourteen

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[62] "Talk of the Headmen of the Savannahs," in DRIA, I, 215.

[63] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, July 18, 1748, p.363. C.O. 5:456.

[64] Journal of [South Carolina] Council, January 18, 1750, C.O. 5:462, n.p.

Cherokees, for example, set out to visit Governor Glen in the winter of 1749-1750. An official authorized their travel but only after he found that they were "quite recovered [from smallpox] and there can arise no danger from them coming down [to Charles Town]."[65] Similarly, an English justice of the peace detained a party of Chickasaws for twenty days before allowing them to complete their journey to Charles Town. "Having carefully looked upon them," the official reported, "[I] can perceive no scab or Blemish upon any of them unless it be the common marks of the Small Pox which they have had sometime ago and which we now think to the best of our knowledge they are entirely clear of."[66] These quarantine efforts helped save Charles Town from a smallpox epidemic, since the South Carolina Gazette did not report infections of this dreaded virus in either 1749 or 1750.

Charles Town, however, did experience other diseases, which arrived aboard sea-born vessels. The volume of ship traffic, especially to and from the disease-infested Caribbean Islands, increased in the 1740s due to England's war with Spain (King George's War, 1740-1748). In July

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Journal of [South Carolina] Council, February 5, 1749, C.O. 5:462, n.p.

1748, a ship coming from Jamaica carried an "infectious fever," causing the death of twenty sailors. Surviving infected crewmen were quarantined in the pest house.[67] Such preventative measures failed, however, as the fever spread throughout Charles Town. Observers called the disease "yellow fever," which due to its association with mosquitoes could not be kept from spreading along the waterfront.[68] Other diseases were also involved. By December 1748, several illnesses were reported to be "growing epidemic."[69]

As the British demobilized their troops and withdrew their navy from the Caribbean, multiple diseases continued to arrive in South Carolina. In 1749, soldiers who recently participated in a failed attempt to destroy St. Augustine probably spread contagion. After their assault on the Spanish outpost, English troops disbanded and traveled through Georgia and Carolina.[70] Many were destitute and had little recourse but to beg for food in Charles Town.[71] With thousands of former soldiers traveling

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[67] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, July 12, 1748, p.354, C.O. 5:456, n.p.

[68] South Carolina Gazette, September 6, 1748, no. 751.

[69] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, April 6, 1749, C.O. 5:457, p.301.

[70] Alexander Heron to Trustees, July 7, 1749, C.O. 5:642, p.245.

[71] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, November 8, 1749, C.O. 5:459, pp.737-738.

about, diseases spread throughout the colony. Most of the diseases remain unidentifiable, but a colonist in near-by Georgia reported that in 1749, 1750, and 1751, Carolinian settlers suffered from "the purples," (most likely Scarlet Fever), sore throat, and the measles.[72] The Governor of Georgia identified the diseases as "yellow fever" and other "distempers," and ordered quarantine on all traffic coming from their colonial neighbors.[73] One prominent medical historian believed that diseases in circulation were respiratory diseases such as influenza.[74] Such diagnosis, however, remains questionable without supporting evidence.

Tragically, large delegations of Cherokee and Creek Indians arrived at the colonial capital at the height of the epidemics. Yellow Bird, a noted Cherokee warrior, saw his wife die along with others, and then asked for a wagon to carry the sick back to their villages.[75] He too died as did numerous other Cherokee leaders including the Emperor, "the Prince of Tennessie," and "Half-Breed Johny," who was

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[72] "Daily Reports...October 12, 1750," in Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants who Settled in America, 27 vols., ed. George Fenwick Jones and Renate Wilson, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1968-), XIV, 161; "Daily Reports...January 18, 1751," in Detailed Reports, XV, 10; "Daily Reports...February 28, 1751," in Detailed Reports, XV, 26.

[73] William Stephens, et al to Trustees, October 26, 1749, C.O. 5:642: fo.268.

[74] Duffy, Epidemics in Colonial America, 195-196.

[75] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, September 6, 1749, C.O. 5:459, p.655; and James Glen to Board of Trade, December 23, 1749. C.O. 5:372. fo. 171-172.

"the Greatest Warrior" of his nation. Creek leaders also succumbed to diseases at this time.[76]

Some of the illnesses first introduced into Charles Town probably spread beyond English settlements into the interior. In July 1749, one Creek leader claimed that several of the headmen of the Lower Towns were sick and unable to travel to Charles Town.[77] Catawbas who visited Glen in late summer 1749 appeared to have carried diseases back to their villages. They experienced massive casualties, leading Governor Glen to lament "I am afraid it must end in the total destruction of that poor Nation." [78] As late as September 1750, the Chickasaws, who also sent leaders to Charles Town in 1749, reportedly suffered from sickness. [79] While the illnesses that the Indians suffered could have been contracted in Charles Town, smallpox and measles first introduced into the Mississippi Valley in 1747 and then spread through the region in 1748 could have also lingered as late as 1750.

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[76] James Glen to Board of Trade, December 23, 1749, C.O. 5:372. fo. 171-172.

[77] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, September 4, 1749, C.O. 5:459. pp.604-605.

[78] James Glen to Board of Trade, December 23, 1749, C.O. 5:372. fo. 171-172.

[79] Minutes of Council, August 2, 1749, C.O. 5:459, pp.385; and Vaudreuil to Rouille, MPAFD, V, 55.

The spread of pathogenic microbes through the Southeast from 1747 to 1750 came in large part from warfare and troop movements. The disruption caused by the Choctaw civil war increased human traffic as did the mobilization of English and Indian troops for a siege on St. Augustine. The next major disease periods in the Southeast were also related to warfare and troop movements.

Between 1755 and 1764, French, English, and Native Americans marched armies across the North American continent, spreading pathogenic microbes. From 1755 to 1757, smallpox wreaked havoc among Native Americans and colonists north of the Ohio, the area where the majority of military engagements occurred.[80] Although smallpox may have appeared in Georgia in 1755, quarantine efforts by South Carolina kept the disease out of Charles Town and its immediate settlements.[81] The virus, however, trickled into the Backcountry. Some Catawbas, returning from the siege on Ft. Duquesne, carried smallpox with them, which according to one source, "almost extirpated this little nation."[82]

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[80] Duffy, Epidemics in Colonial America, 86-90.

[81] South Carolina Gazette, March 20, 1758, no.1082.; and South Carolina, Gazette, June 23, 1757, no.1195.

[82] George Milligan, "A short description of South Carolina," in HCSC, II, 519.

The sickness spread beyond the Catawbas. One Indian trader received a "flying report" of smallpox striking a group of Chickasaws, who had settled among the Upper Creeks.[83] By July 1758, the disease had reportedly reached Ft. Moore and Augusta.[84] Within a year, Chickasaw settlements on the Savannah succumbed to infection, provoking British officials in Charles Town and Savannah to post sentries to arrest anyone suspected of transmitting the disease into their settlements.[85] As late as October 1759, Charles Town had avoided a major outbreak, but events late in the year would spell disaster for the colonial capital.

War between the Cherokees and English helped smallpox spread extensively in late 1759. Relations between the Cherokees and British had been strained throughout the 1750s. War erupted in 1759, after Virginians killed several Cherokees returning from the north. In retaliation, the Cherokees attacked several Backcountry settlers in Virginia as well as North and South Carolina. [86] By

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[83] Daniel Pepper to Governor Lyttleton, June 28, 1757, DRIA, II, 389.

[84] South Carolina Gazette, July 7, 1758.

[85] South Carolina Gazette, May 21, 1759, no.1283; South Carolina Gazette, June 9, 1759, no;1288; "Special journal of Pastor Boltzius, part 1 June-July 1759," in Detailed Reports, XVII, 58 and 134; and South Carolina Gazette, June 23, 1759.

[86] On origins of first Cherokee war, see M. Thomas Hatley, The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Revolutionary Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 105-115.

November, South Carolina assembled 1,678 troops and marched towards the Southern Appalachians. The large army suffered sickness within two weeks of departing, and by the end of the month, measles erupted among the English troops.[87] When they arrived at Ft. Prince George, a British garrison across the river from the Lower Cherokee town of Keowee, the troops encountered smallpox, which the Cherokees reportedly acquired from the Catawbas. Governor William Lyttleton, commander of the expedition, ordered all traffic between Keowee and the encamped troops to cease, but clandestine communication led to an outbreak among the British.[88]

In a rare occasion in Native American history, smallpox in 1759 worked to the advantage of the Indians and to the disadvantage of invading Europeans. The Cherokees had had an epidemic of the disease ten years earlier and thus only a relatively few of their people lacked immunity. The English, on the other hand, were unprepared. "Very few in our little army had gone through the small-pox," George Milligan commented, "and being every way unprovided for

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[87] South Carolina Gazette, December 8, 1759, no.1326; and William Lyttleton to Board of Trade, December 10, 1759, in BPRSC, XXVIII, 280.

[88] South Carolina, Gazette, January 12, 1760, no.1326; and William Lyttleton to Board of Trade, December 10, 1759, in BPRSC, XXVIII, 280.

such an accident, all immediately separated to return to the settlement."[89] South Carolina had not had a major smallpox outbreak since 1738, and many of the enlisted soldiers, especially those born in the colony, had acquired no immunity. When confronted with the disease, they panicked, fleeing back to their homes and spreading the virus among non-immune slaves and European settlers.[90]

With Charles Town officials unable to curtail the disease, a smallpox epidemic, second in magnitude only to that of 1738, occurred that lasted through most of 1760.[91] "The smallpox raged to such a degree in town," one colonist wrote, "that few of the militia could be prevailed on to leave their distressed families to serve the public."[92] Almost every family had experienced fatalities. And, of all deaths in Charles Town in 1760, nearly 92%, or 940 individuals, were smallpox victims.[93] Through most of the year, the colony lay prostrate, and fortunately for the

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[89] Milligan, "A short description," in HCSC, II, 526.

[90] William Lyttleton to Board of Trade, December 29, 1759, in BPRSC, XXVIII, 284.

[91] In January, the South Carolina Gazette denied that infection had made great progress in Charles Town, but others realized the havoc the disease created. See South Carolina Gazette, January 19, 1760, no. 1327; and William Fyffe to John Fyffe, February 1, 1761, Tulsa Gilcrease Museum of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Later, the Gazette reported that all hope curtailing the disease was lost. See South Carolina Gazette, February 9, 1760, no.1330.

[92] Hewatt, An Historical Account, in HCSC, I, 454.

[93] Ramsay, Ramsay's History, II, 44. Ninety-two of the 940 deaths were from failed inoculations.

Cherokees, South Carolinians could not send an army back to the Southern Appalachians until British regulars arrived in the spring of 1760.[94] By April, the pathogen had become epidemic in Georgia.[95]

Although not spreading as it did among Anglo-American and African-American settlers, smallpox did some damage to the Cherokees in 1759 and 1760. "The last accounts from Keowee," the South Carolina Gazette reported in January 1760, "are that the Small Pox has destroyed a great many of the Indians there; that those who remained alive and had not yet had that Distemper were gone into the Woods, where many of them must perish as the Catawbas did."[96] As late as June 1760, when the British expedition under Archibald Montgomery arrived at the Lower Towns, the disease still lingered.[97] Despite the ravages of the disease, Cherokee village life had not totally disintegrated. Montgomery's second in command, James Grant, reported that the Cherokees had "astonishing magazines of corn."[98] Another Englishman

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[94] Milligan, "A short description," 528. British troops arrived in Charles Town on April 5, 1760 but did not reach Keowee late May or early June. See South Carolina, Gazette, April 7, 1760, no.1338; and South Carolina, Gazette, June 10, 1760, no.1348.

[95] "Daily Reports...April 29, 1760," in Detailed Reports, XVII, 160.

[96] South Carolina Gazette, January 19, 1760, no.1327.

[97] South Carolina Gazette, June 14, 1760, no.1349.

[98] James Grant to Lt. Governor Bull, June 4, 1760, printed in South Carolina Gazette, June 10, 1760, no.1348.

claimed, "the neatness of those Indian towns, and their knowledge of agriculture would surprise you, they abounded in every comfort of life."[99] The agricultural surplus of the Cherokees in early June indicated that smallpox had not prevented them from planting and making an early harvest. What smallpox failed to do, however, the English accomplished. Montgomery's army looted and burned the major towns of the Lower Cherokees, before the Cherokees inflicted a defeat on them and forced a retreat. [100]

Conflicting evidence makes it difficult to discern whether smallpox spread beyond the Lower Cherokees. With the destruction of their towns, Lower Cherokees sought refuge with their countrymen in other regions. The Pennsylvania Gazette, whose distance makes it a less credible source on events in the South, recorded that in August 1760 Cherokee war-refugees transported the virus to villages farther away from South Carolina. "The People of the Lower Towns have carried the Small-pox into the Middle settlement and Valley, where that Disease rages with great

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[99] South Carolina Gazette, June 14, 1760, no. 1349.

[100] South Carolina Gazette, June 14, 1760, no. 1349; July 5, 1760, no.1352; and William Bull to Board of Trade, June 30, 1760, in BPRSC, XXVIII, p.365.

Violence," the Gazette claimed. [101] No one reported that the disease penetrated the Overhills, however.

Evidence of illness throughout the Cherokee Nation did not appear in the South Carolina Gazette until late September, and the sickness was not smallpox. "The Indians over the hills, in the Valley and Middle-settlements die very fast, of a violent disorder in their stomach and a flux," South Carolinians learned from two traders. With so many people moving about, particularly armies numbering over 1,000, it would not be surprising that several pathogens circulated through the Southeast. A number of reports in fact indicated that various sicknesses afflicted the English and their Indian allies.[102] Intestinal disorders such as typhoid, a common camp follower of armies, could have been an illness widely circulated during the First Cherokee War. An English official, however, discounted the extent of mortality among the Cherokees claiming that "we do not find that the Indians have been so sickly" as the traders claimed.[103] A month later, another trader claimed that "the smallpox and Flux (which have

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[101] Pennsylvania Gazette, September 4, 1760, no.1654.

[102] South Carolina Gazette, October 18, 1760, no.1368, and November 29, 1760, no.1374.

[103] South Carolina Gazette, October 18, 1760, no.1368.

proved most severe scourges) had reduced the Cherokee gunmen to about 1400."[104]

As with the Middle and Valley Cherokees, the Creeks reportedly contracted disease from the Lower Cherokees. The English had striven to enlist the Creeks in their battle with the Cherokees, but the Creeks were very cautious in engaging their northern neighbors; they had just recently established peace with the Cherokees after nearly forty years of war. Time and again, the Creeks feigned interest in fighting for the British, only to hold back their warriors. The fear of contracting smallpox may have played a role, although the English believed that French and Cherokee influence made the Creeks reluctant.[105] Some Creeks indeed seemed to entertain desires to join with the Cherokees, and emissaries traveled between the two nations through much of 1760.[106] Some Lower Cherokees also took refuge with the Creeks after the second British invasion.

Unfortunately, such friendly contacts resulted in the introduction of pathogens into some Creek villages. In

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[104] South Carolina Gazette, October 22, 1760, no. 1369.

[105] Henry Ellis to Board of Trade, April 16, 1760, C.O. 5:648, fo.1 and 2; and Henry Ellis to Board of Trade, June 7, 1760, C.O. 5:648, fo.5.

[106] Lachlan Shaw to Governor Lyttleton, March 6, 1760, in DRIA, II, 505; South Carolina Gazette, September 13, 1760, no.1363.

June, smallpox infected the Lower Creek town of Coweta and the Upper town of Oakchoy.[107] By September, another Upper town, Mucculassah, succumbed to infection.[108] An unidentified illness, perhaps the same stomach "disorder" and "flux" that afflicted some of the Cherokees, also spread among the Creeks in 1760. The Gun Merchant, a headman of the Upper Creeks, lamented that he could not attend a conference with the Governor of South Carolina. His nation was "in great distress, through a kind of epidemic distemper of which many die."[109]

The spread of smallpox and other diseases through the Cherokee and Creek homelands was due in large part to the upheaval of the First Cherokee War. British invasions in December of 1759 and June of 1760, each involving over 1,000 troops, facilitated the diffusion of pathogens into the interior. In the wake of the epidemics came a third British invasion in the spring of 1761. Although it did not seem to have had a major epidemiological impact, the English expedition again burned the Lower Towns and then torched the Middle settlements, producing a devastating

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[107] South Carolina Gazette, supplement to June 21, 1760, no.1350

[108] South Carolina Gazette, September 27, 1760, no. 1365.

[109] South Carolina Gazette, November 29, 1760, no.1374.

blow to Cherokees trying to recover from their previous bout with sickness.[110] Such violence further encouraged Lower Cherokees to abandon their homes. Many moved to the Overhills and Valley Towns, establishing new towns on the Little Tennessee and Hiwassie rivers.[111]

By the end of the First Cherokee War, the 1759-1760 smallpox epidemic came to a close. The Choctaws, Chickasaws, and other Indians living near French Louisiana were spared infection from the dreaded virus. Nevertheless, the movement of English troops to Mobile and Pensacola to replace French and Spanish garrisons in 1764 brought another round of pathogens to the Southeast that jeopardized Indian survival.

After the defeat of the French in the North, the theater of war had switched to the Caribbean. The increase in naval traffic through southern ports increased the volume of pathogens introduced. Smallpox was reported in South Carolina and in some parts of Georgia in spring 1763.[112] In October, the virus afflicted the French, who were then departing New Orleans to make way for their

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[110] The most thorough account of the First Cherokee War is Hatley, The Dividing Paths, 119-140.

[111] South Carolina Gazette, December 23, 1760, no.1377; and January 31, 1761, no.1383.

[112] South Carolina Gazette, May 14, 1763, no. 1303 and June 18, 1763, no.1307; and Georgia Gazette, July 7, 1763, no.14

Spanish successors.[113] By the following year, the disease arrived in Mobile.[114] Savannah, Augusta, and other settlements in Georgia also suffered from a smallpox epidemic that originated aboard a slave ship from the Caribbean.[115] The illness persisted into 1765. Several Georgians believed that inoculation spread smallpox, and they may have indeed been correct.[116]

As during the majority of disease periods, multiple pathogens invaded the Southeast simultaneously in 1764 and 1765. British officers complained of mass sickness immediately after arriving at their new Gulf Coast outposts. In March 1764, one regiment spread disease into the Mississippi Valley. They had hoped to travel north and join other British forces fighting Pontiac, but they had to disband just above New Orleans due to "death and sickness."[117] By fall 1764, troops in Pensacola and Mobile

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[113] Kerlérec to Choiseul, October 16, 1763, in MPAFD, V, 100.

[114] James Wright to Board of Trade, May 26, 1764, C.O.5:649, fo.13.

[115] Georgia Gazette, May 31, 1764, no.61; June 7, 1764, no.62; June 14, 1764, no.63.

[116] Georgia Gazette, June 7, 1764, no.62.; July 12, 1764; and August 16, 1764, no.72. One can assume that eighteenth century doctors utilized material containing mild strains of the smallpox virus, thus decreasing the chances of death for anyone who received the disease from an inoculated individual. As will be discussed later, this may explain in part why mortality rates among Southeastern Indians declined during the eighteenth century. The viruses to which they were exposed were the more mild forms circulated via inoculation. Infection from a mild strain of smallpox still provides immunity from more severe strains.

[117] Major Loftus to General Gage, April 4, 1764, C.O. 5:83, p.261.

succumbed to "a disorder" resembling "a Plague" that caused many to die daily.[118]

The following year, an even more severe series of epidemics struck. In spring 1765, whooping cough was reported in Charles Town and may have flourished at other ports as well.[119] In September, a virulent outbreak occurred at Pensacola. The Governor of East Florida claimed that the sickness "was hitherto unknown" to the region and that the disease had become "universally epidemic."[120] Bernard Romans, a European naturalist then touring the Southeast, identified the illness as yellow fever and claimed that ships imported it from Jamaica and Cuba. He sadly reported that the affliction "swept [the English soldiers] off so as scarce to leave a living one to bury the dead."[121] Romans may have been correct in blaming yellow fever for the deaths. But a strong possibility existed, especially due to the movement of thousands of

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[118] Major Farmer to Secretary of War, September 15, 1764, MPAED, I, 120; Governor Johnstone to John Pownall, October 31, 1764, MPAED, I, 169; and Thomas Gage to Earl of Halifax, November 9, 1764, C.O. 5:83, p.333.

[119] Lionel Chalmers, An Account of the Weather and Diseases of South Carolina, 2 vols., (London, 1776), 162.

[120] Governor Johnstone to Lord Halifax, September 14, 1765, MPAED, I, 289.

[121] Bernard Romans, A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida: An Account of the Natural Produce in the Southern Part of British America in the Three Kingdoms of Nature Particularly the Animal and the Vegetable (New York: 1775), 232 and 13.

troops, that whooping cough and other diseases also struck the Gulf Coast in 1765.

Once again, the specter of epidemic confronted the Four Nations. The Creeks were particularly vulnerable due to their close proximity to Mobile, Pensacola, and Georgia. "By accounts from Mobile and Augusta," the Georgia Gazette reported in May 1764, "the Creeks seem not to be in a condition to disturb, having got the smallpox amongst them, which carries them off very fast."[122] Later, English sources specified that the Creeks contracted the virus at Mobile.[123] The British also indicated that Upper Creeks living near the Alabama Fort, a French outpost then being transferred to the British located at the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa, suffered the most.[124] Smallpox probably spared these villages in 1760, most likely making it over fourteen years since they had experienced a major outbreak.

Similarly, smallpox probably spared the Choctaws since 1748, only to erupt with a fury in 1764. Several of their older chiefs, many of whom were staunch allies of the French, died from the virus. The epidemic, thus, provided

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[122] Georgia Gazette, June 21, 1764, no.64.

[123] James Wright to Board of Trade, May 26, 1764, C.O. 5:649, fo.13.

[124] Georgia Gazette, July 19, 1764, no.68.

the English an avenue to establish relations with new leaders.[125] No reported cases of smallpox among the Cherokees or Chickasaws emerged. Such an absence of evidence suggests that the virus had struck them four years earlier, lessening the number of non-immune people in which the virus could germinate into an epidemic.

The Cherokees, however, did not escape other diseases then in circulation. In September 1766, an outbreak of a deadly illness occurred in at least one of their villages. "When I got up this morning," Kittagusta, a Cherokee Beloved Man, exclaimed to a British official, "I could hear nothing but the cries of women and children for the loss of their relatives." He went on to add, "I never remember to see any sickness like the present, except the small pox."[126] What this disease was and whether it had an impact on any of the other Four Nations remains uncertain, but its occurrence indicates the proliferation of pathogens in the Southeast during a time of major troop movements.

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By the end of 1766, the incidence of infectious diseases tapered off, and for thirteen years, the Four Nations

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[125] John Stuart to John Pownall, April 16, 1765, C.O. 5:66 in WE, IV, 375.

[126] "Talk of Cherokees to John Stuart," September 22, 1766, C.O. 5:67 in WE, IV, 687.

escaped major epidemic. By 1779, however, the theater of the Revolutionary War moved south, and armies once again spread diseases through the region.[127]

The Four Nations remained reluctant to participate in the Revolutionary War. Border conflicts between the Cherokees and settlers had been sporadic since the end of the First Cherokee War and escalated in 1776. In that year, American rebels, fearing that the mountainous nation would join the British, invaded the Cherokees' homeland, destroying several dwellings, food, and people. Such a violent blow encouraged many of the Indians to stay neutral. Some Cherokees, Creeks, and Chickasaws battled the Americans and served as scouts for the British army, but large segments of these nations as well as the entire Choctaw confederacy did not participate significantly in the war.

The revolutionary conflict, however, had major epidemiological significance for the Southeastern Indians. Smallpox returned to the region in the late 1770s. The virus had plagued revolutionary war soldiers since 1776, and accompanied troops as they moved south in 1779. In

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[127] British officials were in continual communication with the Four Nations from 1766 to 1779, and the documentation of this period is the most substantial of all the years of the colonial period. No evidence of a major outbreak emerged until once again British and American troops moved into the Southeast as the battles of the Revolutionary War shifted to the South.

February, English soldiers infected by smallpox sailed from Jamaica and landed at Pensacola.[128] The British commander attempted to quarantine the victims of the disease, but his efforts failed. By May, residents of Pensacola were embroiled in an epidemic.[129] Throughout the remainder of the year, British officers made several reports of smallpox and other sickness among their troops.[130]

Smallpox then made its way into the interior. British deserters undoubtedly helped spread the virus. American Loyalists and German mercenaries continually left their disease-ridden units.[131] One British officer claimed that the deserters attempted to return to the North through the Indian nations.[132] Visiting Native American delegations also may have transported the disease from the coast into the Backcountry. In August and July, for example, Creeks traveled to Savannah and Pensacola to exchange captured

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[128] Brig. General John Campbell to Sir Henry Clinton, February 10, 1779, C.O. 5:597, p.53.

[129] Jacob Monia to Commissioners, May 1, 1779, C.O. 5:80 in WE, VIII, 246.

[130] Board of Commissioners to the Head Men and Warriors of the Great Tallassie Town in the Upper Creek Nation, June 6, 1779, C.O. 5:81, in WE, VIII, 517; James Wright to Sir Henry Clinton, July 30, 1779, C.O. 5:98, p.286; and John Campbell to Sir Henry Clinton, September 11, 1779, C.O. 5:598, fo.57-58.

[131] Brig. General John Campbell to Sir Henry Clinton, February 10, 1779, C.O. 5:597, p.53; and Brig. General John Campbell to Sir Henry Clinton, September 11, 1779, C.O. 5:598, fo.57.

[132] Brig. General John Campbell to Sir Henry Clinton, March 21, 1779, C.O. 5:597, pp.93-94.

slaves, livestock, and Americans with the British.[133] The following September, Creeks refused to aid the British in repulsing the French and Spanish attack on Mobile.[134] Smallpox, according to Alexander Cameron, a British Indian agent, was the reason for the Creeks' refusal. Cameron reported that the virus struck Creek villagers and had "reduced them much."[135]

At the same time, the Choctaws appear to have contracted an unidentified infectious disease. In November 1779, a party of 300 Choctaws visited Spanish officials in New Orleans. "They came away well satisfied," the British agent Cameron reported, but "an Epedemical disease which They brought with them destroyed a great many in the Nation and intimidated others from making a second visit."[136] Previously, thousands of Spanish troops had arrived in the Mississippi Valley from Cuba. They aided the Americans in defeating the British at Natchez and perhaps spread the disease responsible for afflicting the Choctaws.[137]

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[133] Major General Augustin Prevost to George Germain, August 4, 1779, C.O. 5:182, pp.156-157; David Taitt to George Germaine, August 6, 1779, in WE, VIII, p.266; and James Wright to Sir Henry Clinton, July 30, 1779, C.O. 5:98, p.286.

[134] Governor Patrick Tonyn to George Germaine, September 27, 1779, C.O. 5: 559, fo.184.

[135] Alexander Cameron to Major Gen. Augustin Prevost, October 15, 1779, C.O. 5:182, p.270.

[136] Alexander Cameron to George Germaine, December 15, 1779, C.O. 5:81, in WE, VIII, 350.

[137] John Campbell to George Germaine, December 15, 1779, C.O. 5:597, p.249.

While the 1779 smallpox outbreak had an impact on Southeastern Indians, not every report of disease can be substantiated. For example, American settlers, wishing misfortune for their enemies, may have fabricated accounts of an epidemic among the Cherokees in 1780. Since the invasion of 1776, a group of Cherokees known as the Chickamaugas had continued to war with the Americans, while the majority of the Cherokees sued for peace. In 1780, the Chickamaugas captured a party of Americans as they descended the Tennessee River. Some of the captives reportedly had smallpox, leading the settlers to claim that virus infected their Indian enemies.[138]

With a degree of wishful thinking, the escaped settlers told stories of how smallpox devastated the Chickamaugas. A military leader of the settlers claimed that the disease was a "judgement on the Indians." The American denigrated Indians for their inability to deal with the epidemic, claiming that the Indians used ineffective cures and attempted suicide to avoid the infection. He concluded that such a response "so increased [deaths] that the nation was hastening to extinction."[139]

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[138] "Colonel Fleming's Journal, 1779-1780," in Mereness, Early Travels, 642.

[139] "Narrative of Colonel Brown," in A.W. Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, or, Life and Times of General James Robertson, (Nashville: Printed for the Author, 1859; reprint ed. The First American Frontier Series, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 77.

Such tales subsequently became engrained in frontier historiography. "A dreadful retribution fell on the [Chickamauga] Indians," Theodore Roosevelt wrote in his Winning of the West, "for they were infected with the disease of their victims, and for some months virulent small-pox raged among many of the bands of Creeks and Cherokees." Roosevelt added that "when stricken by the disease, the savages first went into the sweat-houses, and when heated to madness, plunged into the cool streams, and so perished in multitudes."[140] James Moony similarly claimed a massive epidemic as fact.[141]

Concluding that smallpox struck the Cherokees in 1780, however, is problematic. It is doubtful that the settlers remained long enough, at least fourteen days, before smallpox infection would have become apparent. Moreover, John Donelson kept a journal during the trip down the Tennessee in which he made no mention of the disease.[142] Settlers most likely created the reports of a smallpox epidemic as a wish fulfillment that their Native American antagonists would in fact disappear.

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[140] Theodore Roosevelt, Winning of the West, 6 vols., (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1889-96), II, 236.

[141] Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 56.

[142] Captain Donelson's journal is reprinted in Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 69-75.

Still, the smallpox virus lurked in the region and presented problems for the Indians. From 1780 to 1783, troop movements and population dislocation spread the virus through Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia. The widespread practice of inoculation also accelerated the circulation of smallpox.[143]

In 1783, the Chickasaws appeared to have suffered infection. In that year, a Virginian, Samuel Erwin, traveled down the Tennessee River to its junction with the Ohio. There he met with Native American chiefs, "only two days walk from their towns." The Indians could have been Illinois or Chickasaws, although some scholars have misread the evidence and claimed they were Cherokees. Erwin learned that smallpox had afflicted the Indians and reduced them to an "almost starving condition."[144] A Spanish

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[143] "Presentment of a Respectable Grand Jury of Georgia, March 1780," in Papers of Lachland McIntosh, vol. XII, Collections of Georgia Historical Society, p.87; Thomas Brown to George Germaine, March 18, 1780, C.O. 5:81, p.225-226; Governor Patrick Tonyn to George Germaine, December 9, 1780, C.O. 5:560, fo.50; Calendar of Virginia State Papers and other Manuscripts...preserved in the Capitol at Richmond, 11 vols., (Richmond, 1875-1893), I, p.564; James Simpson to William Knox, December 31, 1780, C.O. 5:178, fo.84; Robert Andrews to Governor Harrison, March 9, 1782, in Calender of Virginia State Papers, I, p.89; and Jacobo Du Breuil to Don Estevan Miró, November 8, 1783, in "Spain in the Mississippi Valley," ed. Lawrence Kinnaird, Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1945, 4 vols., (Washington: G.P.O., 1946), vol. III, pt.2, p.91.

[144] Colonel Joseph Martin to Governor Harrison, August 30, 1783, in Calender of Virginia State Papers, III, 527. Mooney cites this source as evidence of a smallpox epidemic that hit the Cherokees in 1783, but the Indians had to be either Illinois or Chickasaws. See Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 61.

official traveling up the Mississippi confirmed that the virus was epidemic in the area.[145]

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After 1783, major epidemics in the Southeast ceased for several years. Cases of smallpox continued to be reported, but the practice of vaccination became prominent in the early 1800s, bringing an end to widespread outbreaks of the dreaded virus. Measles remained, but it became an endemic, common childhood disease among the European, African, and Native American populations. In the nineteenth century, epidemics of yellow fever, cholera, and other pathogens periodically visited. Nevertheless, the magnitude and frequency of epidemics among Native Americans had dramatically declined, giving them a reprieve from the series of diseases that battered them during the eighteenth century.

For nearly one hundred years, major epidemics, occurring every five to ten years, swept the Southeast and produced major changes in the social landscape. By 1750, Atlantic Coast and piedmont tribes consisted of diminutive communities of Catawbas, Natchez, Yuchis, Peedees, Watterees, and Cape Fears, who served as slave-catchers and

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[145] Jacobo Du Breuil to Don Estevan Miró, November 8, 1783, in "Spain in the Mississippi Valley," in Annual Report of the American Historical Association 1945, vol. III, pt.2, p.91.

commercial hunters for the more numerous English colonists.[146] Similarly, the once populous Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast tribes had been reduced to subordinate clients of the French and later the Spanish, to whom they sold food stuffs, deer skins, and other commodities.[147] Native Americans only survived in significantly large numbers in the interior, where the Four Nations suffered disproportionately less than other Southeastern Indians.

In part, the nature of the various diseases involved in eighteenth-century epidemics produced unequal catastrophe among Southeastern Indians. Epidemics during the colonial period consistently involved multiple pathogens. Some of these pathogens could spread far into the interior, and others remained confined to colonial seaports. Yellow fever, for example, occurred either before or after nearly every outbreak of smallpox. But due to the nature of the mosquito necessary for its spread, the disease could strike only seafront communities. Coastal tribes, thus, had to deal with a highly lethal pathogen in

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146 James Glen to the President and Assistants of Georgia, October 1750, C.O. 5:643, fo.60-61.

147 Jean-Bernard Bossu, Travels in the Interior of North America, 1751-62, ed. Seymour Feiler, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 24-28 and 30; and Romans, Natural History, 101-102. For an excellent study of the economy of Louisiana that includes a description of the role that these small tribes played, see Daniel Usner, Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: the Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

addition to equally troublesome diseases such as smallpox and measles.

The geographic location also protected the Four Nations from diseases other than yellow fever. For most of the early eighteenth century, the villages of the Four Nations were far enough away from European settlements to have made it difficult if not impossible for diseases with short incubation and infective periods, such as influenza, to reach them. Travel from the Lower Creek settlements to Charles Town, for example, could take 14 days and even longer from the Upper settlements.[148] Similarly, travel between the Lower Cherokee settlements and Charles Town took 15 days, while it took perhaps as much as eighteen days to go from the Cherokees' easternmost town to the farthest western settlement.[149] The Chickasaws and Choctaws of course were farther away from Charles Town and closer to Mobile and New Orleans. Travel from French colonial ports to these nations, nonetheless, was an arduous task, taking several days to reach the southernmost Choctaw villages and a couple of weeks to reach the northernmost Chickasaw settlements. This relatively far distance from European

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[148] David Taitt, "Journal," in Mereness, ed., Travels, 560-564.

[149] Antoine Bonnefoy, "Journal," in Williams, ed., Early Travels, 158; and "An account of the Presbytarian mission," in Williams, ed., Early Travels, 130-131.

and African settlements of course did not always protect the Four Nations from contagion, but it certainly made diseases less frequent visitors to the interior than they were to the Lowcountry.

When diseases did spread into the interior, the Four Nations suffered lower mortality rates due to the relative absence of malaria in their homelands.[150] The villages of the Four Nations generally existed above the fall line of southeastern rivers. Below this geographic boundary, the flow of rivers slows significantly, producing numerous stagnant pools and swamps, the natural habitat of anopheles mosquitoes. Malaria thereby proliferated as one approached the coast or the Mississippi flood plain. Due to its debilitating effects, malaria weakened the abilities of peoples to fight off other infections. And, when coastal, piedmont, and Mississippi Valley tribes, already weakened by malaria, experienced smallpox and measles, they suffered tragically high death tolls.

Europeans, who attributed malaria to contaminated air and other climatic phenomena, in fact provided observations that indicated an absence of malaria from the homelands of the Four Nations. James Adair reported that the Cherokees

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[150] On the impact of malaria and other infectious diseases, see McNeill, Plagues and Peoples, 212-213 and 310-341, esp. fn.28.

enjoyed "open and clear" air, while the Choctaws lived in a "happy climate" that was "extremely healthful."[151] Patrick Mackay, an English settler from Georgia who visited the Lower Creeks, wrote that "even strangers are seldom ever troubled with fevers and ague in this place." He correctly attributed such health to the hills and absence of swamps that characterized the area above the fall line of the Chattahooche River.[152] A later visitor reported that "no stagnant waters, or infectious fogs" existed about the rivers that ran through Creek settlements.[153]

Some villages of the Four Nations did live near malarial swamps, but unlike Lowcountry groups, members of these villages could move to locations that lacked the disease. William Bartram, for example, found that a town of Apalachicola Creeks moved to higher ground due to an "unhealthy situation, owing to the frequent inundations of the river" near their town.[154] He also found another Creek village, Alachua, which stood close to a swamp and whose residents relocated to a healthier environment. These

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[151] Adair, History of the American Indians, 240 and 303.

[152] Patrick Mackay to the Trustees, March 28, 1735, in Colonial Letters, I, 149.

[153] Caleb Swan, "Position and State of Manners and Arts in the Creek or Muscogee Nation, 1791," in Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States, 6 vols., ed. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1852-57), V, 258.

[154] Bartram, Travels, 318.

Creeks moved to the new settlement of Cuscowilla in northern Florida due to the "unhealthiness" of their village. They blamed such unhealthiness, according to the naturalist, on environmental conditions much as Europeans did. They claimed that their sickness resulted from "the stench of the putrid fish and reptiles in the summer and autumn, driven on shore by the alligators, and the exhalations from marshes of the savannhah, together with the persecution of the mosquitoes."[155]

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The good fortune of living farther away from Europeans and in an area relatively free of malaria explains why the Four Nations suffered less than tribes living outside of the interior. But such factors do not lead one to believe that the interior confederacies suffered *no* population loss. Smallpox, measles, and other diseases indeed penetrated the interior, and the severity of the epidemics as Euro-Americans reported suggests that the Four Nations experienced linear population decline. A close look at the available population estimates, however, suggests a different view. The Four Nations did not experience a

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[155] Ibid., 172.

steady demographic decline but instead showed some signs of growth by the end of the eighteenth century.

Since French and English colonial officials often counted only "warriors," a ratio of men to other tribal members must be used to calculate the population of an entire group. To arrive at such a ratio, one can use documented estimates that give both the total population and the number of men. In 1702, for example, the French commander of Louisiana, Iberville, claimed that the number of Choctaw and Chickasaw warriors for every "hut" was between three and four.[156] In 1715, the British estimated the number of Creeks at 8,777, which included 2,619 "gun men," giving a ratio of four non-warriors to every warrior.[157] A detailed assessment of the Cherokees in 1721, perhaps the most accurate census of any of the Four Nations in the early eighteenth century, counted 3,510 men and 10,379 women and children, which placed the ratio of men to women and children at three-to-one.[158] In 1750, however, an Englishman estimated that the Cherokees consisted of 10,000

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[156] Iberville's Gulf Journals, 174.

[157] Kathryn E. Holland Braund, Deerskins and Duffels: the Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 9.

[158] Francis Varnod, "Census of the Cherokees in 1721," reprinted in Berthold Fernow, The Ohio Valley in Colonial Days, (New York: Burt Franklin, 1890; reprint Lenox Hill, 1971), 273-275.

"souls" including 2,000 warriors, a four-to-one ratio.[159] An estimate of the total number of Creeks at the end of the century also claimed a four-to-one ratio of non-warriors to warriors.[160] At any given point in the eighteenth century, then, the number of adult men seemed to be between three and four times less than the number of women, children, and elders. Thus, a ratio of 3.5 to 1 can be used in the following assessment of the population of each of the Four Nations during the eighteenth century.[161]

Based on English records, the Cherokees lost nearly one-half of their population during the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1708, South Carolina officials claimed there were 5,000 Cherokee warriors.[162] The number of warriors in 1742 shrank to an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 warriors.[163] Using the 3.5 to 1 ratio, the Cherokee population thus would seem to have decreased from 17,500 in 1708 to 7,000 to 10,500 in 1742. Considering the devastation of the smallpox epidemic of 1738-39, one would

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[159] Milligan, "A short description," 519.

[160] Swan, "Position and state of...Creeks," 263.

[161] On Native American demography, see Wood, "Changing population of the colonial South," 35-103.

[162] Nathaniel Johnson to Board of Trade, September 17, 1708, in BPROSC, IX, p.209. Writing in the 1760s, Adair claimed that "forty years ago" the Cherokees had 64 towns and 6,000 warriors. Adair, History of the American Indians, 238.

[163] William Bull to Lords of Trade, June 15, 1742, in BPROSC, XX, p.567; Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, November 11, 1743, p. 236, C.O. 5:444.

assume that there were closer to 7,000 rather than 10,500 Cherokees. A source dated 1741, however, confirms the latter figure, giving an estimate of 10,000 Cherokees.[164]

Cherokee population hovered around 10,000 people for the remainder of the eighteenth century. In 1751, Governor Glen claimed that except for the Choctaws the Cherokees were still "the greatest Nation that we now have in America," with about 3,000 warriors.[165] English traders confirmed that the Cherokees had about 3,000 men.[166] Following epidemic and warfare in 1759 and 1760, the number of warriors dropped to 2,300, or about 8,050 total individuals.[167] For the period from 1761 to 1800, the Cherokees experienced a significant degree of population growth. John Stuart counted 2,800 Cherokee warriors in 1764, while another English official listed 3,000 men in 1783.[168] By the end of the colonial period then, Cherokee population had rebounded to around 10,500. Their numbers continued to increase during the remainder of the century.

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[164] Klingberg, "Lost Yamasee Prince," 31.

[165] Governor Glen to Committee on Indian Affairs, May 1751, in DRIA, I, 52.

[166] "Memorial of Robert Bunning and others," November 22, 1751, in DRIA, I, 148.

[167] Adair, History of the American Indian, 239.

[168] John Stuart to Board of Trade, December 8, 1764, C.O. 323:20, pp.215-316; and Thomas Brown to Thomas Townsend, January 12, 1783, C.O. 5:82, p.635.

In the early nineteenth century, the Cherokees had 12,395 people—a figure that did not include a large number of Cherokees who had moved west.[169]

Estimates of the Choctaw population resemble those for the Cherokees. European officials reported that Choctaw population was quite large in the early century, declined substantially around the middle of the century, and stabilized around 12,000 by the 1790s.

The number of Choctaws exceeded other southeastern groups during the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1700, the French learned from Native Americans that the Choctaws had more than 6,000 warriors.[170] Two years later, French officials lowered the estimate to no more than 4,000 warriors, but they counted only "three different villages," or divisions, neglecting one Choctaw division.[171] By the 1730s and 1740s, counts by both the French and English again reached 5,000 or more. [172] One French deserter informed the Governor of South Carolina that he judged the Choctaws to be "about six thousand without counting women

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[169] Norton, Journal, 162; and Thornton, Population History, 47.

[170] Iberville's Gulf Journals, 141.

[171] Ibid., 174.

[172] General Assembly of South Carolina to the King, April 9, 1734, in BPROSC, XVI, p.391; and The Present State of the Country and Inhabitants, Europeans and Indians of Louisiana...by an Officer at New Orleans (London: J. Millan, 1744), 6.

and children."[173] The total population of Choctaw at 1747 would therefore seem to have been 20,000 to 24,000.

By the 1770s, estimates of Choctaw population showed that the epidemics of 1747-48 and 1764-65 as well as increased warfare took a toll. In 1764, John Stuart claimed the number of Choctaw warriors to be 5,000, but by 1771 the English lowered their estimate to 3,000.[174] Also in the early 1770s, Bernard Romans gave an even smaller estimate of 2,500.[175] The loss of warriors was due in part to war with the Creeks that broke out in 1765 and continued into the 1770s, but both estimates may have been too low, perhaps neglecting to count some villages. In 1777, John Stuart gave a more plausible estimate of 4,400 warriors.[176] Choctaw population seemed to remain at that level for the remainder of the century. In 1792, a Spanish official counted 12,000 Choctaws.[177]

The Chickasaws displayed a high proportion of loss and gain during the eighteenth century. In 1702, the

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[173] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, April 15, 1747, p.82, C.O. 5:455.

[174] John Stuart to Board of Trade, December 8, 1764, C.O. 323: 20, pp.215-216; and Peter Chester to John Stuart, September 10, 1771, C.O. 5:72, in WE, VI, 115. Stuart's estimate may not have yet reflected the demographic impact of the smallpox epidemic of 1764.

[175] Romans, Natural History, 74.

[176] John Stuart to George Germaine, June 14, 1777, C.O. 5: 78, in WE, VII, 632.

[177] Edward Ross and Dawson Phelps, ed. and trans., "A Journey over the Natchez Trace in 1792: A Document from the Archives of Spain," Journal of Mississippi History 15 (October 1953): 272.

Chickasaws informed the French that they had at least 2,000 warriors over 18 years of age, with 700 to 800 having guns.[178] Six years later, however, Thomas Nairne visited the tribe and counted only 700 "men."[179] Nairne's low estimate reflected the impact of disease and warfare, but he also probably neglected to include some villages. A 1731 census showed major decline since 1702. In 1731, two French sources put the number of Chickasaw warriors at 850 and 1000 respectively. Both counts include 250 to 300 Natchez warriors who took refuge with their northern neighbors. [180] Chickasaw population dropped even more substantially by 1742. British officials counted only 400 Chickasaw men, thus putting the total population at approximately 1200. [181]

Mortality from disease cannot account entirely for Chickasaw population decline. Several villages departed the main body of the nation in northern Mississippi to settle in safer environs. Beginning in the 1720s and increasing as a result of French and Choctaw assaults in

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[178] Iberville's Gulf Journals, 174.

[179] Nairne to Ralph Izard, April 12, 1708, in Nairne, Nairne's Muskogean Journals, 36.

[180] De Beauchamp to Maurepas, November 5, 1731, MPAFD, IV, 81; and Perier and Salmon to Maurepas, December 5, 1731, MPAFD, IV, 88.

[181] William Bull to Lords of Trade, June 15, 1742, in BPROSC, XX, p.567.

1736 and 1740, some Chickasaws moved east, settling among the Creeks and on the Savannah River, near Augusta.[182] By 1765, the main body of Chickasaws in Mississippi had dwindled to 350 warriors or 1225 individuals, or 17.5% of their reported population in 1702. After the English defeat in the American Revolution and the expansion of American settlement, many Chickasaws had moved back to Mississippi. Such movement in addition to natural increase caused the population level of Chickasaws to rise substantially. In 1792, a Spaniard claimed that the Chickasaws numbered 600 warriors and 2,000 total people, an increase of nearly 49% since 1765.[183]

The Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Cherokees showed resilience in the face of repeated epidemics, but above all the Creeks displayed the highest degree of population resurgence. From 1715 to 1747, population estimates of the Creeks remained relatively the same. In 1726, the French counted 2,500 Creek warriors, corroborating the English estimate of 2,619 in 1715.[184] James Oglethorpe counted 2,300 warriors in 1733, consisting of 1,000 Upper Creeks,

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[182] Journal of [South Carolina] Upper House of Assembly, June 21, 1722, C.O. 5:425, n.p.; Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, July 4, 1744, C.O. 5:450, p.379; and Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, May 22, 1745, C.O. 5:451, p.305.

[183] Ross, ed. "A journey over the Natchez Trace," 272.

[184] Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 9; and MPAFD, III, 536-37.

1,100 Lower Creeks, and 200 Yuchis.[185] In 1742, the British reported only 1500 Creeks, but in 1748 they again calculated the number of warriors at 2,500.[186] Thus, the number of people that Europeans identified as "Creeks" seemed to hover around 2,500 warriors, or 10,000 total individuals from 1715 to 1747.

Creek population showed much fluidity during the remainder of the eighteenth century. In 1750, Governor James Glen placed the number of Creek warriors at 2,000.[187] Seven years later, another English estimate, which was supposedly derived from "Indian traders and the Indians themselves," gave a similar count of 2,146 Lower and Upper Creek warriors.[188] The number was certainly low and probably did not include some villages included in earlier counts; however, the decline from 1747 may have also reflected the impact of war with the Cherokees that started again in 1749. Peace with the Cherokees, incorporation of remnant groups, and other survival strategies allowed the Creeks to increase their numbers dramatically. The French

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[185] James Oglethorpe to the Trustees, March 12, 1733, in Colonial Letters, I, 7.

[186] William Bull to Board of Trade, June 15, 1742, in BPROSC, XX, p.567; and Governor James Glenn to Board of Trade, February 3, 1748, in BPROSC, XXIII, p.75.

[187] James Glen to the President and Assistants of Georgia, October 1750, C.O. 5:643, fo.61.

[188] "A list of the number of gun men in the different towns of the Upper and Lower Creek Nations, Georgia," C.O. 5:642, fo.22 in CRG, 28 pt.1, 88-89.

before leaving Louisiana provided the English with an estimate of 3055 Upper and Lower Creek warriors. The French counted an additional 440 Alabama, 100 Shawnee, 40 Chickasaws, and 20 Natchez men allied with the Creeks, making a total of 3,655 warriors or 12,792 individuals.[189] According to British Superintendent of Indian Affairs John Stuart, the Creek Confederacy grew not only by the incorporation of different tribes but also because "they have not suffered by the incursions of the Northern Tribes . . .and no war has subsisted between them and any tribe . . .for many years."[190] Stuart later concluded that an estimate of 3,500 Creek warriors was a "moderate" calculation.[191] Four years later he increased his estimate to 4,000.[192]

The Creeks continued to increase despite the secession of many of their people to northern Florida where they joined the growing Seminole confederacy. By 1777, English officials counted 800 Seminole warriors and the number continued to increase in the last two decades of the

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[189] "Creek villages and their populations," January 24, 1764, in MPAED, I, 94-97.

[190] John Stuart to William Tryon, May 28, 1766, C.O. 5:66 in WE, IV, p.421.

[191] John Stuart to [Thomas Gage?], August 8, 1766, C.O. 5: 67 in WE, IV, p.594.

[192] John Stuart to Lord Botetourt, January 13, 1770, C.O. 5: 71 in WE, V, 517.

eighteenth century.[193] Nevertheless, the British claimed a total of 6,000 warriors belonged to the Upper and Lower Creeks in 1783.[194] In the 1790s, the great Creek mixed-blood leader, Alexander McGillivray, confirmed such a large population of Creeks. He put the number of Creeks, not including their Seminole brethren, at 5,000 to 6,000 warriors and 25,000 to 26,000 total people.[195]

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As population estimates demonstrate, the Four Nations not only failed to disappear, but they showed an ability to recover from successive waves of epidemics. The expectations of Euro-Americans that all Native Americans would vanish, thus, failed to materialize. Avoiding disappearance, however, involved much more than the good fortune of geographic advantages. Population growth and even survival, as the next two chapters will explain, depended on an active and innovative response to eighteenth-century epidemics.

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[193] John Stuart to Brig. General Augustin Prevost, July 23, 1777, C.O. 5:78, in WE, VII, p.694.

[194] Thomas Brown to Thomas Townsend, January 12, 1783, C.O. 5:82, p.635.

[195] Swan, "Position and state of ... Creeks," 263. The 25,000 to 26,000 estimate is McGillivray's rather than mine, but it coincides with a 3.5 to 1 ratio.

Chapter Five:

The Imperial Four Nations

Although Euro-American colonists generally believed Native Americans were a vanishing race, at times they had to admit that some groups retained considerable power. John Brickell, who in 1730 estimated a ninety-percent population loss among Native Americans in the Carolinas, admitted that the Cherokees were "the most powerful and warlike Indians that we know of in these parts."[1] A French observer made similar comments about the Choctaws. In 1726, Bienville claimed that the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast had been deserted. "Only the Choctaws . . . can give us any ideas of

[1] John Brickell, Natural History of North Carolina [1737], (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnston, 1968), 320-321.

what the Indians formerly were," he concluded.[2] The Chickasaws also retained significant strength, forcing the French to look upon the Choctaws as "a numerous people, who make us a necessary barrier against the Chicachas, and against the savages bordering on Carolina."[3] Similarly, the thousands of people called Creeks coalescing on the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Chattahoochee Rivers were a formidable force, whose friendship the French, Spanish, and English eagerly sought.

The Four Nations' military strength, which Euro-Americans had to recognize, was indeed important for their survival. During the colonial period, the Four Nations conducted an imperial effort to absorb, capture, and conquer their neighbors to compensate for demographic losses. The interior confederacies particularly went to war against weaker tribes, who bore the brunt of eighteenth-century epidemics. From these tribes, they captured and adopted new members to add to their villages. To varying degrees, the Four Nations also recruited remnant groups to join the growing interior confederacies. Although not their only survival strategy, imperial actions

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[2] Bienville, "Memoir [1726]," in MPAFD, III, 527.

[3] Charlevoix, "Historical Journal," in HCL, III, 192.

helped the Four Nations achieve demographic recovery and growth in the eighteenth century.

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In the early 1700s, Creek Indians increased attacks on weaker tribes living along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. They had struck Spanish missions in northern Florida and coastal Georgia in the 1690s, seeking slaves to sell to English traders, but population decline during the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic gave them even more incentive to strike their enemies. During 1701 and 1702, Creeks raided the Apalachees of northern Florida. The Mobiles, Tohomes, and other tribes that resided along the Tensaw and Alabama rivers also faced repeated Creek attacks. Many Indians abandoned their villages; some even fled west and confederated with the Choctaws.[4]

Carolinians, who learned in August 1702 that Britain was at war with Spain and France, encouraged intertribal warfare. In September 1702, Colonel James Moore, a notorious slave trader from South Carolina, led 500 Englishmen and 300 Yamasee, Yuchi, and Lower Creek Indians in an attack on Guale, destroying Spanish missions and

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[4] Crane, Southern Frontier, 76; Iberville's Gulf Journals, 168 and 173; and Beaudouin to Salmon, November 23, 1732, in MPAFD, I, 156-157.

capturing the Indians.[5] Moore recruited Indian allies again to punish the Spanish in Apalachee. In the winter of 1703 and 1704, a combined army of approximately 3,000 Upper and Lower Creeks, as well as some Cherokees and Englishmen, launched a major assault on northern Florida. Moore acquired 100 slaves for his own profit, but his native allies captured five villages comprised of 1300 Apalachees who abandoned the Spanish in the wake of such an overwhelming force.[6] Many captives probably wound up on the Carolina slave market, while others became adopted members of Creeks and, to a lesser extent, of Cherokees.

For the next several years, Creeks continued to seek captives from the coast to augment their population. In 1706, they annihilated missions among the Timicua Indians that stretched from Apalachee to St. Augustine. The following year, they destroyed the Spanish settlement at Pensacola. Some Apalachees and other tribes fled to Mobile, seeking protection with the French. Others were either incorporated with the Creeks or sold to traders.[7] By 1708, Florida had lost so many of its native inhabitants that the

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[5] Crane, Southern Frontier, 76.

[6] "An account of what the army did under the command of Col. Moore, in his expedition last winter against the Spaniards and Spanish Indians," in HCSC, II, 573-576; Crane, Southern Frontier, 79-80; and Bérnard de la Harpe, "Journal," in HCL, III, 29. De la Harpe reports that 2,000 Apalachees went over to the Creeks.

[7] Crane, Southern Frontier, 81 and 88.

Englishman Thomas Nairne, who took part in the devastating raids, declared that the Creeks and other English allies "are now obliged to goe down as farr on the point of Florida as the firm land will permit." "They have drove the Floridians to the Islands of the Cape," he added, "[and] have brought in and sold many Hundred of them, and Dayly now Continue that Trade so that in some few years the'le Reduce these Barbarians to a farr less number."[8]

As did the Creeks, the Chickasaws sought to gain captives from weakened neighboring groups. The Chickasaws raided Mississippi Valley tribes in the 1690s, but such attacks continued after the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic. During one foray into the lower Mississippi Valley in 1700, the Chickasaws carried off fifty Colapissa Indians from their villages.[9] The Chickasaws also joined the Creeks in depleting the native population located near Mobile.[10] English traders accompanied earlier raids on these unfortunate people and purchased several of them as

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[8] Naime, Muskhogean Journals, 75.

[9] DuRu, Journal, 66.

[10] Iberville's Gulf Journals, 173.

slaves, but after 1700 a higher proportion of the captives were probably adopted.[11]

By 1706, the Chickasaws confederated with a neighboring tribe, the Yazoos, and together conducted raids. The Taensas, for example, were forced to flee down the river and seek shelter with the Bayagoulas. Unfortunately, the Bayagoulas did not welcome the refugees and nearly exterminated them.[12] Similarly, the Chickasaws and Yazoos pushed the Tonicas farther south among the Houmas, who treated the newcomers harshly, killing nearly half of the tribe.[13] Chickasaw prowess quickly gained their nation a reputation among Europeans as the "most military people of any about the great river."[14]

By the 1720s, Chickasaw raids in combination with epidemics had completed the virtual disappearance of many Mississippi Valley tribes. The Chickasaws took people from many groups including the "Courois," "Offagoulas," and "Chahoumas." The "Chetimachas" were "almost entirely destroyed" and there were "harldly any traces left" of the

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[11] Bérnard de la Harpe, "Journal," in HCL, III, 16.

[12] Ibid., 35.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Nairne, Muskhogean Journals, 38.

Mobiles.[15] The Taensas also seemed to vanish. At the time of La Salle's visit, this tribe "made a great figure," but by the 1720s, they had "entirely disappeared."[16] Undoubtedly, most of these tribes disintegrated due to disease, but some were captured and adopted by the Chickasaws, while others had fled into central Mississippi where they confederated with the Choctaws.

The Chickasaws faced their most powerful rival to the South, the Choctaws. In the early 1700s, Chickasaws raided the Choctaws as well as other neighboring tribes. The French managed to forge a peace between the two in 1702, but relations broke down and the Chickasaws resumed raids.[17] In 1705, several Choctaws visited Chickasaw villages to trade with the English. The Chickasaws, though, sold their guests as slaves, and the Choctaws responded by killing seventy Chickasaws returning from Mobile.[18] The following year the Chickasaws took nearly three hundred women and children from the Choctaws.[19]

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[15] Charlevoix, "Historical Journal," in HCL, III, 176 and 192.

[16] Ibid., 177-178.

[17] On the peace of 1702, see Iberville's Gulf Journals, 171.

[18] Bérnard de la Harpe, "Journal," in HCL, III, 33.

[19] Ibid., 34.

The Choctaws, however, managed to defend themselves, and in so doing, they became a powerful player in intertribal warfare. By 1708, the Choctaws obtained guns from the French, and for the following three years, Chickasaws and Creeks faced increasingly vigilant warriors protecting their villages. The Choctaws fought back and forced the invaders to retreat without gaining the number of captives that they had been accustomed to obtaining.[20] Further strengthening the Choctaws, several tribes confederated with them after fleeing into central Mississippi seeking safety from Chickasaw and Creek raids. By 1712, the Creeks and allied Alabamas agreed to a French negotiated peace.

Of all the Four Nations, the Cherokees weathered the dual storms of disease and slave raids in the 1690s and early 1700s most successfully. The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic weakened their Lowcountry neighbors, giving the Cherokees a reprieve from the slave raiders that had victimized them in earlier years. The Cherokees' relative isolation protected them from multiple diseases, and by the early 1700s, their population dwarfed that of their enemies. Traders, moreover, increased the volume of guns and ammunition flowing into the Appalachian highlands,

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[20] Crane, Southern Frontier, 95-96; and McWilliams, ed., Fleur de Lys and Calumet, 123.

giving the Cherokees a military superiority that allowed them to resist predation and become imperialistic themselves. In the first decade of the eighteenth century, they became more ambitious in intertribal warfare, participating in raids on such distant places as St. Augustine and Mobile.[21]

After revolting against the English, the Tuscaroras, a tribe living in the Carolina Piedmont, faced the power of the Cherokees. An invasion of domestic livestock and disease combined to strain relations between the Tuscaroras and English colonists. By 1711, this tribe suffered from several virgin soil epidemics and faced the loss of their privileged position in the colonial fur trade to interior groups. English settlers from Virginia and Carolina began to settle near them, which of course brought pigs and cattle into Indian hunting lands and fields. By the early 1700s, deer populations of the Carolina piedmont were in decline. Faced with such ecological stress, the Tuscaroras rebelled against the English colonists.[22]

The English looked to their native allies for help. The Tuscaroras were traditional rivals to the Cherokees,

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[21] Bérnard de la Harpe, "Journal," in HCL, III, 29; and McWilliams, ed., Fleur de Lys and Calumet, 123.

[22] The best account of the origins of the Tuscarora War is John Parramore, "The Tuscarora ascendancy," 307-326.

and since they were one of the first southeastern nations to acquire guns, they probably had harassed and even enslaved Cherokees for several years.[23] The Cherokees needed little encouragement. In 1711, two hundred and eighteen Cherokees joined a force of Englishmen, seventy-nine Creeks, forty-one Catawbas, and twenty-eight Yamasees and attacked the Tuscaroras. The expedition failed to dislodge the Tuscaroras from their fortified towns, but two years later a larger force consisting of eight hundred and fifty Cherokees, Creeks, and Catawbas overcame Tuscarora resistance.[24] They destroyed Tuscarora villages, took hundreds of captives, and drove the majority of survivors north to seek refuge among the Iroquois.[25]

The expulsion of the Tuscaroras reflected the differential impact of ecological change on Southeastern Indians. According to John Lawson, the Tuscaroras could at one time field approximately 7,200 warriors.[26] They

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[23] Ibid., 310-312.

[24] Frank Klingberg, ed. Carolina Chronicle: Papers of Commissary Gideon Johnston, 1706-1716 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), 174; Crane, Southern Frontier, 158-161; and Parramore, "Tuscarora ascendancy," 322-326.

[25] Crane, Southern Frontier, 160-161.

[26] Lawson claimed that the 1,200 warriors among the Tuscarora in 1709 was only one-sixth of the number that the formerly possessed, but according to Parramore, Lawson did not include six Tuscarora towns and thus gave a figure to low. Still, it would not be unexpected that the Tuscaroras suffered severe population loss in the 1690s and early 1700s. See Lawson, A New Voyage, 242-243.

dominated the flow of goods from Virginia into the interior and probably conducted slave raids that reached all the way to the Mississippi River.[27] But after suffering from smallpox in 1697 and unknown diseases in 1707 and 1711, they were no match for the more powerful Cherokees and their allies.[28]

At the time of their war with the Tuscaroras, the Cherokees expanded their raiding activity westward. The Cherokees attacked the Yuchis, who lived near the junction of the Hiwassie and Tennessee rivers, and forced them to move south. The Yuchi allegedly provoked their neighbors by helping the Shawnees conduct raids into the mountains.[29] The Cherokees, however, may have wanted slaves more than vengeance. They took a number of slaves and surrendered some to the English. Fearing capture and possible enslavement, the Yuchis "killed their own people in the War House to prevent their falling into the Hands of the Cherikees."[30]

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[27] Parramore, "Tuscarora ascendancy," 311-312.

[28] On diseases among the Tuscarora in 1707 and 1711, see Parramore, "Tuscarora ascendancy," 324.

[29] Oral history, archaeological evidence, and documents all verify Cherokee conquest of the Yuchi in the 1710s. John Haywood recorded Cherokee folklore concerning this event, but referred to the Cherokees enemies as "Creeks." See Haywood, Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee, 225-226. On the archaeology of the Hiwassie Valley, see Thomas M.N. Lewis and Madeline Kneberg, Hiwassie Island: An Archaeological Account of Four Tennessee Indian Peoples, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970). The documentation of this attack can be found in JCIT, 53-56.

[30] JCIT, 53-56.

The Shawnees also abandoned their settlements after facing Cherokee attacks. In the early 1700s, some settlements of Shawnees remained in the Cumberland Valley after the Iroquois forced the tribe to disperse during the seventeenth century.[31] Shawnee population increased in the region after the Yamasee War broke-out in 1715, when Shawnees who had settled on the Savannah traveled back into the interior to escape the violence. The Cherokees allowed the Shawnees to settle the region but a quarrel quickly ensued. The Cherokees allied with the Chickasaws and drove the Shawnees out of Tennessee and Kentucky and north of the Ohio River.[32]

The Cherokees' victory over the Shawnees not only added more captives to their population but also opened the way for their domination of what is today Tennessee and Kentucky. This area was largely depopulated after the expulsion of the Shawnees and became a particularly rich game reserve. The Creeks, Chickasaws, Iroquois, and other

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[31] Iberville's Gulf Journals, 174; and Gravier, "Journal of the Voyage," in Early Voyages up and Down the Mississippi, 120.

[32] Haywood, Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee, 426; and Mooney, Myths, 371; Ronald Satz, Tennessee's Indian Peoples: From White Contact to Indian Removal, 1540-1840, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 35.

tribes competed for access to the area, but the Cherokees held the upper hand for most of the eighteenth century.[33]

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The most significant display of Cherokee strength during the early eighteenth century occurred during the Yamasee War (1715-1717). The Yamasees were a heterogeneous group that came to live near Carolina beginning in the 1680s. During the 1670s, groups that the Spanish identified as "Yamases" were associated with missions in northern Florida.[34] Later, they moved north to trade with the British, joined with other tribes, mostly from the coast and piedmont of Georgia, and settled in the lower Savannah Valley.[35] This location near English settlements, and their pivotal role in the slave trade, exposed them to smallpox and other diseases in the 1690s and early 1700s, and by the early 1710s, their power had waned.

The Yamasees also faced other problems associated with ecological change. In the second decade of the eighteenth century, deer herds along the coast and in the Savannah Valley had diminished. Hunting for deerskins depleted wild game as did the rapid increase of domestic livestock,

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[33] DRIA, I, 538.

[34] "Letter of Calderón," 8-9.

[35] On the movement and composition of the Yamasees, see Crane, Southern Frontier, 25-26 and 162-164.

especially cattle, which monopolized grasses and forage. By 1713, deer herds in the lower Savannah Valley could not support the deerskin trade, and traders increasingly began to do business with interior tribes who could supply a higher volume of better quality hides. (Hides from deer in the Appalachian Mountains tended to have thicker hides and thus were of better value.)

The decline of the deerskin trade led the Yamasees to rely more on slave raids. "I suspect there is no other Necessity for those Nations to Warr against their Neighbors," the Anglican missionary Francis LeJau reported, "but that of making slaves to pay for the goods the traders sell them, for the Skins trade do's not flourish as formerly."[36] But the slave trade also began to fail. Disease and continual warfare had decimated tribes, particularly those of northern Florida on which English allied tribes had heavily preyed. By 1715, a lack of deer and potential slaves forced many Yamasees into debt and encouraged the Indians to rebel against English traders who demanded payment.[37]

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[36] Le Jau to Secretary, August 10, 1713, in The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau, 1706-1717, ed. Frank Klingberg, University of Carlifornia Publications in History, vol.53, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 134.

[37] For the best discussion of the origins of the Yamasee War, see Richard L. Haan, "'The trade do's not flourish as formerly': the ecological origins of the Yamasee War," Ethnohistory, 28 (fall 1981): 341-358.

The Yamasee War presented a major crisis for South Carolina, which would not have survived without the aid of the Cherokees. The Yamasees formed alliances with many southeastern tribes. These Indians had grown to despise English traders, who notoriously cheated and abused their native partners. The fear of enslavement also haunted Southeastern Indians, who had watched the English take in thousands of native slaves since first establishing South Carolina. The rebellion included most small tribes of the coast and piedmont and reached deep into the interior including Creeks and Choctaws. In April 1715, the Indians massacred traders and began attacking Carolinian settlers, destroying many plantations and nearly extinguishing the young colony. Carolinians managed to mobilize an army of settlers and slaves, achieving victory in a few battles and forcing the Yamasees to flee to Florida or to the Creeks. Yamasee raids, though, still continued to keep the English population huddled near the coast.[38] What made the English most fearful was the threat that the powerful Cherokees would join the rebellion.[39]

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[38] The best account of the events of the Yamasee War remains Crane, Southern Frontier, 162-186.

[39] Francis LeJau to Secretary, May 21, 1715, in The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau, 158.

In a daring attempt to save the colony, Carolina tried to recruit the Cherokees to wage war on the Yamasees and Creeks. In July 1715, two Carolina traders traveled into the mountains with a present of over 500 guns for the Cherokees.[40] The Cherokees did not immediately mobilize their warriors, but they did send a delegation to Charles Town.[41] In December, the Carolinians increased the pressure on the Cherokees. An army of over 300 Carolinians marched into the mountains bearing more presents. After arriving at the Lower Towns, Cherokee leaders rebuffed demands to fight against the Yamasees and Creeks, claiming they would attack only the Yuchis, Apalachees, and Shawnees. The leader of Tugaloo, an important Lower town, claimed that the Creeks wanted peace and that the Yamasees were his "anchent peapall," perhaps indicating that at one time the Yamasees and Lower Cherokees had been part of the same chiefdom.

Nevertheless, the English ultimately succeeded in persuading the Cherokees to destroy the Yamasees. In January 1716, twelve Creek ambassadors, probably representing several of the major tribes of the confederacy, arrived at Tugaloo. They came to confirm a

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[40] Governor Craven to Lords of Trade, July 19, 1715, BPRSC, VI, 107.

[41] LeJau to Secretary, November 28, 1715, in The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau, 169.

peace with the Cherokees in order to prosecute the war against the English more effectively, but they came at a great risk. Some Cherokee towns were quite adverse to peace with the Creeks and Yamasees, and by late January, they had secured the entrance of their nation into the war. In the council house at Tugaloo, the Cherokees executed all the visiting Creeks, precipitating a violent conflict between the two nations that continued off and on into the 1750s.[42]

The Cherokees' entrance into the war meant catastrophe for the Yamasees. Previously, the Yamasees and other tribes had obtained slaves from the Cherokees, but being less affected by disease, the Cherokees in 1716 could field thousands of warriors and held the balance of power in the Southeast. The Cherokees, moreover, were by this time heavily armed. Throughout 1716, Carolinians continually sent presents of guns and ammunition to their mountainous allies. In one instance they even confiscated weapons from their own citizens to supply the Cherokees.[43] Cherokee warriors traveled south, as far as St. Augustine, to

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[42] The account of the events at Tugaloo are told in a journal believed to have been written by George Chicken. See "A Journal from Carolina," ed. Langdon Cheeves. in Year Book--Charleston, S.C. (Charleston, S.C.: News and Courier Press, 1894): 324-354. Francis LeJau later reported that nineteen Creeks and others opposed to the English were executed. LeJau to Secretary, March 19, 1716, in Carolina Chronicle, 175.

capture Yamasees, whom they either adopted or sold to the English.[44]

The Cherokees had a more difficult time with the Upper and Lower Creeks.[45] The Creeks remained powerful and could defend themselves and even force their northern neighbors to abandon the Lower Town of "Nogoutchee" in northeastern Georgia.[46] Cherokee attacks, however, forced the Creeks to reconsider their alliance with the Yamasees, and by 1717, many Creeks rebuked their Indian allies and agreed to peace with the British. As did the Cherokees, the Creeks also conducted raids on the Yamasees, a tribe whose numbers tragically dwindled as its members became increasingly incorporated into the larger interior confederacies. Unfortunately, peace between the Creeks and Cherokees did not follow and the two nations continued to war with each other.[47]

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[43] JCIT, 75.

[44] Ibid., 186 and 192-193. The Overhill division of Cherokees were perhaps most active in bringing in foreign peoples from Florida. A town belonging to this division had ceramic patterns unlike many Cherokee towns and bore the name "Tomatley," a name commonly associated with the Yamasees. Tomatley thus may have been composed primarily of adopted Yamasees. On the archaeological record of Tomatley, see Guthe and Bistline. Excavations of Tomotley, 1973-74, and the Tuskegee Area; and William W. Baden, Tomotley, An Eighteenth Century Cherokee Village, University of Tennessee Department of Anthropology, Report of Investigations, No. 36. Tennessee Valley Authority Publications in Anthropology, (Knoxville, 1983).

[45] JCIT, 141.

[46] William Hatton, "Some short remarks on the Indian Trade in the Charikees... 1717," ed. Rena Vassar, Ethnohistory, 5 (1972): 413-414.

[47] Ibid., 420.

The Yamasee War was a defining moment in Southeastern Indian history. The violence helped destroy coastal and piedmont tribes, many of which were captured or adopted by the Cherokees or who thereafter lived beneath the shadow of their more powerful neighbors. The Cherokees, according to a Carolinian official, "have done us a signal piece of Service, in Compelling ye Catawbas, and those other Small Nations about them to make Peace with us, whom otherwise they threatened to Destroy."[48]

In addition, the war made the Creek Confederacy more cohesive. With the execution of the Creek delegates at Tugaloo, the Cherokees with one stroke helped unify a multitude of tribes that had been coalescing to the South since the 1690s. Cherokee attacks, moreover, forced many Creeks to abandon their settlements on the Ocmulgee, Oconee, and Altamaha rivers and increasingly concentrate their towns in the Chattahooochee, Coosa, and Tallapoosa valleys.[49] Through much of the eighteenth century, enmity against the Cherokees united these tribes in a powerful confederacy.

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[48] BPRSC, VI, p.241.

[49] Crane, Southern Frontier, 183.

The trade in Indian slaves also crumbled after the Yamasee War. After the conflict, the interior confederacies were the only groups from which slave traders could acquire a significant number of potential slaves. The English, though, did not want to antagonize these nations and provoke another disastrous Indian war. They also did not want to drive either the Cherokees or Creeks into an alliance with the French. Although not completely finished, the practice of buying Native American slaves dramatically declined after 1720.

The number of Native Americans who remained enslaved to Europeans also declined. English masters simply found it impossible to keep Indian slaves on the plantation. They disappeared, either by running away or by being abducted by interior groups. In 1722, for example, Carolinians complained that Cherokees, Creeks, and other Indians visited English plantations and took away numerous slaves. In response, the Governor of South Carolina prohibited trading with Indians within the settlements.[50] Raids of interior groups to capture enslaved Indians continued, however. In 1725 when Colonel George Chicken visited the Cherokees, he found slaves of English masters

[50] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, January 5, 1722, C.O. 5:425

who spoke both Cherokee and English.[51] Seven years later, a Carolinian planter complained of Creeks who "drove away his overseer and slaves."[52] Indian slaves were thus another group upon which the Four Nations preyed to compensate for population loss due to disease.

In their raids on plantations, the Four Nations probably captured some Africans as well as Indians and adopted them as tribal members. By the 1730s this practice became serious enough for Europeans to take efforts to curtail it. The English employed small communities of Indians who remained near their settlements as slave-catchers.[53] They also offered rewards to interior groups for capturing and returning runaway African slaves.[54]

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By the 1720s, the imperial activities of the Four Nations worked in conjunction with epidemics to reshape the social landscape of the Southeast. Only one group that lived outside of the interior, the Natchez, retained considerable

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[51] George Chicken, "Journal (1725)," in Travels in the American Colonies, 138-139.

[52] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, August 16, 1732, C.O. 5:434, n.p. (This raid comes after the 1732 smallpox epidemic.)

[53] James Glen to the President and Assistants of Georgia, October 1750, C.O. 5:643, fo.60-61.

[54] Perdue, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 38-40.

strength. Nevertheless, the Natchez too faced the combined forces of disease and imperial actions of the Four Nations.

As with the Yamasees, the Natchez experienced a myriad of problems and a catastrophic collapse due in large part to ecological changes associated with European invasion. Smallpox and other diseases hit the Natchez hard in the 1720s. And, with their decline and the destruction of other neighboring tribes, French settlement spread up the Mississippi Valley. As in Carolina, the close proximity of Europeans and Africans to Native Americans led to conflict.

French settlers found land near the Natchez the most fertile land of the lower Mississippi Valley. They established plantations near the Natchez, whose hunting grounds quickly became inundated with horses, cattle, and pigs. Natchez warriors killed these invading animals and infuriated the French, who in turn demanded compensation.[55]

The Natchez reluctantly agreed to compensate the settlers for the lost livestock, but the French became even more demanding. In 1729, the French commander of the Natchez settlement wanted to build a plantation where an Indian village lay. He gave the inhabitants until the end of harvest to relocate. To the Natchez, this order was highly insulting. Formerly, they had been the dominant

force in the Mississippi Valley. Now, they were aware of their loss of power and worried about the coming of even more French.[56] One elder rhetorically asked a French missionary, "Shall we suffer the French to multiply, till we are no longer in a condition to oppose their efforts?" Slavery, the elder lamented, would be his people's lot if the French were not checked. "Before the French came amongst us," he exclaimed, "we were men . . . we walked with boldness every road, because we were then our own masters. But now we go groping, afraid of meeting thorns, we walk like the slaves which we shall soon be." He concluded, "is not death preferable to slavery?"[57]

In the fall of 1729, the Natchez prepared for war. War symbols such as red flags were displayed in their villages, and warriors danced, consumed medicines, and prayed. On November 28th Natchez warriors launched their coordinated attacks, executing French traders among them and then slaying settlers. The Natchez killed 145 men, 36

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[55] Usner, Indians, Settlers, and Slaves, 67-70.

[56] The standard primary source on the origins and events of the Natchez War is Antoine Le Page Du Pratz' History of Louisiana, 58-161. Daniel Usner also relies heavily on Du Pratz. See Usner, Indians, Settlers, and Slaves, 65-76.

[57] Du Pratz, The History of Louisiana, 140-141.

women, and 56 children and took 300 African slaves and 50 French women and children as captives.[58]

Once again a European colonial power depended on an interior nation for help. The French appealed to the Choctaws, whose experience with disease had been less severe than the Natchez and whose military strength surpassed all the groups remaining in the Mississippi Valley. On January 1730, a French-led force of 500 Choctaws destroyed many Natchez villages and retook the African slaves. The Choctaws refused to surrender their captives, claiming that it was their due for serving the French. The fate of the slaves remains unclear, but some evidence indicates that they were traded throughout the Southeast. Some of them wound up in the hands of English traders; others ran-away and perhaps back to the French; and some were adopted by other Indian tribes.

Ultimately, a Natchez diaspora occurred due to the combined assaults of Choctaws and French. During the winter of 1730-31, the Choctaws and French launched a final attack on the Natchez. Over 500, mostly women and children, were taken to New Orleans, where they were sold on the Caribbean slave market. The remaining Natchez

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[58] Usner, Indians, Settlers, and Slaves, 72-73.

dispersed into the interior where they sought refuge with the Four Nations.

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The imperialism of the Four Nations did not end with the destruction of the Natchez. As they had before 1730, the Four Nations continued to bolster their populations by adopting captives and incorporating remnant groups. The Four Nations added peoples of different ethnic origins to compensate for losses due to diseases.

On the surface, the Four Nations appear to have undergone a process that scholars have labeled "ethnogenesis," a phenomenon in which peoples of different origins combine to form a new ethnic group. Indeed, ethnogenesis, as a result of epidemics, occurred among coastal, piedmont, and Mississippi Valley groups in the early eighteenth century. Diseases depleted tribes to such an extent that villages of different tribes had to come together to have enough people for defense and economic production. That is, women and men of varying ethnic origins found themselves living next to each other. Close association increased intermarriage, producing cultural homogeneity and ultimately a new ethnic identity.

Nevertheless, the process of ethnogenesis did not come to completion within each of the Four Nations. By 1800,

ethnic homogeneity characterized only the smallest of the Four Nations, the Chickasaws. To varying degrees, the different ethnic groups that composed the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Creeks retained their unique identities. By 1800, the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Creeks still possessed considerable cultural diversity.

The Creeks were most successful in bringing foreign groups into their confederacy and had the highest degree of ethnic diversity of all the Four Nations. Although the number of Native Americans in Florida had drastically declined by 1729, the Creeks continued to seek captives from the relatively few Yamasees, Calusas, and other tribes that remained on the peninsula. Creek raids heightened in 1739 and 1740 at the urging of General Oglethorpe, who led the British in their effort to destroy St. Augustine.[59] By 1763, the Creeks reduced the Florida Indians to a relative few Calusa families, who departed with the Spanish after the English took over the colony.[60] "The Muskoghe who have been at war, time out of mind, against the Indians of Cape-Florida," James Adair reported, "[have] reduced them to

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[59] General Oglethorpe to Harman Verelst, n.d. [1741], C.O. 5:654 fo.399.

[60] Romans, Natural History, 291; and Adair, History of the American Indians, 142.

thirty men who removed to the Havannah along with Spaniards."[61]

Many Florida Indians were adopted into Creek villages, but some did not receive equal citizenship immediately. In 1776, for example, William Bartram visited a Lower Creek Chief, named the Cowkeeper, and claimed that he was "a great warrior, having then attending him as slaves, many Yamasee captives, taken by himself when young." Bartram added that "the slaves are permitted to marry amongst them: their children are free and considered in every respect equal to themselves; but the parents continue in a state of slavery as long as they live."[62]

The Creeks had such success at depopulating Florida that they sought to colonize their newly won land. A group of Oconee Indians belonging to the Creek Confederacy led the conquest of Florida. The Oconees abandoned their original town on the river bearing its name as white settlement in Georgia expanded. They relocated among the Upper Creeks, but soon desired their own lands. Ultimately, they moved to northern Florida where they came into conflict with the remnants of the Yamasees, Calusas, and other tribes. In alliance with the Upper Creeks, the

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[61] Adair, History of the American Indians, 142; see also Romans, Natural History, 291.

[62] Bartram, Travels, 166.

Oconee destroyed the Florida Indians and established a new town called Cuscowilla, which remained loosely allied with the main body of Lower and Upper Creeks for the remainder of the colonial period.[63]

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Yuchi Indians increasingly associated with the Creek Confederacy. In the early eighteenth century, the Yuchi were inveterate enemies of the Creeks. In 1729, however, a Lower Creek chief by the name of "Captain Ellick" took three Yuchi women as wives and brought them back to his town of Cusseta. His townsmen despised his actions, forcing Ellick to move and establish his own village. By 1740, Ellick's settlement had grown into a large town, peopled primarily by Yuchis.[64] For the remainder of the eighteenth century, the Yuchi town remained on the Chattahooche in a loose alliance with the nearby Lower Creeks.[65]

With the inclusion of Florida captives and Yuchi refugees, the Creeks claimed a large area of the Southeast. Creek folklore records that at one time they inhabited

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[63] Ibid., 308-309.

[64] Benjamin Hawkins, Sketch of the Creek Country [1796], (New York: Kraus Reprint Company, 1971), 62.

[65] According to Cherokee legend, Yuchi coalescence on the Chattahooche around 1740. See Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees, 385.

several major river valleys, including the rivers most commonly associated with Creeks—the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Chattahoochee—as well as abandoned valleys such as the Flint, Okmulgee, Oconee, Ogeechee, Savannah, and Altamaha.[66] In short, by the mid-1700s the Creeks claimed virtually all the land south from the Savannah River to St. Augustine and west from the Atlantic to the Alabama River. Control of this land became a central unifying feature of the Creek Confederacy. In 1750, for example, the English wanted to acquire some land that the Yuchi formerly occupied. The Creeks claimed that any cession of land had to be approved by the entire confederacy, for "they look upon the Euchees as their vassals."[67]

Peoples from even farther distances came to join the Creek Confederacy. Following their defeat at the hands of the French and Choctaws, some Natchez moved near English settlements in South Carolina.[68] The Natchez, however, as did the Yuchis and others, increasingly retreated into the interior to join the Creeks as European and African population expanded. By the 1770s, several Natchez had

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[66] Louis Le Clerc de Milfort, Memoir of a Cursory Glance at My Different Travels and My Sojourn in the Creek Nation, (John F. McDermott, ed. Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1956), 161; Verelst, "Some observations [1739]," C.O. 5:283; and South Carolina Gazette, June 2, 1733, no. 72.

[67] William Stephens et al to Benjamin Martyn, July 19, 1750, C.O. 5:643, fo.22.

[68] South Carolina Gazette, April 27, 1734, no.23.

relocated among the Creeks, peopling at least two towns on the Coosa River.[69]

Other Indians formerly living near the Gulf Coast joined the Creeks. "We hear, that a Nation of Indians residing in Louisiana, called the Stinking-Lingo being heartily tired of their old [French] masters," the South Carolina Gazette reported, "have actually desired leave to remove under the Protection of our Friend Indians in the Creek or Chickesaw country."[70] The majority of the so-called "Stinking Lingos" were most likely Koasatis that left the Creeks five years later.[71] Some remained, however.[72] A few of these mysterious Indians may have been Taensas, a group which formerly resided near Mobile Bay.[73]

The Shawnees also added significant numbers to the growth of Creek population. In 1744, the French reported that "Chaouanons," previously living in the North, had

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[69] Milfort, Memoirs, 167.

[70] South Carolina Gazette, April 14, 1759, no. 1279.

[71] Georgia Gazette, July 19, 1764, no.68.

[72] Bartram, Travels, 372-374.

[73] Bernard Romans, Natural History, 90. Romans gives a long list of different groups that comprised the Creek Confederacy. I recognized the Taensas as the only group which had one point lived in Louisiana, although others may have also at one time come from the French colony. No Creek towns bore the name "Taensas" suggesting that these Indians integrated with one or more existing Creek towns.

moved south and allied with the Alabamas.[74] This group may have been the same French Indians that Governor Glen of South Carolina learned about four years later. Peter Shirtee, a French-Indian mixed blood, led the migrants consisting of 120 gun men and their families who settled among the Upper Creeks (sometimes identified as the Alabamas by the French).[75] Unfortunately, the Shawnee newcomers had not been in their new homeland long before the 1747-1750 smallpox epidemic struck them.[76] The influx of Euro-American settlers into the Ohio Valley in the later decades of the eighteenth century drove more Shawnees south seeking a safer and more abundant homeland. Some settled on the upper Savannah but moved to the Upper Creeks after the Revolution.[77] Many more Shawnee newcomers streamed into the Upper Creek settlements. In 1791, the American agent Caleb Swan in 1791 remarked that the Shawnees were coming "in large numbers, having already four towns on the Tallapoosa river that contain near 300 war men, and more are soon expected."[78]

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[74] The Present State of the Country...by an Officer at New Orleans. 51.

[75] Governor Glen to Board of Trade, October 10, 1748, C.O. 5: 372, fo.76.

[76] "Talk of the Headmen of the Savannahs," August 12, 1751, in DRIA, I, 215.

[77] Milfort, Memoirs, 174.

[78] Swan, "Position and state of ... Creeks," 260.

The Muskogee towns, particularly Kasitha, Coweta, Coosa, and Abeca, that hosted the Creek Confederacy demanded that incorporated groups adopt the Muskogee language and customs.[79] Muskogee became the official language in intertribal politics, and all of the different ethnic groups came to use the dominant tongue at least to some degree.[80] Certain Muskogee towns also had a reputation for determining tribal law for all members of the confederacy to follow. Benjamin Hawkins claimed that in Abeca "some of the oldest customs had their origin." Milfort also claimed that an important Muskogee town held a grand council every year, when elders gathered and determined "the lines of conduct that shall be followed during the year." Milfort exaggerated Muskogee power by claiming that the "lines of conduct" applied to all Indians of North America, but he correctly perceived a demand for cultural conformity among members of the Creek Confederacy.[81]

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[79] On the ethnic origins and languages of the various towns of the Creek Confederacy, see John Swanton, "Creek social organization and usages," In Forty-Second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, (Washington: GPO, 1928), 248.

[80] Swan, "Position and state of... Creeks," 268.

[81] Milfort, Memoirs, 196.

The periodic epidemics that struck the region helped integrate different ethnic groups and homogenize Creek culture. Creek tribal laws promoted intermarriage by obligating men and women to find a partner outside their clan but not necessarily outside their ethnic group. Several clans composed each tribe making it feasible to find a partner of the same ethnic origin. Epidemics, however, expedited intertribal marriages. As the available number of potential marriage partners within one's tribe diminished, young men and women not only had to look outside their clan but also outside their ethnic group for a suitable mate. Such intermarriage provided a way for the Muskogees to demand cultural conformity. If a Shawnee man, for example, married a Creek woman, he was "obliged to follow the laws, customs, and habits" of the Muskogees. Creek men who married Shawnee women, however, did not have to conform to Shawnee customs.[82]

By the end of the colonial period, a degree of integration and cultural homogeneity existed within the Creek Confederacy. Benjamin Hawkins observed that the Tuskegees, a group that joined the Confederacy in the 1690s, "have lost their language, and speak Creek [Muskogee], and have adopted the customs and manners of the

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[82] Ibid.

Creeks."[83] Another early joiner, the Pacanas, also had assimilated into the Creek melting pot. "The Abekas have a tradition that the Puccunnas were a distinct people and that they in old times were very numerous," George Stiggins, an early nineteenth century Creek mixed-blood, claimed. "By continual intermarriage with the other tribes," he added, "they at length became absorbed and assimilated with their neighbors without distinction."[84]

The Natchez also displayed a degree of acculturation. In 1772, the English agent David Taitt visited a Natchez village on the Coosa River, where he found not only Natchez residents but also Creeks and Chickasaws.[85] The Natchez who had taken up residence in the Talladega Valley lived "indiscriminately" among the Abecas and conversed in the "Creek [Muskogee] tongue." Natchez women especially adopted the new language and were able to speak it "fluently."[86] Nevertheless, the integration of the Natchez

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[83] Hawkins, Sketch, 39.

[84] George Stiggins, Creek Indian History, (Birmingham: Birmingham Public Library Press, 1989), 33.

[85] David Taitt, "Journal of David Taitt," in Travels in the American Colonies, 531-532.

[86] Stiggins, Creek Indian History, 33.

was not complete. As late as the 1830s, Natchez parents spoke their native language with their children.[87]

The survival of the Natchez and their language typify a general pattern throughout the Creek Confederacy. Despite frequent epidemics, the necessity to intermarry, and cultural imperialism of the original Muskogee towns, various ethnic groups preserved their customs. In 1791, Caleb Swan recognized six "dialects," or what might properly be called languages, spoken among the Creeks. These included Muskogee, Hitchiti, Natchez, Yuchi, Alabama, and Koasati.[88] Curiously, Swan did not include Shawnee, an Algonquian language, although at that time hundreds of these people were joining the Confederacy. The newly arrived Shawnee kept the same customs as their relatives north of the Ohio.[89] In the twentieth century, members of the Raccoon, Potato, and Fox clans continued to identify themselves as Shawnees and "Tcilokogis," or people of a different language.[90]

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[87] Ibid., 37.

[88] Swan, "Position and state of... Creeks," 268.

[89] Hawkins, Sketch, 34.

[90] Swanton, "Religious Beliefs and Medical Practices of the Creek Indians," In Forty-Second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1928), 614.

At the end of the eighteenth century, and to the present day, one could hear Hitchiti spoken among the Creeks. This language most likely belonged to groups that lived in eastern Georgia and northern Florida, who became incorporated in the Creek Confederacy either through confederation or conquest. Groups such as the Okmulgees, Oconees, Apalachicolas, Sawoklis, Tamalis, and Chiahas were probably Hitchiti speakers.[91] Their language appeared quite different from Muskogee. In 1776, Chiaha and the Muskogee town of Koasati almost joined each other, but members of the respective villages spoke radically different languages.[92] To be sure, Hitchiti men conversed in Muskogee in inter-village affairs, but in their local concerns they spoke their native tongue.[93]

The Alabamas and Koasatis, two culturally related tribes, assimilated into Muskogee culture to varying degrees. Koasatis spoke their own language in the late eighteenth century, but they had conformed to Muskogee customs and practiced Muskogee ceremonies. The Alabamas, although living in close association with the towns of Abeca, Coosa, and Tuckabatchee for most of the eighteenth

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[91] Swanton, "Creek social organization and usages," 248.

[92] Bartram, Travels, 368.

[93] Stiggins, Creek Indian History, 46.

century, did not conform to Muskogee ways.[94] They spoke Muskogee in national political and ceremonial matters but seldom in their local concerns. According to Stiggins, the Alabamas were "tenacious of their private self-government, seldom associating with any other Indians."[95]

The Yuchis were equally if not more determined to retain their ethnic identity. The Yuchi language was radically different from Muskogee, being more guttural than the dominant Creek tongue.[96] Their customs also were quite unique and may have engendered Creek prejudice against them. One Creek claimed that all Muskogees generally disdained the Yuchi, claiming their "dishonesty is proverbial . . . so that any remarkable thief is said to be like an Uchee, licensed to steal with impunity."[97] Some Yuchi did intermarry and assimilate with immigrant Shawnees, whose languages seemed to be related.[98] As late

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[94] Hawkins, Sketch, 36.

[95] Stiggins, Creek Indian History, 30.

[96] Ibid., 32-33; and Bartram, Travels, 317.

[97] Stiggins, Creek Indian History, 32.

[98] Bartram, Travels, 317; Hawkins, Sketch, 34; and Thomas Simpson Woodward, Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek or Muscogee Indians[1859], (reprint. Mobile, Ala.: Southern University Press, 1965), 41. In contradiction to Bartram, Swanton doubted a relation between Yuchi and Shawnee. See John Swanton, Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors. Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, No. 73. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 286-312. The Yuchi certainly dispersed and frequently moved, making their history and identity difficult to understand. The familiarity existing between the Yuchis and at least some Shawnees may not have been due to similar language but from years

as the 1830s, however, the Yuchis remained "so attached to their own tongue and mode of living that very few of them make any use of or can converse in the national tongue."[99]

Ethnic diversity that survived within the Creek Confederacy can be attributed in large part to matrilineal and matrilocal clan structure, common features of each of the Four Nations. In matrilineal societies, individuals traced descent through their mother, and in matrilocal societies, women owned the household of the family and men moved to their wives' villages. Such an arrangement tended to preserve cultural differences. If, for example, a Hitchiti man married a Yuchi woman and had a daughter, the child would be raised as a Yuchi and remain in her village even after becoming married. If they had a son, the son also would be raised a Yuchi but leave the village if he could not find a Yuchi marriage mate. Men intermarrying with women of different ethnic origin may or may not have assimilated into their spouse's tribe. Creek men, particularly those who found themselves living in a village of people with radically different languages, most likely communicated to each other through Muskogee. Thus among

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of residency near each other on the Savannah River. Intermarriage and kinship bonds thus may have predated the movement of these people into the interior.

[99] Stiggins, Creek Indian History, 32-33.

men, Muskogee became a national tongue, while on the local level women preserved a multitude of different languages.

The cultural survival of different ethnic groups demonstrated the limited nature of ethnogenesis within the Creek Confederacy. Yuchis, Shawnees, Alabamas, Hitchitis, and others, although intermarrying and forming political alliances, all resisted cultural amalgamation and retained their unique identities. Such cultural persistence undoubtedly showed that the Creeks managed to retard mortality rates and withstand the homogenizing forces of eighteenth-century epidemics.

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As with the Creeks, ethnogenesis within the Choctaw confederacy had its limitations. In the 1760s, warfare accelerated confederation among the Choctaws. In 1764, war broke out between the Choctaws and Creeks. A series of killings and retaliatory attacks occurred between the two confederacies as they competed over the game-rich Black Warrior Valley hunting grounds. The Creeks and Choctaws had been at peace for sometime, due in large part to the mediation of the Alabamas, who had kinship ties with both confederacies. The Alabamas, however, lost power and status as their French sponsors withdrew from the region in 1763. Moreover, it had been several years since either

nation had been to war, depriving young Creek and Choctaw warriors of chances to gain war names.[100] The conflict thus spun out of control and lasted into the 1770s.

The Creek-Choctaw War involved significant changes in the composition of both confederacies. Many formerly Creek towns opposed the Muskogee's desire for war, seceded from the confederacy, and joined the Choctaws. Two Koasati towns, for example, left the Creeks and established settlements near the Choctaws on the Tombigee River.[101] Staunch allies to the French, the Koasati and the Choctaws established kinship and friendship bonds with each other. Former client tribes to the French at Mobile also had to leave their homes in the wake of Creek raids.[102] Nanniabamas, Tohomes, and other tribes, possibly including Yuchis, Apalachicolas, and Pacanas that had settled near Mobile in the 1740s, moved north incorporating with the Chickasawhay Division of the Choctaws.[103] By 1772, much of

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[100] The Creeks in particular had not been to war since the early 1750s against the Cherokees and a generation of young men had not had a chance to prove themselves. See South Carolina Gazette, July 19, 1760, no, 1354.

[101] Adair, History of the American Indians, 284-285; and "Talk of Topoye...Chief of the Cussadoes to Dept. Superintendent, [Charles Stuart]," July 23, 1766, C.O. 5:67, in WE, IV, p.671. Another source labeled these Indians the "Stinking Lingo" Indians who had only settled among the Creeks five years earlier. See Georgia Gazette, July 19, 1764, no.68.

[102] Congress at Pensacola, October 1771, C.O. 5: 73, in WE, VI, p.181;

[103] John Stuart to Lord Hillsborough, January 6, 1772, in WE, VI, p.216. During the eighteenth century, the Native American population around Mobile had become quite heterogeneous. In 1747, the English

the Alabama River and Mobile Delta, which had been the former home of thousands of peoples of diverse ethnic origins, lay abandoned.[104]

The Choctaws attempted to unite various tribes through intermarriage and the use of a common language. Choctaws commonly "exported women" from one village to another to form kinship bonds between different tribes. A woman of one tribe, for example, would marry a man of a different tribe. Instead of the man coming to live with his in-laws, the woman would go to her husband's village—a practice uncommon among matrilineal and matrilocal societies. Children of the union had the ethnic identity of their mother but status in his or her father's tribe. This practice promoted cultural amalgamation and political cooperation between different tribes.[105] Exporting women seemed to be most prevalent among only a small group of elite families, but it may have increased in the wake of epidemics, as different tribes looked outside of their villages for suitable marriage partners.

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believed that Yuchis, Pacanas, and Apalachicolas lived at Mobile. See Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, April 15, 1747, C.O. 5:455, p.83.

[104] Romans, Natural History, 326-332.

[105] Galloway, "Confederacies as solution to chiefdom dissolution: historical evidence in the Choctaw case," in The Forgotten Centuries, 408.

Nevertheless, exporting women and simple intermarriage did not erase ethnic divisions within the Choctaw Confederacy. By the mid-to-late eighteenth century, Europeans recognized four divisions among the Choctaws. These included Eastern, Western, Chickasways, and the Six Villages districts, each of which had been populated by people of differing ethnic origins. The Choctaw language of the dominant Western Division became the tongue spoken in inter-village affairs, but on the local level a multitude of languages and dialects were heard.[106] Moreover, each Choctaw division, unlike the various groups of Creeks, claimed the exclusive rights over the land that fell within its bounds.[107] This failure to centralize reflected in part the cultural differences and the limited ethnogenesis of the Choctaw Confederacy.

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Although not as ethnically diverse as the other three interior confederacies, the Cherokees did add foreign

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[106] The exact contours of the dialect and language differences within the 18th-century Choctaw Confederacy remains too obscure to reconstruct. See Galloway, Choctaw Ethnogenesis, 315-324. Milfort recognizes two culturally unique sections. The "northern section," according to Milfort, were more "warlike" and wore their hair as the Creeks did, while the southern section were "cowards, lazy, and slovenly." See Milfort, Memoirs, 177. Choctaws living to the south may not have been any more cowardly than their northern brethren, but they had a quite different historical experience. Many were former Natchez, while others may have been former clients of the French who moved into the interior at the outbreak of the Creek war. These groups tended to be more settled and even had begun to keep livestock, making them less active in the deerskin trade and the warring that such trade necessitated.

[107] Ross, ed., "A journey over the Natchez Trace in 1792," 270.

peoples to their population through both capture of enemies and incorporation of remnant groups. In addition, a limited degree of ethnogenesis occurred among the Cherokees during the eighteenth century.

Fleeing the French and allied Indians, both Natchez and Chickasaws took refuge among the Cherokees. Some Chickasaws came to the Cherokees as early as 1723, but records do not indicate whether they remained there for long.[108] In the 1730s, the Natchez established settlements in the Overhill and Valley division of the Cherokees. Some of these refuges did not stay. Early nineteenth century sources recorded that the Natchez angered their hosts and supposedly plotted against them, while eighteenth century sources mentioned they fled to escape attacks of French-allied Indians who continually harassed the Overhill Cherokees.[109] A small number of these refugees nonetheless remained with the Cherokees permanently.[110] Cherokee tradition also recorded that the Natchez, who had a "reputation for ceremonial and secret knowledge," at first established their own town and had their own customs but

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[108] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, May 16, 1723, p.14, C.O. 5:427.

[109] Norton, Journal, 47; Haywood, Natural and Aboriginal History, 99; and Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, February 4, 1746, p.29, C.O. 5:455.

[110] "Talk of the Warrior of Keowee and the Raven of Hywassee, [1751], in DRIA, I, 155; and "Journal of John Evans," October 1755, in DRIA, II, 86.

later assimilated into Cherokee villages.[111] Although not as prevalent as they were among the Creeks, Chickasaws, and Choctaws, the Natchez made a contribution to the cultural development and demographic recovery of the Cherokees.[112]

Other remnant groups became associated with the Cherokees. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the Cherokees engulfed some tribes such as the Tuskegees, who maintained one or more villages among the Overhills through the colonial period.[113] Shawnees also lived among the Cherokees, and in one particular instance, a British trader mentioned 20 "Savannah" or Shawnee men and their families taking up residence in the Overhill town of Chota.[114] Yuchis, retreating from the Savannah Valley as European and African settlement approached, also added numbers to the Cherokee population.[115] In the early twentieth century, Yuchi speakers still lived among the

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[111] Mooney, Myths, 386-387.

[112] In the 1830s, Daniel Buttrick learned of many Natchez ceremonies from Cherokee informants. See Butrick to Payne, JHPP, IV, n.p.

[113] Francis Varnod, "Census of the Cherokees in 1721," 273-275. On the history of the Tuskegees, see Swanton, Early History of the Creek Indians, 207-211.

[114] John Elliot to Governor Glen, September 25, 1755, in DRIA, II, 79. Generally, Shawnees were identified as "Savannahs" in the South, but the immigrants may have been another group identified by the same name due to their residence on the Savannah River. A multitude of tribes had lived on that river during the eighteenth century.

[115] Mooney, Myths, 385.

Oklahoma Cherokees. The Yuchis claimed to have resided among the Cherokees before removal, but they may have not joined the larger nation until after 1800.[116]

Despite the addition of Natchez, Shawnees, and Yuchis, the Cherokees generally suffered from an inability to persuade remnant groups to incorporate with them. Twice, the Cherokees attempted to lure the Catawbas to confederate with them; both times the Catawbas rebuked their more powerful neighbors.[117] The Cherokees' peculiar Iroquoian language and their remote mountainous location may have inhibited attempts to draw in foreign tribes.

The Cherokees did add many captives to their population in the eighteenth century. As all of the Four Nations did, the Cherokees brought in women, children, and men from their rivals to augment their population. In the early nineteenth century, the adopted Mohawk John Norton visited the Cherokees and frequently referred to Cherokees who had a parent that had been captured and adopted. Many of these were Iroquois, who assimilated into Cherokee society with more ease due to the similarities of their

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[116] Swanton, Early History of the Creek, 297.

[117] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, June 21, 1749, p.349, C.O. 5:450; "Journal of John Evans," October 1755, in DRIA, II, 86.

languages.[118] Creeks, captured during a nearly continuous war from 1715 to 1752, also peopled Cherokee villages. Cherokees, however, probably lost as many people to their southern rivals as they gained.

Many individuals that the Cherokees captured were Europeans. For most of the colonial period, the Cherokees remained staunch allies of the English and preyed on French traders as they traveled on the Ohio River.[119] The earliest raids occurred in the 1710s. In a particular raid in 1717, the Cherokees took over 32 Frenchmen near the mouth of the Ohio River.[120] During times when the French and English were at war, the Cherokees took more French prisoners, finding that they could exchange their captives to their trading partners for goods. Raiding activity, however, was fairly constant through the 1750s.[121] "There never passes one year," Governor Glen remarked in 1754, "that the Cherokees do not take a Boat or two belonging to the French on the Mississippi and destroy most of the crew."[122] Many

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[118] Norton, Journal, 38, 42, 49, and 64.

[119] For an interesting account of one of these captives, see Bonnefoy, "Journal of Antoine Bonnefoy," in Early Travels, 149-159.

[120] Charlevoix, "History and General Description of New France," in HCL, III, 122.

[121] One of these raids was particularly destructive and called the "Wabash Incident" by the French. The Cherokees captured a multitude of French traders. See Bill Barron, ed., The Vaudreuil Papers, (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1975), 3 and 4; and JCHASC, (1741), 15.

[122] Glen to Secretary of State, 1754, in DRIA, I, 533.

crewmen were not destroyed but adopted into Cherokee clans. In the 1750s the British, to their dismay, discovered several Cherokees were in fact Frenchmen who could speak both Cherokee and French.[123]

How many French became adopted Cherokees remains a mystery, but the frequency of reports of Cherokee raids and Frenchmen living among their captors indicate a significant French contribution. European prisoners who married and fathered children with Indian women thus may have had some demographic impact on the Cherokees, particularly among the Overhills. Overhill towns of Tellico and Chatuga became notorious in the 1750s for their sympathy with French and their association with the French-allied Alabamas.[124]

The Cherokees also added a significant number of Anglo-Americans to their population. During the First Cherokee War, they captured many Carolinian and Virginia Backcountry settlers including men, women, children, and some African-American slaves. The British estimated that the Cherokees possessed at least 170 and perhaps 200 of

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[123] See "Second letter from Ludwick Grant to Governor Glen," February 8, 1753, in DRIA, I, 368; and other letters in DRIA, II, 78, 79, 122, 203, 391-392.

[124] Captain Raymond Demere to Governor Lyttleton, December 23, 1756, in DRIA, II, 282-283; and Captain Raymond Demere to Governor Lyttleton, January 2, 1757, in DRIA, II, 303.

their subjects.[125] Conflict with Americans during the Revolution involved the taking of more captives. Many settlers came under control of Cherokees; children in particular were adopted into their villages. In addition, hundreds of Loyalists flocked to the Cherokees as they did the Chickasaws and Choctaws after the American victory.

Although the adoption of hundreds, if not thousands, of Anglo-Americans seemed unique, it was not. Such activities represented a practice that had been going particularly among the Overhill Cherokees for most of the eighteenth century. The Overhills drew in a diverse array of peoples that included not only European and Native American captives but also Cherokees from other regions. Refugees from the Lower Cherokees continually fled their villages on the headwaters of the Savannah to join their Overhill brethren. The Lower Cherokee had unique material cultures and a different dialect, but in the process of relocation their culture fused with the many cultures that made up the Overhills. Consequently, the ethnogenesis of a unique Cherokee society occurred.

Beginning in the 1750s and continuing until the 1770s, the Lower Cherokees dispersed through other settlement

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[125] South Carolina Gazette, June 7, 1760, no. 1347; November 1, 1760, no.1370; and November 29, 1760, no.1374.

areas. From 1749 to 1752, a particularly severe period of their longstanding war with the Creeks, many Lower Cherokees departed their settlements for safer environs deeper in the Southern Appalachian highlands. In the spring of 1750, a combined force of 500 Creeks attacked and destroyed the Lower Cherokee towns of Tugaloo and Tomassee and burned one-half of Estatoe.[126] Surviving Cherokees fled into the Middle settlements for safety.[127] Some even discussed joining the Catawbas, but instead most retreated to other Cherokee settlements.[128] By the spring of 1752, all but two Lower Towns had moved farther into the mountains.[129]

The Overhill Cherokees welcomed the majority of Lower Town refugees. In 1752, they recruited the Lower Cherokees to rebuild their settlements on the Little Tennessee, and some established new villages on the river.[130] In 1752 the Cherokees formed a lasting peace with the Creeks and rebuilt several of their Lower Towns including Keowee, Tugaloo, and Estatoe. Nevertheless, they had lost much of

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[126] Journal of [South Carolina] Council, May 11, 1750, C.O. 5:462, n.p.

[127] Governor Glen to Secretary of State, July 1750, C.O. 5:13, in WE, I, p.331.

[128] James Beamer to Governor Glen, June 1, 1752, in DRIA, I, 267.

[129] Patrick Brown to Governor Glen, April 25, 1752, in DRIA, I, 246.

[130] Minutes of South Carolina Council, June 18, 1753, in DRIA, I, 448.

their population to other divisions, and many of their settlements remained abandoned.[131] The destruction of their towns by the British army and colonial militias in 1759, 1760, and 1761 encouraged even more movement from the headwaters of the Savannah to the Overhill region. The American invasion in 1776 forever destroyed the Lower Towns, and thereafter the Lower Cherokees, who had had significant dialect and material culture differences, became dispersed particularly among the Overhills.

Another major population movement occurred in the 1770s and 1780s. The multi-pronged American invasion of 1776 destroyed towns not only in the Lower settlements but also the Middle, Valley, and Overhill regions. Some Cherokees fled the Americans and re-established settlements on the Tennessee River, near present day Chattanooga.[132] Their leader, Dragging Canoe, continued the war against the settlers and recruited a following from all of the various regions, even attracting Loyalists and runaway slaves. The Chickamaugas were the most ethnically diverse of all Cherokee settlement groups. Through the 1780s and 1790s, Cherokees continued to relocate down the Tennessee River

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[131] Richardson, "Account of the Presbyterian Mission," in Early Travels, 131.

[132] Charles Stuart to John Stuart, April 8, 1771, C.O. 5:78, in WE, VII, p.622.

and even moved into the headwaters of the Coosa in northwestern Georgia.[133]

Cherokees who settled down the Tennessee River and into northwestern Georgia represented a century of ethnogenesis. By 1800, communities in this region were composed of Cherokees from various regions, former captives from rival tribes, and immigrants such as the Creeks who had joined the Chickamaugas in their fight against white settlers. In addition, one could find a large number of intermarried whites, their mixed-blood offspring, and African-Americans both free and enslaved.[134] Among this group, which had had a tradition of adapting diverse peoples and practices, the English language, Christian religion, African-American slavery, and commercial agriculture took root in the early 1800s.

While new Cherokee communities formed out of a diverse array of peoples, the Middle and Valley settlements remained relatively culturally homogenous. Cherokee villages in these areas were the most homogenous of all native societies in the eighteenth-century Southeast. Some villages of the Middle settlements referred to themselves

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[133] On Cherokee movement down the Tennessee and into Northwestern Georgia, see Charles Stuart to John Stuart, April 8, 1777, C.O. 5:78, in WE, VII, 622; John Stuart to George Germaine, December 4, 1778, C.O. 5:80, in WE, VIII; and Thomas Brown to Thomas Townshend, January 12, 1783, C.O. 5:82, fo.634.

[134] Hawkins, Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 23.

as "Ani-Kituhwa," or people of Kituhwa, a village on the Tuckasegee River, which the Middle Cherokees claimed to be the center of the Cherokee Nation. The Kituhwa had their own dialect, which resembled the language spoken by the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Even Kituhwans that left the Middle settlements to live with the Chickamaugans retained their unique identity.[135] In the early nineteenth century, it would be in the Valley and Middle settlements that "traditionalists" resisted the influence of missionaries, government agents, and mixed-bloods in their attempt to "civilize" the Cherokees.

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Being the least populated of the Four Nations, the Chickasaws appeared to have the highest degree of cultural homogeneity at the end of the eighteenth century. Due to their exposure to French-allied enemies, the Chickasaws did not attract many remnant groups. To be sure, a sizeable contingent of Natchez joined the Chickasaws after their defeat at the hands of the French and Choctaw. Nevertheless, until the 1760s more people left the villages of the Chickasaws than entered.

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[135] Norton, Journal, 62; See also Mooney, Myths, 15.

Pressure from French-allied Indians made living in Chickasaw villages quite dangerous. In 1736 and 1740, the French sent troops to dislodge the Chickasaws and Natchez who had harassed French traders. More frequently, the French gave their Indian trading partners goods for Chickasaw and Natchez captives. One Chickasaw chief complained, "the ugly yellow French have proved most bitter enemies to us . . . we have lost the greater part of our people, chiefly through the mean spirit of their red hirelings, who were continually stealing our people for the sake of a reward."[136] Not only did they lose people but also the continual presence of their slave seeking enemies prevented the Chickasaw from planting and harvesting safely.[137]

Many Chickasaws escaped the threat of their adversaries by moving east to settle near their English allies. Since the 1720s, some Chickasaws had been living on the Savannah River. The number who departed the main nation increased in the 1730s and 1740s as French inspired attacks peaked. By 1744, a large exodus occurred that involved 60 to 100 warriors and their families, who established a settlement known as the "Breed Camp" among

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[136] Adair, History of the American Indians, 359.

[137] Journal of [South Carolina] Council, May 17, 1750, C.O. 5:462, n.p.

the Upper Creeks.[138] Throughout the 1750s and 1760s, Chickasaws could be found scattered throughout Georgia and South Carolina.[139]

For Chickasaws who remained in their traditional homeland, capturing and adopting other Indians became the primary means of maintaining population. The tribes of the lower Mississippi Valley continued to be a favorite target. Numerous Quapaw captives came to people the Chickasaw villages. The "Chockehuma" tribe, which existed between the Choctaws and Chickasaws, virtually disappeared as their people either escaped to the Choctaws for protection or became captives to the Chickasaws.[140] Chickasaws also raided tribes to the north, including the Illinois and others. Bernard Romans, probably exaggerating, wrote that "there were in 1771, only two real original Chicasaws left; one of them, who goes by the name North West, scruples not to tell them all very often, that they are of a slave race."[141]

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[138] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, July 4, 1744, C.O. 5:450, p.379.

[139] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, May 22, 1745, C.O. 5:451, p.305; Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, May 15, 1747, C.O. 5:455, p.106; Governor James Glen to Board of Trade, October 2, 1750, C.O. 5:372, fo.256; and South Carolina Gazette, November 10, 1766, no.1631.

[140] "Memorandum of Jerome Courtance," [1756-1757], in DRIA, II, 415.

[141] Romans, Natural History, 63.

By the 1760s, the Chickasaws fortunes began to change. The departure of the French brought a degree of peace; war between the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Illinois had dissipated. It was at this point that some groups even began to confederate with the Chickasaws. By 1772, four towns, most likely Choctaws, "attached themselves" to their former rivals.[142] The Choctaws, though, were culturally similar to their hosts, speaking a related dialect of the Muskogean language, and thus adding little diversity to Chickasaw society.

Chickasaw population grew with the return of their kinsmen to their traditional homeland. Perhaps lured by the promise of a safe environment, many Chickasaws left the East and resettled on the headwaters of the Tombigbee. Around 1760 or 1761, the Breed Camp removed themselves from the Upper Creeks and returned home.[143] In 1768, the British agent John Stuart reported that many of the Natchez had decided to return to their former territory and possibly unite with the Chickasaws.[144] The upheaval of the Revolutionary war and the expansion of Euro-American and African settlement in South Carolina and Georgia inspired

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[142] Congress Held at Mobile, December 1771-January 1772, C.O. 5:73, in WE, VI, p.274.

[143] South Carolina Gazette, June 13, 1761, no.1402.

[144] John Stuart to Lord Hillsborough, December 28, 1768, C.O. 5:70, in WE, V, pp.167-168.

Chickasaws who had lived on the Savannah to return home. They first attempted to settle among the Lower Creeks, but left their Muskogee hosts after a dispute broke-out.[145]

Unfortunately, ethnographic evidence for the Chickasaws in the late eighteenth century remains sparse. How extensive the process of ethnogenesis occurred among the Chickasaws cannot be determined. Given their small population, one can assume that the various ethnic groups within Chickasaw society underwent a large degree of intermarriage and developed a single Chickasaw ethnic identity. Nevertheless, a significant number of Euro-Americans, particularly British Loyalists, came to live among the Chickasaws, as well as the other Four Nations, after the Revolutionary War.[146] These newcomers interrupted the process of ethnogenesis and added more diversity to what was a relatively homogenous Chickasaw population.

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The imperial actions of the Four Nations did not distinguish them from other tribes and confederacies of North America. Many Native Americans resorted to the adoption of captives and incorporation of remnant groups to

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[145] Hawkins, Sketch, 83; and Haywood, Natural and Aboriginal History, 272. Haywood claimed that some Chickasaws, known as the "Lightwood-knots" remained with the Creeks.

[146] Ferq. Bethune to Lt. General Leslie, January 28, 1782, C.O. 5:82, fo.528.

augment their populations. What made the Creeks, Choctaws, and Cherokees, if not the Chickasaws, different were the ethnic and cultural differences that persisted within their confederacies. As can be seen in many places and at many times, epidemics forced tribes to break-up villages and amalgamate with groups of different ethnic origins. Such a process resulted in the ethnogenesis of new tribes with hybrid cultures. The persistence of ethnic and cultural diversity within the interior confederacies demonstrated that members of the Four Nations protected their lives as well as their cultures from the corrosive impact of epidemics. How they did so will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Survival of the Four Nations

By the early nineteenth century, the Four Nations were not dwindling to obscurity as Euro-Americans thought or some hoped. They had stubbornly resisted the forces that destroyed so many other tribes since the early colonial period, and their populations were resurgent. But how did the Four Nations avoid the ecological disasters that destroyed so many other Indian groups? How did they manage to persist into the nineteenth century, becoming some of the largest Indian nations in North America?

In the 1830s, Daniel Buttrick, a Protestant missionary among the Cherokees, found an answer to these questions. The Cherokees, he learned, took an active response to epidemics, creating cultural innovations that not only gave them spiritual comfort but also protection from contagious

diseases. Specifically, the Cherokees practiced a ritual or religious ceremony to avoid the wrath of Kosvkvskini, or evil spirits that tormented people with the dreaded infection of smallpox. Cherokee informants, who described this "Smallpox Dance," claimed spirit beings above the earth kept Kosvkvskini confined until they became displeased with the Cherokee people for violating tribal customs. When let loose, the evil spirits "prowled in wide and open public way," looking for people to punish during all hours of the day and night. It was only at midnight that Cherokees could leave their villages and even then they had to travel by way of "by-paths" in the woods.

The Cherokees believed that once the spirit beings let Kosvkvskini loose it was not too late to avoid their anger. When smallpox lurked near their villages, the Cherokees prepared to perform the Itohvnv, or physic dance, a purification ritual to obtain pardon for violating religious laws. Members of a village gathered at the Council House and consumed medicines prepared by the Ooleestooleeh, or priest who presided over the itohvnv. A specially consecrated medicine man or Teekanawghistee led dances and prayerful songs to "exorcise" the village of impurities. For seven days, women, men, and children dutifully performed various ritual activities, seeking

divine aid in their efforts to avoid a visit from Kosvkvskini. The occasion was most solemn, and the Cherokees could leave the Council House "only to gather needful food at hours when the Small Pox spirits were not abroad."[1]

The Cherokees' Smallpox Dance showed how one of the Four Nations ritually conducted the practice of quarantine. While performing the ritual, the Cherokees effectively cut off communication between infected and uninfected villages, consequently curtailing the spread of disease and decreasing casualties. Ethnographic data for the Cherokees surpass that of the other nations, but all the Four Nations learned to live in the new disease environment that European invasion created.[2] Each nation had a variety of medicine people who explained diseases, constructed avoidance rituals, and treated afflicted individuals. Such actions, although not effective at all times, offered a significant degree of protection from epidemics that swept the Southeast in the eighteenth century.

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[1] Buttrick learned about the Smallpox Dance from several Cherokees who had been trained to be medicine people. Buttrick recorded the information and sent it in a letter to John Howard Payne (Buttrick's account is in JHPP, vol. IV, n.p.). Payne included it in his manuscript on Cherokee customs. See JHPP, I: 159-163.

[2] Historian William McNeill found that populations generally took 100 years to adapt to a newly introduced disease and to display population growth. "A pattern of increasing frequency by declining virulence of infectious disease is exactly what a population learning to live with a new infection experiences as the accommodation between hosts and parasites moves toward a more stable chronic state." See McNeill, Plagues and Peoples, 128.

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Religious leaders among the Four Nations generally had the responsibility of dealing with epidemics. Thus, a discussion of the duties and status of these leaders is necessary to understand how the Southeastern Indians responded to the threat of disease. The Ooleestooleeh and teekanawghistee, who conducted the Cherokees' Smallpox Dance, were two of many types of religious figures that played a prominent role in the survival of the Four Nations. Eighteenth-century Euro-Americans called these individuals "priests," "doctors," "magicians," "prophets," "jugglers," and most commonly "conjurors." Modern scholars refer to them as shamans, medicine men, or using the gender-neutral form, "medicine people."

Although having many different titles and levels of social status, medicine people among the Four Nations generally fulfilled three medical roles. First, they acted as priests, conducting the periodic ceremonies to gain divine favor and to keep sickness from striking their people. Second, they were healers, or people who worked directly with the sick or afflicted, administering physical treatment and spiritual aid. Third, religious leaders served as knowers, or individuals who determined the cause and identity of an illness but did not administer

treatment. In addition, knowers predicted whether illness or other dangers were in the future for their villages and advised political leaders about the potential consequences of specific tribal actions.

Southeastern Indians did not rigidly divide the three medical duties among different people. Some individuals performed more than one task. Creek oral history, for example, records that the same person served as both healer and priest in Creek society. Known in the various Creek languages as hilis haya, alektca, or isti poskålgi, priests and healers possessed the knowledge of the sacred arts of healing, and were in charge of training younger adults to be doctors. They obliged their protégés to fast, pray, and sweat to gain the spiritual knowledge needed to effect cures. They learned the proper treatment for wounds and illnesses, including songs to sing, prayers to pray, and roots, herbs, or other medicines to administer. Hilis haya, alecktca, and isti poskålgi also conducted the rituals and prepared medicines consumed at annual town ceremonies.[3]

Twentieth century descriptions of Hilis haya, alecktca, and isti poskålgi resemble references to "high

[3] Swanton, Indians of the Southeastern United States, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, No. 137, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 774; and Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 617-618.

priests" that Euro-Americans made in the eighteenth century. James Adair referred to several "high priests" or "archi-magus" among the Southeastern Indians and claimed only one presided over a village. Similarly, William Bartram called Creek religious leaders "high priests," whom he stated Euro-Americans called "jugglers, or conjurors." The naturalist claimed that the high priest advised the secular headman of a village or mico, in both civil and military matters.[4] He also commented that "they foretell rain or drought, and pretend to bring rain at pleasure, cure diseases, and exercise witchcraft, invoke or expel evil spirits, and even assume the power of directing thunder and lightning."[5]

Medical roles were not confined to high priests, however. Among the Creeks a group of knowers, called "Kilas," practiced the art of prophecy. They foretold events such as death and sickness and diagnosed disease.[6] Another group of Muskogee knowers were called "Hitch Lalàge," who were "cunning men, or persons prescient of

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[4] James Adair commented that Southeastern Indian villages had only one high priest, but his claim probably only applies to some Creek towns, such as the one Bartram visited, whose priest advised in both military and domestic matters. See Adair, History of the American Indian, 85.

[5] Bartram, Travels, 396.

[6] Swanton, Indians of the Southeastern United States, 774; and Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 615.

futurity."[7] Healers who lacked the status of a high priest were also prominent. "Physick, or the knowledge of it, is another thing in which they [the Creeks] pride themselves not a little," Bernard Romans commented, "but they apply that name to all kinds of exorcisms, juggling and legerdemain tricks, as well as to the knowledge of diseases and the simples proper to cure them."[8]

A complex array of religious leaders practiced medicine among the Cherokees. In the early eighteenth century, Lower Cherokee priests called "Cheeràtahége," who resembled the priestly chieftains of earlier centuries, led negotiations with Europeans, but they disappeared from the record as the eighteenth century progressed.[9] References to other high priests, called Uka, survive in nineteenth century oral history. Such accounts recorded that a single Uka determined when the entire Cherokee Nation would perform their annual ceremonies. The Uka's power, however, was most likely not that extensive. Ukas probably lived in "Beloved" or mother towns, such as Chota, Tugaloo, Kituwah, Cowee, Hiwassie, and perhaps some other towns, which the

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[7] Adair, History of the American Indian, 84.

[8] Romans, Natural History, 98.

[9] According to Adair, Cheera was the Cherokee word for fire and Cheeràtahége meant men possessed of fire. See Adair, History of the American Indians, 84. Several references to a Cheeràtahége exist in early eighteenth century British records. See above.

Cherokees regarded as their oldest settlements from which other communities sprang. And, as the leaders of these Beloved Towns, Ukas exercised some authority over villages in their immediate vicinity.[10]

Although having a tradition of centralized religious authority, the Cherokees practiced medicine in a decentralized fashion. On the town level, seven clan elders, or Beloved Men known as tinvlinoheski, selected different individuals to perform particular tasks. Beloved Men, chose the Ooleestooleeh and Teekanaghistee (also referred to as "adonisgi" in other accounts) to conduct the Smallpox Dance. Other Cherokee priests bore the name Unikuuruhi, or peace chiefs, being those who dealt with peace negotiations. Still another group of priests were known as Askagugustuega, or war priests.[11] Euro-Americans often referred to the war priest by the English translation of his title, "Raven," and presumably they conducted ceremonies to prepare warriors for battle.[12]

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[10] For accounts of Ukas, see JHPP, I, 117-123; III, n.p.

[11] JHPP, I, 24. De Brahm observed two "conjurors" conducting the induction ceremony of a new village headman. These two men, who sat on opposite sides of the headman, were most likely the war and peace priests. See John Gerar De Brahm, Report of the General Survey in the Southern District of North America, ed. Louis DeVorsey, Jr., (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1971), 112.

[12] Adair, History of the American Indian, 202. This priestly division was unlike the Creeks, who tended to have single high priests that resided over either "red" towns, where ceremonies concerning war were performed, or "white" towns, where war ceremonies were prohibited. On the division of Creek towns into "red" and "white" categories, see Michael Green, The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 7.

Ooleestooleeh and other priests also served as knowers. As part of their role in village ceremonies, Ooleestooleeh sacrificed deer meat in a fire and observed the smoke for information about the village's future. The Ooleestooleeh also utilized the Oohlungsahtah, a quartz "divining crystal," to predict the fate of his people.[13] The Raven, of course, made prophecies in matters of war, foretelling the consequences of Cherokee military engagement with particularly enemies.[14] In addition to these high status knowers, individuals of inferior rank acted as knowers in matters of less concern, such as ballplays.[15]

The titles and status of healers among the Cherokees are more difficult to discern. Teekanawghistee and other holy men may have performed some healing, but their primary role in regard to treating patients involved exorcising the dwellings of the dead and diseased rather than administering medicine. Healers, who worked directly with a patient, most likely were called aniganagati (plural) or

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[13] JHPP, I, 76 and 108.

[14] De Brahm, Report of the General Survey, 113.

[15] Norton, Journal, 135.

ganagati (singular).[16] The individuals seemed to have an ambiguous status in village society. On one hand, nineteenth century oral histories do not mention ganagati as important religious leaders and generally denigrated healers, calling them "conjurors," or those who lacked the prestige of ceremonial priests.[17] On the other hand, Englishmen and Cherokees both recognized "Cannacaughte" or Old Hop of Chota as the most powerful Cherokee "high priest" in the eighteenth century.[18] Whatever their name or status, healers obviously were important in Cherokee medicine.[19]

The Chickasaws and Choctaws also had multiple types of medicine people. Each group had high priests or "archi-magus" who presided over ceremonial activities. James Adair claimed that "Ishtohoollo is the name of all their priestly order, and their pontifical office descends by inheritance to the eldest."[20] This comment corresponded with a nineteenth-century observation concerning the

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[16] Cherokees today use the term "ganagati" to denote a surgeon but the term was also used during the colonial period. DeBrahm records that "Kanekadi" meant physician or conjuror. De Brahm, Report of the General Survey, 118.

[17] JHPP, I, 95.

[18] South Carolina Gazette, July 31, 1755, no.1101; and Adair, History of the American Indians, 85.

[19] JHPP, IV, n.p.

[20] Adair, History of the American Indians, 85. "Ishtohoollo" was also a Chickasaw [Muskoghean] name for God. Adair, History of the Amerian Indians, 48.

Choctaw that "Ishtahullo or Nanishtahullo is applied to whatever excites surprise, and also to anything which they conceive to possess some occult or superior power." Choctaws and Chickasaws, thus, not only labeled priests Ishtohoolo but also witches, both of whom used religious powers, although for diametrically opposed purposes.[21] Adair also referred to leading religious figures as "Loáche," or those who fulfilled all three medical duties. Chickasaw Loáche had high status "because they believe they are inspired with a great portion of the divine fire." They conducted agricultural ceremonies, performed rainmaking rituals, foretold the future, and healed afflicted individuals.[22] Another group of Chickasaw medicine men, the Opae, were war priests, who, like Cherokee Ravens, made predictions concerning military action and conducted ceremonies to prepare warriors before and after battle. [23]

Whatever the name of their high priests, a number of other important individuals, known as Tisho Mingos, fulfilled some medical roles. Similar to the Beloved Men of the Cherokees, Tisho Mingos conducted many rituals of

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[21] Quoted in John Swanton, Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin, No. 103, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), 195.

[22] Adair, History of the Amerian Indians, 181.

[23] Ibid., 170-171.

village ceremonies.[24] They also acted as healers or at least assisted native physicians in treating patients and performing healing rituals. In addition, Tisho Mingos traveled with Opae to help prepare war medicine.[25]

Although the Choctaw name for their medical people in the eighteenth-century went unrecorded, the actions of Tisho Mingos did appear in the written record. In the 1730s, a French observer found healers, whom he called "jugglers," because they appeared to use magic to cure the afflicted.[26] Later, Bossu claimed that medicine people not only cured "common diseases" but also saw into the future and predicted events. In addition, they had "a great deal of authority," for Choctaws asked them for advice and consulted them "on every occasion, like oracles."[27]

The Choctaw medicine man also served as a priest in rainmaking ceremonies and served as a healer.[28] Both of these activities were similar. The rainmaker used a plant

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[24] Ibid., 101-104.

[25] Richard White claims that Tisho Mingos among the Choctaws controlled a town's medicine. White, Roots of Depedency, 44. As will be shown below, Tisho Mingos assisted Chickasaw doctors during the Pishofa ceremony. Adair, History of the American Indians, 170-171.

[26] John Swanton, ed. and trans., "An Early Account of the Choctaw Indians [1730]," Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, 5 no. 2. (Lancaster, Pa.: 1918), 61-62.

[27] Bossu, Travels, 167-168. The French terms that Bossu used for these medicine people were translated by Seymour Feiler as "medicine man or seer."

[28] Romans, Natural History, 85-86.

that bore the sacred name of "esta hoola." He boiled it in a pot, while dancing to bring the desired rain. Similarly, a Choctaw medicine man attempted to administer an herbal medicine to Bernard Romans for a fever. Romans drank some of the medicine but claimed his fever had not dissipated. When he refused a stronger dose, the Choctaws derided the European as a fool.[29]

As in all of the Four Nations, the Chickasaws and Choctaws had many individuals of varying status who served as knowers. These lesser status medicine people particularly made predictions in regard to an individual's fortune in traditional games, warfare, hunting, or romance. A nineteenth century account, however, distinguished these knowers as "conjurors," who were considerably less reputable than "doctors" or healers.[30]

Details concerning female activities in Southeastern Indian medicine are scarce, but they certainly played important spiritual and medicinal roles in their villages. Some Cherokee females became "Beloved Women," or Akeyvgustu. As did their male counterparts, these women won that title through special deeds that earned the

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[29] Ibid., 78. For an earlier account of a Choctaw healer, see Swanton, ed., "An early account of the Choctaw," 61-62.

[30] John Swanton, "Social and Religious Beliefs and Usages of the Chickasaw Indians." In Bureau of American Ethnology 44th Annual Report, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), 270-272.

respect of their fellow village residents. During a Creek attack, for example, one Cherokee woman joined the male warriors and inspired them to victory. "She was afterwards raised to the dignity and honor of a Queen or Chief of the nation," William Bartram remarked, "as a reward for her superior virtues and abilities, and presided in the State during her life."[31] More appropriately, the "Queen" became known as War Woman, a title akin to Raven denoting her status as a priestess. War Woman may have been the woman from Keowee regarded as "the greatest conjuror" in the nation at the time of her death in 1773.[32]

Other accounts mention priestly women who were regarded as "Beloved." Among the Cherokees in the 1760s, the primary duty of Beloved Women involved the preparation of ritual drinks consumed during village ceremonies. These medicine women acquired the right ingredients, blessed the drink with a swan's wing, and said special prayers.[33] "Beloved Women" among the Chickasaws also functioned as priests during annual harvest festivals.[34]

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[31] Bartram, Travels, 545.

[32] Alexander Cameron to John Stuart, October 11, 1773, C.O.5:75 in WE, VII, 8.

[33] Henry Timberlake, Memoirs [1765], ed. Samuel C. Williams, (Mariette, Ga: Continental Book Co., 1948), 100.

[34] Adair, History of the American Indian, 107.

Since most observers came from patriarchal societies, women's roles in eighteenth-century Southeastern Indian society largely went unrecorded. Some fragmentary evidence, however, suggests that female healers were common among the Four Nations. In 1791, Creek women were reportedly more prevalent than men in administering cures to patients.[35] Earlier, a Natchez woman received such prominence in medicine that the French would go to her for treatment. Bossu claimed that the woman was "familiar with many herbs which she used to save the lives of a good number of our sick."[36]

Within each of the Four Nations, medicine may have been segregated by sex. Women went to female healers, while men went to male practitioners. In addition, women priests led other women in songs and prayers during village ceremonies, while male priests conducted services among men. An early twentieth-century Mississippi Choctaw in fact claimed that traditional "medicine givers" could only administer treatment to a person of the same sex, necessarily involving both female and male healers.[37]

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[35] Swan, "Position and state of ... Creeks," 270.

[36] Bossu, Travels, 35.

[37] Swanton, Social and Ceremonial life of the Choctaw, 235-236.

Just as many types of religious leaders existed, a variety of means were available through which one could become a medicine person. Most commonly, an existing medicine person selected young kinsmen and carefully instructed them to be priests, knowers, or healers. One of Buttrick's Cherokee informants, Nutsawi, for example, learned of the Smallpox Dance and other medicinal rituals from his uncle who had been a priest, perhaps an Ooleestooleeh.[38] In some cases, a young man's preparation meant that he did not participate in warfare. The act of killing another human being "polluted" a priest and prevented him from exercising sacred powers during annual ceremonies.[39] Instead, potential medicine people were secluded for at least a portion of their life, wherein they prayed, fasted and purged themselves through sweat baths and special emetics.[40]

Once trained, medicine people considered their knowledge sacred. They did not share their knowledge with untrained tribesmen, for fear that it would become polluted and lose its efficacy. The Southeastern Indians' "supposed holy orders," James Adair recorded, were "obtained from a

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[38] JHPP, IV, n.p.

[39] Adair, History of the American Indians, 159.

[40] Ibid., 128.

close attention to, and approved knowledge of their sacred mysteries." He added that "no temptations can corrupt their virtue on that head: neither will they convey their divine secrets to the known impure."[41] A skeptical French observer made a similar comment about an Alabama medicine man. "The language that the medicine man speaks in his invocations has nothing in common with everyday speech," he observed. "It is nothing but the product of an over-excited imagination that these charlatans pass off as a divine language."[42]

Another means through which an individual became a medicine person involved survival of almost impossible circumstances. Etteachteal, a Natchez man, for example, became a "witch doctor" after defying two death sentences. Natchez elders ordered the sacrifice of Etteachteal after his wife, a member of the hereditary elite ruling family, died from sickness. The condemned man ran-away, forcing his in-laws to sacrifice someone else. Later, Etteachteal returned thinking he would be safe, but again tribal members ordered his death when one of his late wife's relatives died. When he cried out in protest, his in-laws

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[41] Ibid., 391.

[42] Bossu, Travels, 149, n.6.

determined that he was not fit to die. Thereafter, Etteachteal remained with the Natchez, using "his knowledge to fool his fellow tribesmen."[43] Other Natchez men also achieved positions as medicine men after escaping death. The Natchez generally believed that a person who had been struck by lightning could cure any disease.[44]

Some Cherokee men achieved special powers by surviving terrible ordeals. Old Hop, or Cannacaughte of Chota, was wounded while very young and crippled for life, depriving him of the ability to travel to Charles Town and conduct diplomacy with the English, the means in which many Cherokee headmen achieved status.[45] Old Hop nonetheless used his religious authority and became widely regarded as the most powerful leader of the Cherokees in the 1750s.[46] Interestingly, another Cherokee holy man of the town of the Overhill town of Settico, and a contemporary to Old Hop, was called the Smallpox Conjuror. The evidence does not indicate whether the dreaded virus afflicted the Smallpox Conjuror, but this Cherokee leader may have achieved

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[43] Ibid., 32-34.

[44] Swanton, Indians of the Southeastern United States, 780.

[45] South Carolina Gazette, July 31, 1755, no.1101.

[46] Adair, History of the American Indians, 85.

mystical power by surviving a severe case of the disease.[47] If so, immunity to the virus would have enabled him to work closely with smallpox victims.

In nineteenth and twentieth century oral histories, Southeastern Indians claimed that medicine men and women received special knowledge through the "Little People." According to Chickasaw myth, the "Little People" were powerful yet diminutive beings, who were rarely seen. They often took children who stumbled upon them in the woods and imparted special medical knowledge to them. The children thus became practicing doctors, but they could not tell anyone of their meeting with the Little People.[48] The Choctaws also believed in small mystical beings, or two little men known as Bahpoli and Kowi anukasha. Some Choctaws claimed that only medicine men had the power to see and to talk to these men, and that Bahpoli assisted Choctaw doctors in preparing medicine. Other Choctaws, as well as Chickasaws, believed that the small beings sequestered children, giving them medical secrets.[49] Creeks and Cherokees also revered small beings. The Creeks

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[47] For references to the Smallpox Conjuror, see various letters in DRIA, I, 224, and DRIA, II, 25, 381-382, and 385.

[48] Swanton, "Social and religious beliefs ... of the Chickasaws," 250-251.

[49] Swanton, Social and Ceremonial life of the Choctaw, 198.

claimed such creatures granted people supernatural power, while it is unclear whether the Cherokees believed that the Little People gave humans medical knowledge.[50]

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However medicine people achieved their knowledge or status, they were expected to discern the causes of sickness and other misfortunes. It would fall to the various priests, knowers, and healers, to interpret the cause of eighteenth-century epidemics. This task proved difficult, considering that epidemics of acute infectious diseases were unlike the indigenous disorders that traditional Indian medicine aimed to relieve. Priests, knowers, and healers, nonetheless, came up with explanations for epidemics that threatened their people.

Among the Four Nations, medicine people claimed that an array of intermediary agents spread contagion. The most common intermediaries were animal spirits. Animals, according to Cherokee mythology, created diseases to defend against human predators. Humans had multiplied rapidly and invented bows, knives, blowguns, spears, and hooks that increased their hunting yields. Animals conferred and "began then to devise and name so many new diseases, one

[50] Swanton, Indians of the Southeastern United States, 774; Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 496-497; and Mooney, Myths, 333-334.

after another, that had not their invention at last failed them, no one of the human race would have been able to survive." Plants, however, remained friends to the human beings. They heard of the animal's "evil designs" and decided to furnish medicine that would cure the various ailments.[51]

Cherokees also believed that by asking forgiveness they could escape some diseases that animals created. For example, Little Deer, the powerful and invisible chief of the deer tribe, kept watch over all his species, and when a human shot a deer, he immediately knew it. He listened for the hunter to ask for forgiveness, and if such a request occurred, Little Deer forgave the hunter. If not, Little Deer followed the hunter home and afflicted him with rheumatism that lasted forever.[52]

Creek medical folklore also associated illness with certain animals.[53] Unlike the Cherokees, Creeks did not record in their myths that animals created illness to punish human predators. Instead, Creeks named their illnesses after animals whose characteristics resembled the symptoms. Deer, bison, bear, rabbits, dogs, squirrels, and

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[51] Mooney, Myths, 250-252.

[52] Ibid., 264.

[53] Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 638.

many other animals, Creeks believed, caused a variety of ailments, including fevers, intestinal disorders, respiratory troubles, rheumatism, and virtually every other health problem one can imagine.[54]

North American Indians commonly associated animals with disease, and such beliefs among the Southeastern Indians most likely predated 1500. Nevertheless, it does not follow that Southeastern Indians blamed indigenous animals for virgin soil epidemics. Instead, medicine people of the Four Nations appear to have attribute intermediary agency of epidemics not to animals but to evil spirits.[55]

The Cherokees explanation of smallpox as deriving from the evil spirit, kosvkvskini, was the most clear association of evil spirits with an epidemic disease. Kosvkvskini, according to some Cherokees, physically appeared in the forms both a man and a woman. The female was of "a ripe chestnut burr colour, and similarly covered all over with fine prickels, whereupon she flitted the prickle, on touching any one, [and] raised the fine red pimple characteristic of the disease." The male was of "a

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[54] Ibid., 639-648.

[55] Calvin Martin argues that Native Americans of Canada blamed animals for virgin soil epidemics. But no such evidence exists in the Southeast. See Calvin Martin, Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

ripe choke berry hue; and his touch, wherever that of the [female spirit] had preceded, gave the blackness which the pustules afterwards assumed."[56]

Similar accounts exist concerning the Creeks. In the eighteenth century, some Apalachicola Creeks relocated their town after floodwaters had inundated their settlements and sickness reigned among the inhabitants. But it was not the high water that the Creeks blamed for the illness. Rather, they believed they became "haunted and possessed with vengeful spirits." Spirits plagued the villagers because of the murders of a group of traders several years earlier. "Repeatedly warned by apparitions and dreams to leave," the Creeks moved to a healthier location.[57] Similarly, the Taskeegee Creeks informed a twentieth-century anthropologist that "spirits of the dead, who have not reached the home of the spirits, but who wander about the earth, cause fever in its various forms."[58]

Choctaw folklore also associated disease and other misfortunes with spirits of the dead. The Choctaws traditionally retained the bones of their deceased loved-

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[56] JHPP, I:159-160.

[57] Bartram, Travels, 318.

[58] Frank Speck, "The Creek Indians of Taskigi Town," Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, no.2, pt. 2, (Menasha, Wi: 1907), 129 and 149.

ones, and even carried the bones with them when they moved their villages. Choctaws feared abandoning the bones because "the spirits hovered about their bones to see that they were respectfully cared for." In the event that the caretakers neglected the bones, the offended spirits would punish the Choctaws with "bad luck, sickness, or even death."[59]

Malevolent spirits, Southeastern Indians believed, worked in conjunction with witches or wizards to spread disease. These individuals possessed supernatural powers and were considered medicine people, but unlike high status priests, healers, and knowers, witches and wizards used their medical abilities for malevolent purposes. As early as 1708, the English learned that Southeastern Indians generally feared witches. In his visit to the Creeks, Nairne claimed that a man named Cossittee of Okfuskee was reluctant to become headman, "for the generall opinion of the Indians is, that men of power and authority are generally the objects of the [W]izards mallice, who frequently bewitch them into lingering distempers."[60] James Adair commented that "there are not greater bigots in

[59] Gideon Lincecum recorded this myth from 19th century Choctaw informants. It is quoted in Swanton, Social and Ceremonial life of the Choctaw, 14.

[60] Nairne, Muskhogean Journals, 35.

Europe, nor persons more superstitious, than the Indians, (especially the women) concerning the power of witches, wizards, and evil spirits."[61]

The link between witchcraft and disease appears vividly in nineteenth-century oral history. George Stiggins wrote that Creeks believed that witches or wizards spread disease by "flying about the country to poison people who were inimical to him." Such evil spirits struck their victims by "blowing a contagious air into a house in passing by it at night, blowing into the nostrils and lungs of a person he did not like when asleep, causing instant death."[62]

John Ridge, an educated mixed-blood, similarly described traditional Cherokee beliefs about witchcraft. The Cherokees in "their most savage state," Ridge wrote, believed in "a great first cause or spirit of all good and in a great being the author of all evil." Witches and wizards, who had supernatural powers, always worked in "intercourse with the Devil or bad spirit" to produce misfortune. These malevolent medicine people could transform themselves into animals, especially birds, which sought people to afflict. Such beings "take their

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[61] Adair, History of the American Indians, 38.

[62] Stiggins, Creek Indian History, 88.

nocturnal excursions in pursuit of human victims, particularly those suffering from disease." Sick people could ward off death by employing "witch shooters" to protect him or her from the evil spirits.[63]

It was not uncommon, then, for relatives of deceased victims of disease to take vengeance upon individuals suspected of practicing witchcraft. Sometimes they made accusations themselves or acted on the beliefs of their dying kinsmen. A Cherokee "dying by disease, and charging his death to have been procured by means of witchcraft, or spirits, by any other person," John Haywood discovered, "consigns that person to inevitable death."[64] Other times, healers and knowers had the duty to determine with whom the malevolent medicine originated.[65]

In the eighteenth century, some accusations of witchcraft fell on Euro-American traders. As outsiders who probably did not participate in tribal ceremonies, traders naturally engendered suspicion. Numerous traders perished at the hands of their Native American hosts, and many, but of course not all, of these deaths were due to charges of

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[63] John Ridge to Albert Gallatin, February 27, 1826, JHPP, VIII, n.p.

[64] Haywood, Natural and Aboriginal History, 250-251.

[65] Swanton, "Social and religious beliefs...Chickasaws," 270-272.

witchcraft. In 1748, for example, a Cherokee killed a white trader for being "a Devil and a witch."[66] In addition, a Creek family once held a trader responsible for the death of a kinsman due to "pleurisy." They probably believed the trader cursed the dying man with disease after the two had a fight.[67]

More commonly, Southeastern Indian villagers blamed their own residents, particularly healers and knowers, who were suspected of using their craft for evil rather than good. In 1708, the Chickasaws were embroiled in a witch scare. They had killed at least two suspected witches and decided to execute another, electing two individuals from every clan to enact the sentence. The suspects were not only witches but also "conjurers and rain makers" that prevented rain from falling.[68] Insecurity consequently plagued medicine people. "Sometimes it is dangerous to be a medicine man," a Frenchman reported. "When someone dies, the Indians attribute the death to the medicine and not to the patient's condition."[69]

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[66] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, March 29, 1748, pp.162-163, C.O. 5:456.

[67] Adair, History of the American Indian, 156.

[68] Nairne, Muskhogean Journals, 40.

[69] Bossu, Travels, 149; See also Von Reck, Von Reck's Voyage, 42.

Most often, Southeastern Indians executed elderly individuals who had not achieved much status over the course of their life for witchcraft. Such people were believed to have achieved their advanced age by adding the years of those who died young to their own life expectancy.[70] As a result, village members immediately suspected these individuals when a young member died. After suffering the loss of a child, for example, one Indian family called on a village priest to ascertain the cause of death. The priest immediately suspected witchcraft and charged an old lady with the crime, consequently resulting in her murder.[71] Accusations seemed to fall more on women than men, but the Cherokees equally punished elderly men and women for suspected witchcraft.[72]

Southeastern Indians may have blamed their own village inhabitants for eighteenth century epidemics, but more likely they interpreted these catastrophes as the result of witchcraft originating beyond tribal bounds. For example, the Indians, who encountered the Roanoke colonists,

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[70] Fogelson, "An analysis of Cherokee sorcery," in Four Centuries of Southern Indians, ed. Charles Hudson, (Athens: University of Georgia, 1975), 120.

[71] Adair, History of the American Indians, 186.

[72] John Ridge to Albert Gallatin, February 27, 1826, JHPP, VIII. Scholars generally agree that elderly people, women more so than men, bore the brunt of witchcraft accusations. See Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 632; Fogelson, "An analysis of Cherokee sorcery," 120; and Swanton, "Social and religious beliefs...of the Chickasaws," 270-272.

suffered mortality from a mysterious illness and blamed the English for shooting them with "invisible arrows."[73] Although not associated with a particular epidemic, an episode involving eighteenth century Creeks corresponded to the Roanoke example. Creeks, one American learned, believed that other tribes could shoot them with invisible bullets. They informed the American that "their Indian enemies have the power of shooting them as they lay asleep, at the distance of 500 miles." Creek warriors often complained of "having been shot by a Choctaw or Chickasaw from the midst of these nations, and send or go directly to the most cunning eminent doctress for relief."[74]

Wars among the Four Nations probably originated with one group blaming an epidemic on the witchcraft of another. Following the 1747-1750 epidemic, the Creeks and Cherokees became engulfed in violent conflict. In addition, relations between the Creeks and Choctaws deteriorated substantially following the 1764 smallpox outbreak, and the two nations battled each other into the 1770s. These wars had multiple causes, including the competition over hunting grounds and the desire to replace kinsmen who died from

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[73] Thomas Harriot, "A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia," (1588) in NAW, III, 152-153.

[74] Swan, "Position and state of... Creeks," 271.

disease. But, it would not be surprising that war priests and other medicine people rallied their people into battle by charging enemies with using witchcraft to spread contagion.

An outbreak among the Choctaws bears more substantial evidence that Southeastern Indians suspected that epidemics originated with the witchcraft of their enemies. In 1731, the Choctaws blamed widespread sickness on poisoned trade items that the Chickasaws and English traders circulated. Toupaoulastabé, a Choctaw headman, claimed that "the sickness which was current in the nation came from a medicine that the English made with cane sugar and put in the limbourg that they had sent to trade by way of the Chickasaws for the purpose of making all the Choctaws die."[75] Choctaw warriors sought vengeance against the Chickasaws, "who had cast a sickness into the villages that made them all die."[76] Whether using poison, invisible ammunition, or other devices, only witches or wizards used such malevolent medicine.

The English and French attempted to manipulate beliefs in witchcraft to promote their imperial interests among Southeastern Indians. The French, who had little to offer

[75] Régis du Roullet to Périer, February 27, 1731, in MPAFD, IV, 58-59.

[76] Ibid., 60.

the Indians in way of trade goods, circulated a rumor that the English practiced witchcraft. After suffering the loss of some of their delegation in 1749, Creek leaders left Charles Town claiming "that what was told them by the French was too true."[77] What the French told them was probably what they told the Cherokees. During the sickly decade of the 1750s, one Cherokee leader claimed that the French said "that the Carolina People had Conjourors amongst them, that could send up different Bundles of Sickness to their Nation which they scattered amongst their Towns from which proceeds the Decrease of their People."[78] The French also claimed that the English were directly responsible for the deaths of Cherokee leaders in Charles Town in 1749. Governor Glen's "arms and hands" were "all stained with Blood," the French argued.[79] Cherokee medicine men, however, were reluctant to hold their British patrons responsible. Instead, one can conjecture that the Cherokees' long-standing friendship with the English and frequent attacks on the French indicated that they blamed the latter more than the former for witchcraft.

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[77] James Glen to Board of Trade, December 23, 1749, C.O. 5:372. fo. 171-172.

[78] DRIA, II, 265.

[79] Ibid., 358.

Still, witches and wizards remained just intermediary agents in the spread of disease. Ultimate responsibility for an epidemic, Southeastern Indians believed, lay elsewhere. Supernatural forces, or spirits, controlled witchcraft, and such spirits subjected people to malevolent medicine when they violated sacred tribal laws. The Cherokees' belief that spirit beings let kosvkvskini loose to afflict people with smallpox provides one of the most telling examples of where the ultimate responsibility for an epidemic lay. When the spirit beings let kosvkvskini free, the Cherokees explained, "they were displeased with the people for their sins." Beliefs among all the Four Nations associated disease, whether through the agency of witchcraft, evil spirits, or other phenomena, with transgressions against the supernatural forces that controlled life.

The belief that epidemics resulted from divine anger stemmed from traditional Southeastern Indian interpretations of natural disasters such as floods and droughts. A Muskogee rainmaker, for example, once claimed that the bad conduct of young adults ruined his power to mediate with the spiritual world and bring rain. "Loak Ishtohoollo was sorely vexed with most of their young people for violating the chastity of their neighbours

wives," Adair learned from the medicine man. "They spoiled the power of his holy things, and tempted Mingo Ishto Elóa, 'the great chieftain of thunder,' to bind the clouds, and withhold the rain."[80] The Cherokees also believed that youthful transgression not only brought drought but also sickness. The Cherokees showed their deference to the Great Spirit by making sacrifices of deer meat and maize to the four winds, which fell under divine control. When they disobeyed this tribal law, the Great Spirit set the four winds against the earth "to destroy the crops" and bring "a famine on the earth to punish them for their disobedience."[81] Cherokees courted catastrophe when they failed to heed the authority of their religious leaders. "When he [the Great Spirit] sees that they will not be reclaimed by the king nor priests nor beloved men," a Cherokee priest recited to an English trader, "he sends [the four winds] either with war or sickness or some grievous famine to destroy these rebellious people."[82]

Not surprisingly, Cherokee priests explained the smallpox epidemic of 1738-1739 as a natural disaster and

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[80] Adair, History of the Amerian Indians, 93-94.

[81] Alexander Longe, "A Small Postscript on the Ways and Manners of the Nashon of Indians called the Charikees (1717)," ed. by David H. Corkran. Southern Indian Studies. 21 (October 1969): 14.

[82] Ibid., 18.

divine punishment resulting from violation of tribal laws. The alleged transgression that brought the epidemic involved sexual intercourse of young men and women in the cornfields.[83] Laws against such activity undoubtedly functioned to keep the attention of adolescent Cherokees focused on the important duty of guarding crops against animal scavengers; dereliction of such duty could result in disastrous loss of a season's vegetable supply.[84] Guarding cornfields, as one can imagine, however, was not exciting, and youth probably used their time in the cornfields for sexual experimentation despite strict laws against it. Thus when the smallpox outbreak occurred, Cherokee elders imagined the disease "to proceed from the invisible darts of angry fate, pointed against them, for their young people's vicious conduct." In addition, the elders equated the epidemic with a natural disaster, calling smallpox "oonatàquára" a term related to the Cherokee word for thunder, "eentaquáróske."[85]

Southeastern Indians believed that sickness not only resulted from individual violation of tribal law but

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[83] Adair, History of the American Indians, 244-245.

[84] Bartram recorded Creek customs of guarding cornfields. See Bartram, Travels, 172.

[85] Adair, History of the American Indians, 69. This name for smallpox does not survive probably because it is a Lower Cherokee term. As the century wore on the Lower dialect became less prevalent.

communal disregard for traditional modes of religious worship. Writing about the Four Nations in general, Adair claimed that the Indians believed that the correct practice of their Green Corn Ceremony, or what he called the "annual expiation of sin," would bring good health and safety. A key element of this ceremony occurred on the third day, when a village priest extinguished the fire of the past year and ignited a new fire, which Southeastern Indians considered sacred. In the case that tribal members did not show proper regard for this ritual, catastrophe would result. Such irreverence might involve failure of common people to remain in their dwellings and to extinguish all their old fires, while the head priest produced the new fire for the village. As a consequence of their transgression, "the divine fire will bite them severely with bad diseases, sickness, and a great many other evils."[86]

The Green Corn Ceremony gave priests of the Four Nations an opportunity to enumerate tribal laws and command their obedience. On the fourth day of the annual event, priests exhorted the people of their village to abide by the sacred rules. Southeastern Indians believed such obedience would "enable their prophets, the rainmakers, to

[86] *Ibid.*, 111.

procure plentiful harvests, and give war leaders victory over the enemies." The priests, moreover, would be able to use "the communicative power of their holy things" or their medicine to bring "health and prosperity." In the event that people ignored tribal law, they could expect "a great many extraordinary calamities, such as hunger, uncommon diseases, a subjection to witchcraft, and captivity and death by the hands of the hateful enemy in the woods."[87]

The Creeks also saw epidemics as a consequence of improper regard for tribal laws and village rituals. At some point in their history, Creeks, belonging to the town of Tuckabatchee, came into possession of some brass plates. The artifacts may have come from the earliest Spanish explorers, other Indians, or eighteenth century French or British, but their exact origin will probably never be determined. The Creeks nonetheless incorporated the objects into their ceremonies as sacred items that only head priests and his specially trained assistants could handle. The plates were displayed on ritualized occasions such as the Green Corn Ceremony, or Busk (the English

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[87] Ibid., 113-114. Swanton suggests that the Choctaws lacked the Green Corn Ceremony until the Creeks introduced it to them in the 19th century. See Swanton, Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw, 221. This suggestion, however, seems ludicrous. Green Corn ceremonialism was widespread through the Eastern Woodlands. In addition, harvest festivals appear universal among most if not all pre-industrial societies. The fact that Choctaw ceremonies went largely unrecorded does not mean they were absent. Instead, one should suspect that the Choctaw ceremonialism was as elaborate as the rest of the Southeastern Indians.

rendering of the Creek "Puskita"). The Creeks considered them "relics of great value, on account of the blessing supposed to be attached to the proper attention to them." Tuckabatachees' "health and prosperity" depended on the proper observance of the objects' ritual use.[88] If unconsecrated persons even touched the plates, "he would certainly die, and sickness or some great calamity would befall the town."[89]

While improper attention to village rituals could bring disaster, correct performance could insure health and prosperity. In 1736, a Creek priest reported that the Busk involved the use of four medicines, pasaw, or rattlesnake root; mico weanochaw (also spelled "hoyanidja"), or red root; sowatchko, or something akin to wild fennel; and eschchapootchke, or small tobacco.[90] Creek legend holds that the Lower Town of Coweta originally possessed pasaw, while the Upper Town of Tukabachee had mico hoyanidja. The two towns combined the medicines, perhaps to symbolize the spiritual unity of the Creek confederates, and formed the

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[88] Account of R.M. Loughridge, September 14, 1852, reprinted in Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 507.

[89] Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 506.

[90] Von Reck, Von Reck's Voyage, 49. See also "Ancient Georgia Indian lore," Georgia Historical Quarterly, 15 (1931): 194.

third medicine sowatchko.[91] Another legend claims that Tukabahchee held the Busk before all other Creek towns, which sent emissaries to retrieve the divine fire and sacred medicines.[92]

Creek ceremonies involved the ritual consumption of specially consecrated medicines, believed to protect their villages from sickness and misfortune. Hillis Haya, or other high status priests, had the duty to obtain materials for the sacred medicines and prepare them for communal consumption. The Taskigi Creeks claimed that red root and rattlesnake root "were sacred plants given to [them] by the Master of Breath as purifiers and insurers of good health in being free from possession by harmful spirits."[93] The Yuchi also valued the two roots, claiming that the Sun gave them to the Indians for ritual consumption during the Busk. "On that day," the Yuchi believed, "no trouble comes to the people when they have taken the medicines."[94] Another Creek, speaking about the town of Eufala, commented that "the miko hoyanidja is taken to ward of ills, to act as a kind of wall about the people against pestilence or any

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[91] Swanton, "Creek social organization and usages," 64-66.

[92] Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 568.

[93] Speck, "Indians of Taskigi Town," 138.

[94] Frank Speck, Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians, Anthropological Publications of the University Museum, vol. 1, no. 1, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1909), 106-107.

kind of disease." "The mashed medicine," he further reported, "should be taken home after the Busk and used in cases of sickness."[95]

The persistence of beliefs that proper personal conduct and reverent adherence to village ceremonies ensured good health demonstrated that epidemics did not necessarily undermine Southeastern Indian religion. On the contrary, village priests convinced their followers that ultimate causation of such catastrophes lay in the entire community's relationship with the supernatural. Priests exhorted village members that they must maintain their relationship through traditional modes of worship if they were to survive. Such theology not only reinforced the status of priests but also gave Southeastern Indians a sense that they could control their own destiny.[96]

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In more years than not, Southeastern Indian theology must have appeared effective to its followers. Epidemics, although certainly devastating, only struck every five to ten years. But what about when epidemics penetrated the

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[95] Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians," 608.

[96] Gregory Evans Dowd also came to this conclusion concerning Native American religious beliefs about misfortune in the eighteenth century. See Dowd, A Spirited Resistance: the Native American Struggle for Unity, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 5-6

interior, when diseases lurked in nearby settlements, or worse when illness struck the village? In these events, annual traditions such as the Green Corn Ceremony did not suffice. New methods of avoiding disease and treating the afflicted were needed. To meet this need, the Four Nations relied on their priests, healers, and knowers more than ever.

Before the age of modern medicine, the natural reaction of human beings to epidemics involved avoidance of communities where the disease existed. The Four Nations were no different. In the fall of 1739, for example, Cherokee hunters did not return to their villages for fear of smallpox. "Smallpox is said to be still raging among the Cherokees," a Georgia settler wrote. "This is one of the reasons that the men would rather be in the forests than at home."[97] Southeastern Indians, however, did more than flee their own villages. As the eighteenth century progressed, their medicine people listened closely to rumors of epidemic and warned against travelling into areas suspected or known to be experiencing an outbreak.

By the 1750s, if not earlier, Southeastern Indian religious leaders exerted their authority to decrease the exposure of their people to disease. Periodically, leaders

of the Four Nations lost their lives as they traveled into the disease-ridden settlement of South Carolina. In 1748, Creeks and Cherokees reminded Governor Glen about the "ill consequences that attends Headmen going to Charles Town by sickness, [and] that from time to time they have lost a great many headmen."[98] They also asked him to hold future meetings away from the Lowcountry, preferably at Ft. Moore.[99] Despite the complaints of the Cherokees and Creeks, Glen insisted that meetings continue to be held at Charles Town. And, in 1749, Cherokees and Creeks reluctantly journeyed to the colonial capital, where they stumbled into a disastrous epidemic.

From that point on, Southeastern Indian medicine people became more firm in their resolve to prevent their people from travelling into areas where pathogens frequently loomed. The Cherokees believed that the road to the colonial capital had become contaminated, and the "fear of pollution" even kept them from burying their dead.[100] A few years later, Old Hop ordered that future meetings be held at Congarees, a fort above the fall line of the

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[97] Daily register entry, November 24, 1739, in Detailed Reports, VII, 289.

[98] Minutes of [South Carolina] Council, May 23, 1749, C.O. 5:459, p.394.

[99] JCHASC, (1749), 194.

[100] Adair, History of the American Indian, 133; and South Carolina Gazette, July 31, 1755, no.1101.

Savannah. He exclaimed to British officials that many of his "best warriors had perished coming home [from Charles Town], and [he] does not want anymore to die."[101]

As a Cherokee medicine man, Old Hop's orders to avoid Charles Town did not merely take the form of verbal harangues but involved the art of knowing. Cherokee knowers in fact exerted considerable influence in the 1750s. In 1758, for example, Cherokee medicine men prevented warriors from joining the British to fight the French and their Indian allies in the Ohio Valley. Cherokee medicine people perceived "bad omens . . . in their Conjurations" and predicted that if their warriors went they would suffer "Sickness and Death" from a "pestilential distemper." One Cherokee headman, the Little Carpenter, further explained that he and his warriors "never undertook any Thing of Consequence [on their own], but they consulted their Conjurers to know the Pleasure of the Great Man above and they never departed from his Opinion."[102]

In the 1750s, Cherokee knowers had good reason to worry that young men would contract infectious diseases.

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[101] March 23, 1755, DRIA, II, 46.

[102] July 2, 1758, DRIA, II, 471. Evidence of the Cherokees' reliance on knowers to predict the consequences of tribal actions can be found in DeBrahm, Report of the General Survey, 113.

From 1755 to 1757, smallpox raged in the North, particularly among the troops that the British wanted their Indian allies to join.[103] Perhaps the Cherokees had learned of the epidemic from traders or contacts with other tribes. French-allied Indians had continually visited Cherokee villages in the 1750s and attempted to enlist them against the English or at least guarantee their neutrality. In addition, Cherokees may have also learned that smallpox had erupted in their immediate vicinity. In June 1757, for example, the British trader Daniel Pepper received a "flying report" that smallpox had struck a Chickasaw village located among the Upper Creeks.[104] Additional reports circulated that smallpox, measles and other diseases were spreading in Georgia and Carolina and had hit the Catawbas. Cherokee medicine people may have obtained some of this information, thus encouraging them to predict harmful consequences for their people should they travel much beyond their homelands.

In the smallpox epidemic of 1763, Southeastern Indians again proved reluctant to enter areas where disease raged. In that year, the British sought to meet with the Four

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[103] A smallpox epidemic raged in the North undoubtedly spread by British, French, and Indian troops. See Chapter 4.

[104] Daniel Pepper to Governor Lyttleton, June 28, 1757, in DRIA, II, 389.

Nations. At first, they wanted to hold a conference in South Carolina but moved the location due the lingering of smallpox. The British informed the Indians of the disease's presence and the necessity to choose a location other than Carolina. [105] Understandably the Indians became "disinclined" to travel into English settlements. The Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Catawbas, according to the Georgia Gazette "absolutely refused" to go to the town of Dorchester, where the Royal Governors of Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina proposed seeing the Indian delegates.[106] The Lower Creeks and Cherokees also expressed reservations about meeting at Augusta.[107] In the late fall, representatives of the Four Nations, after much cajoling, eventually met with the British at Augusta. It may have been at that meeting that the Creeks contracted the virus and carried it back to their villages.

During the Revolutionary War, Southeastern Indian fears of contracting diseases in Anglo-American settlements became pronounced. In 1775, Lower Cherokee leaders curiously remarked to the British in East Florida that they

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[105] "Journal of the Congress at Augusta in Georgia, 1763," C.O. 5:65, in WE, IV, p.11.

[106] Georgia Gazette, October 20, 1763, no.29. It is unclear whether they meant Dorcester, Georgia or South Carolina, but both were near the smallpox-infested settlements of Savannah and Charles Town, respectively.

[107] South Carolina Gazette, October 8, 1763, no.1525; and "Journal of the Congress at Augusta in Georgia, 1763," C.O. 5:65, in WE, IV, p.49.

did not care to trade with South Carolinians any more. "Our paths to them," the Cherokees claimed, "are grown up with Brush." The cession of trade occurred because "the Great Man above sent a Distemper" which had "seized the whole [Anglo-American population] from Boston to Georgia." It may be the case, however, that the "distemper" was a metaphor for rebellion. The Cherokee leader proclaimed that the colonists were "now all mad." Whether disease or warfare afflicted the colonists, the Cherokees did not want anything to do with them.[108]

During the 1779-1780 epidemic, the Cherokees again avoided certain areas due to fears of smallpox. In these years, the virus spread through the South. The British hoped to enlist the Four Nations against the rebellious colonists, but the smallpox virus ruined any chance that large numbers of Indian troops would join the fray. One British officer described his difficulties with the Cherokees, who remained reluctant to expose themselves to contagion for the benefit of the British:

> Having held a conference with the [Cherokee] Indian chiefs on this subject, they told me, 'they were willing and ready to give every assistance in their power to the Great King and had come down from their nation for that purpose but that as the smallpox . . .

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[108] Lower Cherokee Speech to a Party Setting off for East Florida, November 8, 1775, C.O. 5:77, in WE, VII, p.380.

> raged throughout the province, they would not be able to prevail on their young men and warriors to remain under their present apprehension of receiving an infection from which their nation had on a former occasion sustained a loss of 2500 men.[109]

The Creeks also feared contracting smallpox from the Euro-Americans in 1779. In that year, Creeks knew more than Cherokees that smallpox lurked in their immediate vicinity. The virus had penetrated a few of their villages. Not surprisingly, they refused to send warriors to aid the British. "I endeavored by every means in my power to get them down to the Army," a beleaguered English agent claimed. "But their superstitious ceremonies to which they are unalterable attached would not permit them to turn out of their course."[110] The date of the British report indicated that the Creeks were performing their annual Busk. According to Creek theology, the Busk protected them from the very harm that would surely follow if they ventured into the smallpox-ridden Anglo-American settlements.

While avoiding disease-filled locations undoubtedly minimized the risk of Southeastern Indians of contracting illness, such practices did not totally prevent epidemics

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[109] Thomas Brown to George Germaine, March 18, 1780, C.O. 5:81, fo.225-226.

[110] David Taitt to George Germaine, August 6, 1779, C.O. 5: 80, in WE, VIII, p.268.

from spreading into the interior. Diseases of course traveled into the homelands of the Four Nations, forcing them to be even more creative in developing ways to deal with outbreaks.

To curtail the spread of contagion from village to village, the Four Nations learned to implement quarantine. In 1748, smallpox infected some Upper Creek towns and threatened to spread throughout the Creek Confederacy. The Indians, however, "cut off every kind of communication" with infected villages and posted "at proper places, with strict orders to kill" people from infected villages "as the most dangerous of all enemies." Such measures reportedly worked. Continual practice of quarantine, moreover, facilitated the Creeks' population resurgence in the last half of the eighteenth century.[111] The epidemics of 1764 and 1779 appeared to be confined to certain towns and population estimates showed no major demographic losses.

Although the use of quarantine may have been borrowed from the English, Native Americans traditionally sanctified such practices with elaborate ceremonies designed to gain divine favor. In 1776, the Creek town of Attassee turned to rituals to gain divine favor in avoiding disease. The

town had previously experienced an outbreak that had "laid in the grave abundance of their citizens," and they did not want to suffer another round of disease. "At this time the town was fasting, taking medicine, and I think I may say praying," the visiting William Bartram discovered, "to avert a grievous calamity of sickness."[112]

Other Creek tribes practiced avoidance ceremonies. The twentieth-century Yuchis, for example, had "a general public ceremony, the object of which is to ward off not only sickness but evils of other sorts whatever they might be." Yuchis called their special disease avoidance ritual, "Tsotí' bene," or "Medicine Drinking." The town chief ordered that the ceremony be held "when sickness, or trouble in general is abroad or threatens the town." The ceremony embodied the theology of normal Creek festivals. The various families gathered at the town and purified themselves by consuming emetic until they vomited. They also danced as a form of "propitiation to the various

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[111] Adair, History of the American Indians, 364 and 276 (quotes on 364).

[112] Bartram, Travels, 366-367. There were several descriptions of varying detail of Creek ceremonialism in the eighteenth century, but all except Bartram were weak in providing evidence of the particular purpose of consuming medicines. They generally referred to the idea that medicines would bring good fortune particularly in warfare and would purify individuals and an entire village of past transgressions. See Bossu, Travels, 147; Milfort, Memoirs, 135-142 and 152-153; Swan, "Position and state of ... Creeks," 267-268; and Hawkins, Sketch, 75-78. See also the nineteenth century account of Stiggins, Creek Indian History, 60-64.

supernatural beings" that would protect them from disease.[113]

During their medical rituals, Creeks consumed special potions to ward off infectious diseases. One of these medicines, "kadohwa" or honey locust, was specifically taken to prevent exposure to "contagions such as smallpox and measles."[114] Family members bathed in the medicine for four successive days in order to be protected from disease. As during their annual agricultural ceremonies, medicines were prepared and used in highly ritualized formats, in which prayers, dances, and songs were important for medicine to be fully effective.

The Tsotí' bene resembled the Cherokees' Smallpox Dance. Both were ritualized forms of quarantine, which functioned to quell contact between infected and uninfected villages. The Cherokees had another avoidance ceremony, which provides even richer detail in how Southeastern Indians reacted to the threat of epidemic.

The Cherokees performed a modified version of their "Great New Moon" festival, or Ahtawhhungnah, in order "to avert contagious fevers and other similar epidemics."[115]

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[113] Speck, Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians, 136.

[114] Swanton, "Religious beliefs and medical Practices of the Creek Indians," 658.

[115] JHPP, I: 152.

The Great New Moon festival was held annually after the appearance of the first new moon of fall. It marked the beginning of the new year and was a time in which Cherokees gathered at their respective towns and purified themselves through use of herbal medicines, ritualized bathing, and special dances. Cherokee head priests, or Ooleestooleeh, however, determined to hold a modified version of the ceremony whenever "disease was apprehended or prevailed."[116] "When God was displeased with any people he sent sickness by means of . . . the fire, the water, the moon, or the thunder," Cherokees explained. "Other towns fearing a like calamity celebrated the [Ahtawhhungnah] in order to please god and had him to defend them from so great a calamity."[117]

The modified Ahtawhhungnah was a lengthy ceremony, which like the Smallpox Dance essentially shut Cherokee villages off from the outside world. The head priest made the decision to hold the event seven days in advance, while the ceremony itself lasted another seven days. On the first day of the ceremony, the Ooleestooleeh, his Beloved Men, and a Teekanighistee, prepared the medicinal beverages that village members would consume. Over the next several

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[116] Ibid.

[117] JHPP, III, 32.

days, the Ooleestooleeh acted as a knower, making predictions of the village's fate. Each member of the village presented a bead to the priest "that he might, in the event of any one being taken sick, determine the result by means of the bead representing the sufferer."[118]

The prophecy of the Ooleestooleeh did not stop there. He also sacrificed a deer's tongue to the divine fire and sprinkled it with tobacco. He prayed that he might learn "whether the dreaded pestilence would be driven away." If smoke formed a bluish cloud and remained over the flame, sickness would prevail. If no such cloud formed and the flame rose straight up, the pestilence would spare the medicine man's village. If sickness seemed imminent, the priest would consult his divining crystal, which above everything else symbolized his medicinal powers. Within the divining crystal the whole village would appear to the Ooleestooleeh. Victims of disease would come into view as distinctly dark blue, while the others would look bright. The crystal would grow more and more brilliant if good health was predicted. After conducting these rituals, the Ooleestooleeh told the villagers the results. Undoubtedly, positive predictions gave Cherokees spiritual comfort,

[118] JHPP, I: 156.

while ominous ones caused them much concern and reflection.[119]

During the smallpox years of the late 1750s, the Cherokees appeared to practice the modified Ahtawhhungnah, the Smallpox Dance, or another disease avoidance ritual. In January 1759, a Presbyterian missionary found people of the town of Chota engaged in religious activity. "They are much given to conjuring & the conjurers have great Power over [them]," the missionary stated. "They have these few days been preparing a Physick [which] they say will drive away all their Disorders."[120]

Smallpox afflicted some Cherokees in 1759 and 1760, but even during these years of war against the British they strove to curtail the spread of the epidemic. By December 1759, Lower Cherokees contracted the virus, probably from neighboring Catawbas who transported it from Pennsylvania. In that month, Lyttleton's invasion probably helped spread the disease through the Lower Cherokees, as they were forced to communicate with each other to meet the emergency. After the British departure, however, Cherokees attempted to arrest the progress of smallpox. Through the

[119] The entire description of the modified Ah-tawh-hung-nah can be found in JHPP, I: 152-158.

[120] Richardson, "Account of the Presbyterian mission," 135.

winter and spring of 1760, "the ravaging small-pox . . . induced the Lower Towns to lie dormant."[121]

Not until after the second British invasion in June 1760 and the subsequent destruction of Lower Cherokee villages did the disease seem to spread. The exigencies of warfare prevented Cherokee villages from shutting themselves off from each other and performing disease avoidance rituals. Lower Cherokee refugees unintentionally carried the virus to other towns. Reportedly, the Middle settlements came down with the illness. Smallpox, however, stopped short of the Overhills. The Overhills were "in such Dread of the Infection, that they will not allow a single Person from the [Lower or Middle Towns] to come amongst them."[122]

* * *

As the smallpox epidemic of 1759-60 showed Southeastern Indians attempted to avoid epidemics. But they did not always succeed. In this event, treatment became as important as prevention. Response to epidemic disease thereby fell into the hands of healers.

As has been shown, healers proved ineffective in dealing with the crisis of a virgin soil epidemic. An

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[121] Adair, History of the American Indians, 266.

[122] Pennsylvania Gazette, September 4, 1760, no.1654.

entire village succumbed to infection at the same time; basic services such as acquiring food, water, and fire wood broke down; and traditional treatments such as sweating and cold water bathing did nothing to arrest and may have even expedited the progress of a disease. In the smallpox epidemic of 1738, for example, bewildered medicine men among the Cherokees destroyed their aboriginal medicinal artifacts, and some stricken patients killed themselves believing there would be no deliverance from the horribly disfiguring virus.

After first experiencing a virgin soil epidemic, however, Southeastern Indian medicine people learned more effective ways of treating the sick. The most important mode of treatment involved removing the patient outside the village and preventing his or her contact with other tribal members. Seclusion was not a new practice. Menstruating women, new mothers, and their infants remained outside their villages for varying spaces of time.[123] So did wounded warriors, whose blood threatened to pollute the village. These afflicted individuals remained in huts

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[123] Adair, History of the American Indians, 129-130; and Swanton, "Creek social organization and usages," 358-361.

outside of village, where only "prophets" and "superannuated women" treated them.[124]

Southeastern Indians looked upon victims of smallpox and other infectious diseases in much the same way. Even during what appeared to be their first experience with smallpox, Cherokees worried about the consequences of keeping the sick in the village and ordered them to sleep in the fields. Cherokee priests, according to James Adair, "were . . . afraid, that the diseased would . . . pollute the house, and by that means, procure all their deaths."[125] Nineteenth-century Cherokee oral history records similar fears of disease victims:

> Long ago the Indians were afflicted with some very awful diseases which do not now prevail. One of these differed from the smallpox, or yaws, yet occasioned dreadful sores in the flesh. When any one in a family was taken with that disorder the diseased person was removed, and had a hut, or tent, raised at a distance from any other habitation, and there lived alone. Then the priest was sent for to cleanse the dwelling just left by the diseased, as if some person had died in it. After this should any one touch the diseased, he would be unclean as if he had touched a dead body.[126]

The Creeks treated patients similarly. In 1764, Thomas Campbell visited the Creeks. Although making no

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[124] Adair, History of the American Indians, 131.

[125] Ibid., 245.

[126] JHPP, I, 23.

reference to smallpox, which reportedly struck the Creeks in the year of his visit, he commented that "none but near relations inquire after the sick."[127] Campbell referred to the common practice of each clan having its own healer, who administered treatment to his kinsmen.

Treatment of patients followed an elaborate ritual involving healers, their assistants, and special medicines. But since medicine men and women guarded their sacred knowledge of healing, their rituals were generally hidden from the observation of Europeans. Only brief descriptions survive in eighteenth century records. "When taken sick," one typical account said of the Indians, "they are particularly prone to superstition, and their physicians administer their simple and secret cures with a variety of strange ceremonies and magic arts."[128]

The "strange ceremonies" and "magic arts" that eighteenth century Europeans observed become more detailed in nineteenth-century accounts. In 1840, the Chickasaws practiced a ceremony called the tonshpashoophah (later called the Pishofa), which demonstrated the elaborate ritual involved in patient treatment. The ceremony

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[127] Thomas Campbell, "Lieutenant Thomas Campbell's Sojourn among the Creeks, November, 1764-May, 1765," ed. Robin F.A. Fabel and Robert R. Rea, Alabama Historical Quarterly 36 (1974): 162.

[128] Hewatt, An Historical Account, in HCSC, I, 70.

involved a family calling upon a healer to care for an afflicted member. The healer secluded his patient in a hut and commenced "singing and shaking a gourd over the patient" in order to determine the cause of the sickness. When the healer discovered the cause, he used "herbs, roots, steaming and conjuroring" to treat his patient. He also ordered family members to have a "large feast" in which they eat, dance, and sing. Such activities, the healers believed, "raises the spirits of the sick, and weakens the evil spirit" which caused the disease.[129]

Choctaws also practiced the tonshpashoophah. The Choctaws as well as the Chickasaws appointed Tisho Mingos to guard the patient and prevent anyone from entering the sick person's hut. Moreover, participants in the ritual believed that by dancing they would scatter the disease, driving it from the midst of their communities.[130]

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Avoidance rituals, quarantine practices, and healing ceremonies of the Four Nations were not always effective. Despite stern warnings from medicine people, individuals walked into the disease traps of Anglo-American settlements

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[129] Schoolcraft, Information Respecting, I, 310.

[130] Swanton, "Social and religious belief...Chickasaws," 258-263; and Swanton, Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaws, 221.

and carried pathogens with them back to their home villages. There were certainly times when native healers, such as those that conducted the Pishofa, contracted diseases from patients and exposed other members of the village. In addition, while ceremonies such as the Smallpox Dance aimed at cutting villages off from communication, it may have been too late in some cases. Infected villagers brought a disease with them to their village ceremonies, thus exposing an entire village.

Nevertheless, at the very least, Southeastern Indian survival strategies slowed down the progress of contagious diseases. The limited spread of epidemics in 1759-1760, 1764, and 1779-1780 and the relatively minor demographic changes following these outbreaks suggests that the Four Nations responded effectively. Undoubtedly, the Southeastern Indians consciously took actions that isolated some of their villages and spared them from the ravages of disease. And, for those villages that were unfortunate enough to receive a visit by contagion, healing rituals most likely lowered mortality rates. The seclusion of afflicted individuals outside the village again impeded, if not prevented, the dissemination of germs through an entire community. This kept everyone from getting sick at the

same time and allowed normal social services such as gathering food and caring for the sick to continue.

One does not have to believe that native healers in fact effected cures through mediation with the spirit world to understand that they had a positive impact on their patients. Unlike the barbaric cures of Euro-American doctors who bled patients and inflicted them with doses of mercury and other toxic material, native herbal medicines were quite benign. Compared to their European counterparts, native healers let nature take its course, which in the absence of modern medicines such as antibiotics and vaccines, was the best regimen to pursue. "Quite elementary nursing will greatly reduce mortality," the medical historian William McNeill has found. "Simple provision of food and water, for instance, will allow persons who are temporarily too weak to cope for themselves to recover instead of perishing miserably."[131]

Indeed, "simple nursing" along with a regimen of prayers and dances bolstered the health and morale of Indians stricken with contagious diseases. It was no surprise, then, that one Choctaw chief compared the beloved English agent John Stuart to a medicine man. "You are like a great Doctor who can cure all Distempers, the sight of

whom comforts and cheers the Spirits of his patient," the Indian leader commented.[132] Southeastern Indians, thus, held their medicine people in high esteem. These individuals not only gave effective counsel in times of crisis but also interpreted diseases, constructed avoidance ceremonies, and performed healing rituals that reinforced village solidarity in the midst of epidemics that threatened to destroy their communities. Through such an active response to eighteenth-century epidemics, the Four Nations survived not only physically but also culturally and spiritually.

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[131] McNeill, Plagues and People, 121.

[132] Congress held at Mobile, December 1771-January 1772, C.O. 5: 73, in WE, VI, p.266.

Epilogue

In the early twentieth century, long after the forced removal of Indians from the Southeast, a Hillibi Creek man from Oklahoma gave the anthropologist John Swanton an interesting account of his people's history. The story reflected the influence of Euro-American education but nonetheless provides insight into how the Creek's interpreted the legacy of European invasion. The man informed Swanton:

> Columbus and his people landed, but, being at first unable to open communication with the natives on account of their shyness, they resorted to a strategem. They set a barrel of whisky ashore, laid a cane by it, and then withdrew. Afterward the Indians found the barrel and got drunk so that the white people were enabled to capture one of them. The rest managed to get away. They took the man they had captured and taught him 'English' and through him they

> gradually became acquainted with the rest. Then they began making treaties.[1]

The Creek storyteller continued with a parable explaining how the whites gained Indian land through trickery:

> Seventy Indian chiefs sat on a log which had fallen toward the west, and every time the whites came to make a treaty with them they would move up on it a little. They kept hitching up until at last the end man was shoved off. Then he said: 'There it is. I told you that is what you would do with me.' The white people induced them to make a treaty granting them as much ground as could be covered with a cowhide, and afterward they cut the hide into strips and treated them in the way already related.[2]

Significantly, the Hillibi man did not mention epidemic disease as a factor in his people suffering from Euro-American invasion. References to the epidemiological holocaust in fact are missing from the vast collection of Southeastern Indian folklore. While Euro-American colonists and modern historians give epidemics a primary role in facilitating European take-over of the Americas, the Southeastern Indians themselves remembered white brutality, treachery, and the detrimental impact of alcohol on Native American societies.

The Southeastern Indians' interpretation of their history poses a poignant counter to American myths and even

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[1] Swanton, "Creek social organization and usages," 76.

[2] Ibid.

contemporary scholarship about the conquest and supposed disappearance of Native Americans. Whereas Euro-Americans viewed the conquest of Indians as resulting largely from ecological processes, Indians have focused on the politically willed actions of whites. In the case of the Southeast, the Native American interpretation more accurately reflects the actual history of the region.

The Four Nations survived the epidemiological storms that ravaged the Southeast. Beginning with the Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic (1696-1700), the Four Nations experienced devastating diseases, but living in the interior gave them some protection. They did not suffer from as many diseases at one time as did tribes living near the coasts, piedmont, and Mississippi Valley. More importantly, the Four Nations sought to regain lost population and protect themselves from disease outbreaks. Imperial actions involving the adoption of captives and incorporation of remnant groups added valuable numbers to their villages, while cultural innovations such as disease avoidance rituals and healing ceremonies impeded the spread of contagion.

By the early 1800s, the Four Nations maintained a tenacious hold on their land and were not going to disappear due to epidemics as many Euro-Americans expected

and some even hoped. Their remarkable survival tragically brought out the worst in Euro-Americans. Through a series of fraudulent treaties, Southeastern Indians ceded their lands to the United States and moved west. Often at the bayonet points of United States soldiers, Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles abandoned their traditional homelands, leaving only a myriad of indigenous place names to mark where they once resided. The brutal nature of Indian Removal demonstrated that the Four Nations would not simply disappear from disease and ecological changes. Rather, only human-willed force could make them leave the beloved land of their ancestors.

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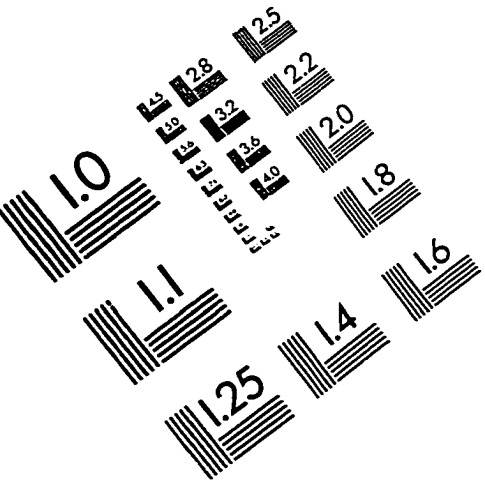

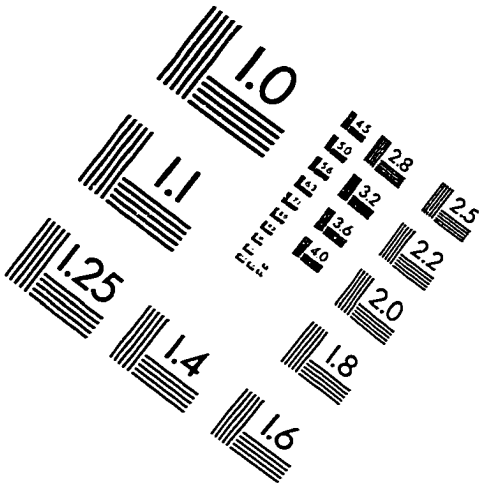

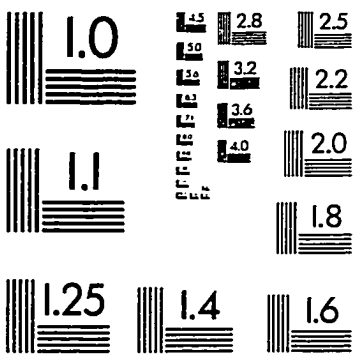

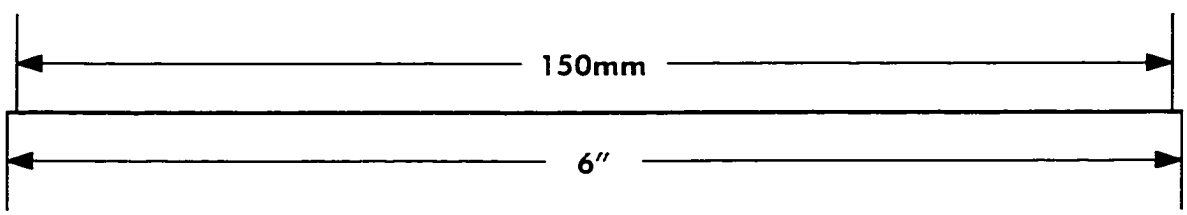

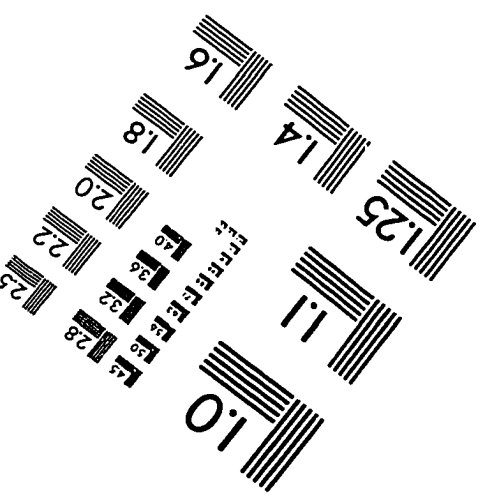

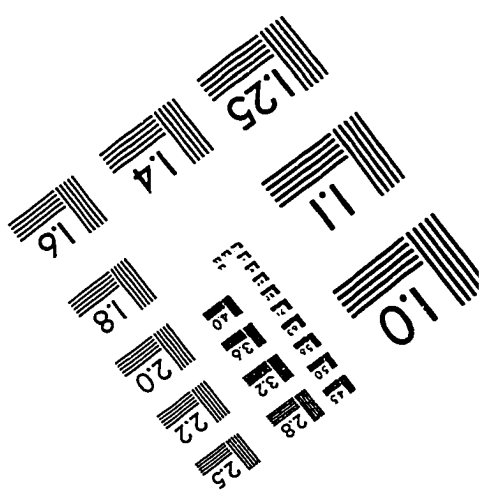

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