“We are a people to ourself”
Florida’s Native Borderlands during the Mikasuki-Spanish War, 1799–1803

JOHN PAUL NUÑO
California State University, Northridge

I wish to inform you, Seminoles, that we have not thrown you away; in our councils we have thought of you . . . listen to the voice of the chiefs of the nation.
—Efau Haujo to the Seminoles, June 30, 1802

Abstract
This essay uses the textual record produced in East and West Florida during William Augustus Bowles’s final filibuster campaign. Bowles, a British adventurer, sought to break the Panton, Leslie & Company trade monopoly and establish the “State of Muscogee,” with himself as its “Director General.” This article, however, focuses on his indigenous allies who used Bowles to further their respective agendas. The Mikasukis and their leader, Kinache, protested against the Creek National Council, the Spanish, and the United States for their respective roles in the delineation of the Florida-Georgia border across their homeland. An ensuing

Having benefited from their insightful comments and support, I want to thank Cristóbal A. Borges, Susan Fitzpatrick-Behrens, Patricia Juarez-Dappe, Cheryl E. Martin, Jeffrey P. Shepherd, and James M. Starling for reading drafts of this article. My student research assistants, Mary Casey, Kristin Contreras, and Ariel A. Stone, contributed perceptive notes on primary source materials. James G. Cusick and Paul E. Hoffman provided valuable feedback on an early draft presented at the 2015 Gulf South History and Humanities Conference. I owe a debt of gratitude to Laraine Fletcher and George Scheper for organizing the 2016 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute at the Library of Congress. The institute afforded me an excellent space for expanding and refining this work. During the latter stages of the project, the two anonymous readers for Early American Studies astutely prodded me to sharpen the text’s overall structure and thematic focus. Finally, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at California State University, Northridge, provided vital resources toward the completion of this article.

Early American Studies (Winter 2019)
Copyright © 2019 The McNeil Center for Early American Studies. All rights reserved.
Mikasuki-Spanish war lasted over two years and included extensive raiding of East Florida plantations. The Alachua Seminoles and their leader, Payne, made their own geopolitical calculations and decided to help the Spanish appeal to the Creek National Council for assistance. The Creeks suppressed the Mikasuki insurgency and apprehended Bowles. Nonetheless, the conflict demonstrated that the Mikasukis and the Alachuas, who were once Creek colonists in Florida, conducted independent foreign policies, an essential step in their eventual ethnogenesis as Seminoles. Lastly, this work implements a Native borderlands framework that focuses on inter- and intra-indigenous relations as these groups grappled with the forces of Euro-American colonialism.

By the summer of 1802, the Mikasuki Seminoles and their principal leader, Kinache, had devastated Spanish East Florida and initiated a crisis throughout the colony. Located just south of the present-day Florida-Georgia border, the Mikasukis had grown disillusioned with their former allies and sought a more fruitful trading partnership. They launched attacks against a border survey expedition, a military outpost, and, most effectively, Euro-American plantations. Unable to muster punitive measures beyond a trade embargo and occasional captive taking, Spanish Governor Enrique White appealed to diplomacy with a higher power, the Creek National Council. He sent representatives, including the leader of the Alachua Seminoles, to plead his case with the council, which responded with sympathy and, more important, direct action. Encouraged by U.S. agents with whom the council had just settled the Treaty of Fort Wilkinson, the Upper Creek speaker of the National Council, Efau Haujo, issued a stern warning to the Mikasukis, whom he called Seminoles. He ordered Kinache to stop his war against the Spanish and to align his foreign policy with the council’s agenda. Concerned that the edict would not be enough to subdue the bellicose Mikasukis, Spanish agents convinced the national council and its entourage of three to four hundred fighters to embark to their adversary’s principal town.

1. During the British occupation of Florida (1763–83), the province was divided into separate East and West colonies. West Florida consisted of a broad swath of land bordering the Gulf Coast and extending from the Apalachicola River to the Mississippi River. The East Florida colony encompassed most of the present-day state, but its western border at the Apalachicola River meant it included only part of the Florida Panhandle. References to a specific colony will be noted as either East or West Florida, while Florida will be used in reference to both provinces.
Having charted an ambitious, independent course and willing to use violence to safeguard their autonomy, Kinache and the Mikasuki towns now directly confronted the power of the Creek National Council.²

The Creeks’ show of force and their aggressive stance against the Mikasukis highlight a longer, broader process in which Florida’s indigenous peoples asserted their independence but nonetheless remained within a Creek sphere of influence. The Mikasukis and their Alachua neighbors traced their origins as Creek colonists who ventured south in the eighteenth century. Because of the decentralized nature of the Creek political system, the Florida towns always enjoyed autonomy over local matters. The more powerful and influential Upper and Lower Creeks, however, made decisions in treaty negotiations with Euro-American powers that affected these populations. Consequently, the region was not simply divided between homogeneous Native peoples and Euro-American settlers; in some areas a series of borderlands existed between the different Native settlements. The Mikasukis and Alachua Seminoles made decisions that could align or diverge from Creek objectives in order to protect access to trade, preserve hunting grounds, and ensure the safety of their towns. Although Euro-American colonialism placed indigenous peoples under ever-increasing strain in the early nineteenth century, Native groups, and their relations with each other, still shaped power dynamics in a territory widely recognized as “Indian Country.”³


³. The phrase Indian Country referred to territory under the effective control of indigenous peoples. Although state entities upheld a pretense of legal jurisdiction over the territory, they nonetheless acknowledged the existence of Native autonomy. For a discussion of Spanish recognition of Indian Country in Florida, see Cameron B. Strang, “Indian Storytelling, Scientific Knowledge, and Power in the Florida Borderlands,” William and Mary Quarterly (hereafter cited as WMQ) 70 (October 2013): 679; Kathleen DuVal’s concept of a “native ground” is also instructive for examining the Florida borderlands where Euro-American powers did grapple with indigenous understandings of “land and resource allocation, sustenance, goods
Mikasuki and Alachua Seminole leaders crafted their respective foreign policies on the basis of strategies designed to preserve their political autonomy and secure vital resources. The Mikasukis, the most powerful and militant indigenous group in Florida, became disaffected not only with their Spanish allies, but also with their fur-trading partners, the firm of Panton, Leslie & Company, which had been granted a monopoly over the deerskin trade and increasingly sought to collect the debts owed by its indigenous clients. Meanwhile, the Spanish, the United States, and the Creek Confederacy concluded agreements that called for surveying a border through the Mikasuki homeland. Threatened by the geopolitical situation, Kinache sought alternative alliances that could strengthen his position. Consequently, he became attentive to the overtures of the British adventurer William Augustus Bowles and his political and economic connections. If the Mikasukis could secure more advantageous access to trade, Kinache could reshape power relations in the Florida borderlands in his favor. Meanwhile, the Alachua Seminoles and their leader, Payne, made different calculations that were based on their own regional considerations. The Alachuas continued to see value in the Spanish alliance and access to Panton, Leslie & Company goods. Because of their inferior military strength and feeling less threatened by the new border owing to their more southerly location, the Alachuas turned to diplomacy and the maintenance of the status quo. Nevertheless, both Alachua and Mikasuki actions toward the Spanish and other southeastern powers signaled their intent to act independently of the Creek Confederacy, not just at the local level but in the realm of international relations as well. Although these groups acted separately from each other and a corporate Seminole identity developed later, their willingness to break with the Creeks signaled an important development in the ethnogenesis of Florida’s Native peoples.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

Southeastern Native peoples, who retained power even into the nineteenth century, constantly engaged in negotiations with Euro-American nations. Fortunately, these encounters produced a significant textual record that often included transcripts of the diplomatic talks. Because indigenous groups did not produce written records, these materials are one of the few exchange, gender relations, diplomacy, and warfare.” For further discussion of this phrase, see Kathleen DuVal, The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 5.
sources that preserved the words of their leaders. Nonetheless, these documents must be contextualized and analyzed as diplomatic exchanges meant to advance particular objectives rather than unvarnished portrayals of historical events. Indigenous leaders and diplomats, although often underestimated by their European counterparts, were astute strategists who measured their words carefully and whose various stratagems can be deciphered from the treaty transcripts. The value of these sources, however, is compromised by issues with translation and cultural misunderstandings, in addition to the use of private meetings that produced no records. Nonetheless, a critical reading of this correspondence, placed in proper context, provides valuable insight into local and regional power relations.

William Augustus Bowles’s outsize presence in the transcripts is an additional impediment to decoding them. Bowles was a British adventurer involved in three separate campaigns between 1788 and 1803 against Spanish Florida and Panton, Leslie & Company. The political and economic elites of New Providence, Bahamas, financed these filibusters and tasked Bowles with diverting the deerskin trade to their businesses. Bowles used his personal and marital connections to establish alliances among the Lower Creeks that he hoped to parlay into the “State of Muskogee.” By establishing an indigenous nation-state with himself as “Director General,” the adventurer sought to secure his own economic and political empire. Bowles used his acting background and flair for the theatrical to represent himself

4. Indigenous and Euro-American representatives often engaged in deliberations outside the formal proceedings. Although these discussions determined the outcome of negotiations, few participants disclosed the contents of their conversations.


6. As a British ensign posted to Pensacola during the American Revolution, Bowles deserted his post and lived in a Lower Creek village. He married and had a son with Mary Perryman, the daughter of the headman William Perryman. This relationship provided early contacts and influence. Bowles, however, later fell out of favor with the indigenous leader.

to the Native population as an official British agent, while seeking to convince Euro-Americans that he was an influential indigenous leader. Both Spanish and American officials became concerned with Bowles’s activities and posturing, and they considered him a corrupting force among the Creeks and Seminoles, a view that played into Euro-American predispositions about Native peoples as simple-minded and naive and reflected a long legacy of interpreting indigenous behavior as a product of manipulation by other whites. Consequently, both Spanish and U.S. protagonists produced reams of documents that established Bowles at the narrative’s center and consigned indigenous peoples to roles of partisans and followers of the “Director General.”

Bowles’s mercurial and charismatic career, which had bedeviled contemporary authorities, later caught the attention of a number of scholars whose works, however, rarely analyzed Bowles-related materials from the perspective of his Creek and Seminole allies. A study repositioning Native leaders


9. Claudio Saunt, “Our Indians: European Empires and the History of the Native American South,” in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman, eds., The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000 (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson, 2007), 64. Writing about what he calls “proxy wars” in the lower South during the early eighteenth century, Saunt illustrates that the British and French, despite the strength of the Choctaws and Chickasaws, viewed each other as the actual powers in the region, which in turn controlled their respective Native allies.

10. Wright, William Augustus Bowles, is the first book-length scholarly treatment of the confidence man. Wright’s text provides a comprehensive narrative-based account that eschews complex analysis. Based on Spanish sources, Din’s War on the Gulf Coast takes a critical position on Bowles’s exploits and their effect on the southeastern borderlands. For works that include a substantial discussion of Bowles,
as the catalysts of the hostilities during 1788–1803 yields fresh insights into indigenous diplomacy, resistance, and adaptation. Southeastern Native peoples, with hundreds of years of experience involving shrewd Euro-American traders, were not easily manipulated, so it is more likely it was Bowles who was being exploited. Indeed, various factions and Native headmen explored whether an association with Bowles was advantageous. They wanted to determine whether he could produce the steady stream of British trade and gifts that they needed both for defense and to buttress their internal social and political standing. And when they found Bowles’s promises wanting, Native leaders took turns scapegoating him to appease U.S. and Spanish authorities.

The reconceptualization of Bowles as an instrument of indigenous foreign policy allows for a greater emphasis on inter- and intra-Native dynamics. During one of Bowles’s initial Florida forays, the Upper Creek Alexander McGillivray, who sought to centralize power among the Creeks and urgently needed munitions, was at first willing to entertain Bowles’s proposals but rebuffed him when the Spanish became less prohibitive with their gifts and trade.11 Thereafter, only factions of Lower Creeks and Seminoles, many of whom opposed McGillivray’s agenda, remained receptive to


11. Wright, *William Augustus Bowles*, 29–33; Wright speculates that McGillivray used contact with Bowles to pressure the Spanish into favorable policies. Din,
Bowles. Although the adventurer was captured in 1792, he returned seven years later to confront an emergent political entity, the Creek National Council, which consisted of an elite group, including a “Speaker of the Nation,” who sought to consolidate power within the traditionally decentralized Creek Confederacy. Bowles now found new allies among Upper and Lower Creek dissident groups who were disturbed by the council’s power. The Mikasukis and Kinache, however, were those most committed to using Bowles’s supposed trade networks to reorient regional power relations. The Bowles-related textual record hence reveals Native Floridians’ local autonomy and independent foreign policy, a critical precursor to Seminole ethnogenesis.

---

12. Historians argue that U.S. Superintendent for Indian Affairs Benjamin Hawkins encouraged Creek political centralization and the emergence of the national council; however, other scholars assert that Creek leaders were capable of consolidating power of their own accord. For an author who asserts the former, see Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 1, 179–80. For a scholar who notes that the Creek National Council predated the American agent’s arrival and that his initiatives were either failures or already rooted in existing Creek institutions, see Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 18–19. See also Daniel K. Richter, review of *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733–1816*, by Claudio Saunt, *Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 3 (2002): 679.

Beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century, Creek leaders recognized the recalcitrant nature of the Florida towns. Consequently, the Creek National Council referred to the Mikasukis as “Seminoles,” and the latter identifier, which may have been a Lower Creek adoption of the Spanish term *cimarrón*, referring to undomesticated animals and plants, and later to runaway slaves, appeared in British, Spanish, and U.S. documents. The Mikasukis, however, never referred to themselves as Seminoles. Native Floridians did not develop a “Seminole” identity, or embrace a political entity beyond the town level, until the First and Second Seminole Wars (1817–18 and 1835–42) and the subsequent need to grapple with U.S. removal efforts. The Creeks viewed the Mikasukis and Alachuas (former Creek migrants) as “wild” because they were unwilling to abide by legitimate Creek authority, as demonstrated during the Mikasuki-Spanish War (1799–1803). Many factors had driven Native migration to Florida, such as internal leadership disputes, ethnic divisions, and alliances with colonial powers, but what united Florida’s indigenous peoples, if not yet within a shared group identity, was a desire to be independent of the Creeks. The region’s Native population remained politically fragmented, as each group claimed power over its own towns, hunting grounds, and trading paths. Consequently, the concept of Native borderlands effectively illuminates the geopolitical situation among the Creek, Mikasuki, and Alachua towns.

Conceptualizations of Florida as a borderlands have usually been contingent on the presence of Euro-American powers, whose actions spread the market economy and integrated the area into the Atlantic world. The


16. For factors that led to Creek migration to Florida in the nineteenth century, see Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670–1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 234–38.

interior, however, would remain Indian Country until the Second Seminole War (1835–42), and although Euro-American social, political, and economic influences affected Native communities, indigenous structures and institutions maintained their dominance. Borderlands frameworks that emphasized rivalries between Euro-American nation-states in turn privileged the formation of national borders at the expense of indigenous autonomy, while doing little to highlight the emergence of Mikasuki and Alachua Seminole political identities separate from the Lower Creeks. Consequently, this study posits borderlands as not just peripheral areas of colonial and national domains, but as multiple overlapping zones of interaction that could emanate from indigenous core areas.

18. For example of the prevalence of indigenous social and political beliefs despite the presence of European colonial powers in the region, see Strang, “Indian Storytelling, Scientific Knowledge, and Power in the Florida Borderlands,” 672. Strang asserts that the predominance of indigenous storytelling illustrates how the Native production of knowledge remained dominant.

19. Andrew K. Frank, “Taking the State Out: Seminoles and Creeks in Late Eighteenth-Century Florida,” FHQ 84 (July 2005): 11–12. Although the Native population in Florida became known as the Seminoles, they did not centralize political power or form a confederacy. The Floridian settlements acted independently, and power was localized at the town level.

20. For historians who conceive of borderlands as Native spaces, see Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, “On Borderlands,” Journal of American History 98 (September 2011): 352–53. The authors argue that borderlands studies must reconcile old empire-centered and nation-centered narratives with indigenous and
FLORIDA’S NATIVE BORDERLANDS

Despite being non–state actors, indigenous groups not only grasped European ideas of territoriality and space, but also had their own distinct understandings of these concepts. Scholars have analyzed indigenous mapmaking in an effort to comprehend how Native peoples perceived their physical, social, and political worlds. In the eighteenth century, the Chickasaws and Catawbas created maps that plotted sociopolitical relationships between themselves and other peoples. These maps included a series of circles (representing Native populations) and connecting lines representing the current status of trading paths as spaces either of cross-cultural interaction or of hostility. The deerskin trade, the conduit to manufactured goods, which

non-state space and territoriality.” Borderlands frameworks must be applied to both European and indigenous entities; thus, scholars should “envision new cores, and embrace more nuanced definitions of power.” They further assert that previous works designated only peripheral areas of European empires as borderlands, but future scholarship will apply the concept to indigenous powers. See also DuVal, The Native Ground, 9; Juliana Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the ‘Borderlands’ of the Early Southwest,” WMQ 68 (January 2011): 9.

21. James A. Dockal and Michael S. Smith, “Evidence for a Prehistoric Petroglyph Map in Central Arizona,” Kiva 70 (Summer 2005): 413–14, examines pre-contact rock art maps produced in areas that form the present-day U.S. Southwest. Although Dockal and Smith are confident these illustrations had utilitarian purposes, their full sociopolitical context and meaning nonetheless elude scholars. F. Terry Norris and Timothy R. Pauketat, after examining a petroglyph panel on the banks of the Mississippi River near Commerce, Mo., argue in “A Pre-Columbian Map of the Mississippi?” Southeastern Archaeology 27 (Summer 2008), 78, that the diagram, produced during the Mississippian period (1050–1600), identified places with political and cultural significance. Advocating for an expansive definition of a map as “anything that depicts geographic or cosmographic relations in microcosm,” the authors assert that Native peoples, during various time periods, produced many “spatialized narratives.” In addition to discussing Native representations of place and space, Juliana Barr and Edward Countryman, in “Introduction: Maps and Spaces, Paths to Connect, and Lines to Divide,” in Barr and Countryman, eds., Contested Spaces of Early America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 8–16, demonstrate how early European maps were infused with indigenous knowledge and depicted Native polities and their territories.

Nun˜o • “We are a people to ourself”

could bestow societal prestige, shaped these spatial concepts. Although not depicted on the maps, hunting grounds that supplied the trade routes were vital spaces as well, and they often merited rigorous protection. As fellow southeastern peoples, the Creeks shared Chickasaw and Catawba spatial concepts that shaped perceptions of their geopolitical situation.

With foreign relations centered on trading paths, the town represented the heart of domestic affairs among the region’s indigenous population. Indeed, Creek political and social activity occurred primarily at the town level; Creek settlements united into a decentralized confederacy only when dealing with matters affecting all their constituents. Each Creek town had its own independent leader, trade policies, and claims to specific hunting grounds. Understanding how towns consolidated, expanded through satellite settlements, and splintered to form independent villages reveals Creek spatial organization and their specific relationship with the Mikasuki and Alachua towns.

Indigenous nation building at the turn of nineteenth century aside, the Creek Confederacy represented a coalescence of various indigenous groups that maintained local political autonomy. A Creek identity gradually emerged after the break-up of centralized Mississippian chiefdoms that was due to political volatility, diseases, the slave trade, and the spread of warfare. As part of this political reformation, a number of Native peoples, most with cultural similarities, but others linguistically and ethnically different, coalesced around river systems to form two major groupings known as the Upper and Lower Creeks. Creek settlements consisted of hutis, known exchanges, and sociopolitical relationships such as those depicted in Chickasaw and Catawba maps. See also Barr and Countryman, “Introduction: Maps and Spaces,” 11.

23. Ethridge, Creek Country, 135–37. According to Ethridge, Creek towns had specified hunting grounds. For instance, Lower Creek villages claimed areas in Spanish Florida. At the time of the 1802 Treaty of Fort Wilkinson, Creek negotiators informed their American counterparts that ceding a Creek town’s hunting ground without adequate consultation or the presence of its delegates at the treaty conference could lead to conflict. See also Doster, The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1:228; Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 62–63; Angela Pulley Hudson, Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 18–20.


25. Ethridge, From Chicaza to Chickasaw, 244–54.
among the Seminoles as *isihapos*, which comprised extended matrilineal kin groups living close to each other.\(^{26}\) *Hutis* formed the nucleus of towns, known as *talwas*, each of which had a town square that operated as its autonomous sociopolitical center. A network of kin and clan relationships that extended to all its communities linked these independent Creek towns together.\(^{27}\) This system was impressively malleable, since it could incorporate even ethnically diverse outsiders.\(^{28}\) Simultaneously, a mechanism existed for groups seeking to break away from Creek towns and form independent settlements in a process that Steven Hahn calls “Seminolization.”\(^{29}\)

During the eighteenth century, a number of Lower Creek peoples left their towns and established communities in northern Florida, attracted to lands vacated by declining Native populations once allied with the Spanish. These “proto-Seminoles” arrived in phases to form the basis of core groups such as the Alachuas and the Mikasukis. Although the precise reasons for the Creek migration remain a mystery, previous instances of colonization and expansion may offer some clues. The Creek town system expanded through the creation of *talofas*, satellite settlements affiliated with a *talwa*. A *talofa* could form for a number of reasons but usually related to population increase and internal political factionalism. Over time, a *talofa* could construct its own town square and assert its independence from its old *talwa*. Typically, *talofas* were just a few miles distant from their “mother towns,” but a few were over fifty miles away.\(^{30}\) Creek colonization of Florida was unique, however, because the new settlements were more than two

---


30. Ibid., 234–35; Hahn states that ethnic and political fusion and fission occurred simultaneously among the Creeks. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 95–96, explores the possible factors that led to the establishment of satellite villages.
hundred miles distant from most Lower Creek towns. This physical separation combined with the independent nature of the Creek town structure to ensure that the Floridian towns exercised considerable local autonomy.

Creeks were one of the most powerful indigenous groups in the region, so their influence extended over East and West Florida, but the recent migrants began implementing an independent foreign policy attuned to their specific geopolitical concerns. For indigenous leaders, successful diplomacy and alliances meant prestige, gifts, and trade (in particular, guns and ammunition), which helped them deal with outside groups while buttressing their internal power. The Florida towns thus sought to assert themselves at diplomatic conferences such as the Picolata Conference of 1765, which established treaty terms between British East Florida and regional indigenous powers. The Alachua leader Ahaya (Cowkeeper) demonstrated the nuanced nature of Seminole foreign policy when he attended the conference only after the Lower Creek leaders had departed, so as to ensure he would not be viewed as a subordinate.31 This deft diplomatic maneuver highlights Ahaya’s desire to assert his autonomy while avoiding a direct challenge to Lower Creek influence.

Nearly a decade later, the British East Florida governor, Patrick Tonyn, considered the possibility of a British-Creek conflict souring relations with the Seminoles and laid out this inter-indigenous dynamic to the British secretary of state for the colonies. The Native peoples of East Florida were “separated from the Creek Nation, and are not considered by them to be of it,” Tonyn explained, “although we cannot entirely hold them, as a free people, independent of that Nation. They have on these disturbances shown

31. Ahaya garnered the name Cowkeeper by accumulating vast herds of cattle. For information on the diplomatic conference, see Report of the Picolata Congress, November 16, 1765, Colonial Office (hereafter cited as CO), 5/540–49, reel 1, British Public Records Office (hereafter cited as PRO), LC. The main indigenous speakers at the conference were Lower Creek leaders from Coweta, Cussita, and Ockmulge. Their concerns rested more with treaty agreements and trade issues in Georgia, which they hoped to address in exchange for an accord on East Florida. James Grant and John Stuart to the Board of Trade, December 9, 1765, CO, 5/540–49, reel 1, PRO, LC; Grant to Board of Trade, January 13, 1766, CO, 5/540–49, reel 1, PRO, LC; James W. Covington, The British Meet the Seminoles: Negotiations between British Authorities in East Florida and the Indians, 1763–68 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1961), 39–41; Sturtevant, “Creek into Seminole,” 104–5; Weisman, Unconquered People, 28. Mahon and Weisman, “Florida’s Seminole and Miccosukee Peoples,” 187, state that Ahaya had little formal contact with Creek leadership.
great marks of uneasiness and an anxiety to be reckoned our friends,” the
governor continued, noting, “They have offered services, have gone with
talks and have assured us they shall be ready on all occasions to go with
dispatch to the Nation with any talks or messages.” Tonyn based his
assessment on his interactions with Ahaya, who told the governor that he
could answer only for his own people, and not for “what was done at a
distance.” The Alachua leader confided to Tonyn that the Lower Creek
“Nation” viewed him as a “Wild man,” but despite his renegade reputation
he would maintain friendly relations with the British. This exchange
reveals how Florida’s Native peoples had charted an independent course
that earned them the reputation of being “wild,” but nonetheless they recog-
nized their continued links with the formidable and influential Creeks.

It is difficult to pinpoint exact levels of Lower Creek influence over the
Florida towns with the simultaneous development of Seminole political
identity. The scholarly consensus is that the Seminoles began taking inde-
dependent actions during the first Picolata Congress, in 1765, whereas the
First U.S.-Seminole War, in 1817–18, marked a permanent break. Gaug-
ing the Seminole-Creek relationship during the intervening years, however,
is more daunting. Furthermore, indigenous notions of identity are difficult
to discern owing to their complex and intertwined nature; Native peoples

32. Patrick Tonyn to Earl of Dartmouth, September 23, 1774, CO, 5/550–556,
reel 2, PRO, LC.

33. Ahaya to Tonyn, March 13, 1774, CO, 5/550–56, reel 2, PRO, LC. For an
interpretation of the use of the term wild in Creek discourse to connote Seminole
nonconformity, see Hawkins, “Creek Schism,” 4–11, 56, 98.

34. For scholars positing dates of Seminole independence, see Mahon and Weis-
man, “Florida’s Seminole and Miccosukee Peoples,” 187, who state that Seminoles
displayed “increasing and purposeful separation” after the 1760s. Weisman, Uncon-
quered People, 26, specifies that the Seminole breach with the Lower Creeks was
permanent by 1818. James W. Covington, The Seminoles of Florida (Gainesville:
University of Florida Press, 1993), 26, argues that only Ahaya asserted his indepen-
dence early on but that all “bands” were independent by 1804. Saunt, “The English
Has Now a Mind to Make Slaves of Them All,”158, ties Seminole independence
within the broader struggle among the Creeks over political centralization and mar-
ket capitalism. See also Saunt, A New Order of Things, 205–7; Sturtevant, “Creek
into Seminole,” 105–7. Because of the influx of Creek Red Sticks and Creek mili-
tary incursions, the War of 1812 and the subsequent First U.S.-Seminole War
marked Seminole independence from the Creek; Frank, “Taking the State Out,” 11.
Susan A. Miller, Coacoochee’s Bones: A Seminole Saga (Lawrence: University Press of
Kansas, 2003), 8–10, argues that Seminole settlements remained within the “Mus-
cogee sphere of influence,” but that the Floridian towns nonetheless exercised levels
of autonomy depending on their distance to Creek political centers.
belonged to overlapping layers of moieties, clans, towns, and, to a smaller degree, nations. Nevertheless, the autonomous nature of Creek towns meant that the Floridian settlements were independent from their inception, yet the powerful Lower Creeks continued to exercise authority at the higher levels of foreign policy. Depending on the situation, Creek leaders could benefit from either presenting themselves as power brokers or disowning responsibility for Seminole actions. Thus, if they felt it was diplomatically advantageous, the Lower Creeks could negotiate compacts that directly affected Florida’s Native peoples, whom they viewed as unruly expatriates. A Native borderlands emerged from this tension that comprised independent indigenous towns advancing geopolitical strategies capable of aligning or diverging.

THE MIKASUKI-SPANISH WAR

Not as conspicuous in the historical record as their Alachua counterparts, the Mikasukis were the most powerful and populous indigenous group in East Florida at the turn of the nineteenth century. Their towns were located in the area once inhabited by the Apalaches, who bequeathed their name to the region. Mikasuki settlements were established during the early to mid-eighteenth century near Lake Miccosukee, close to the present-day site of Tallahassee. The historian Patsy West, however, points to linguistic evidence suggesting the Mikasukis traced their origins to the settlement of Capecheque in present-day southwest Georgia, which Hernando de Soto entered in 1540. They spoke a Mikasuki dialect of the Hitchiti language,

---

35. Within the textual record, usage of the term nation, as originally applied to Native peoples, referred to ethnically related groups and did not imply the presence of a nation-state.

36. Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 206, notes that the Creeks did distance themselves from the Seminoles when colonial powers sought to hold them responsible for the latter’s actions. On the other hand, Saunt argues that early nineteenth-century Creek statements alluding to power over the Seminoles were more a sign of “hubris” than an indication of any “real political relationships.” Alexander McGillivray to Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, August 3, 1786, EFP, reel 43, PKY. The Upper Creek leader stated that he had no contact with the Seminoles since he had “little acquaintance with the present leaders the former ones whom I knew are dead.” McGillivray’s statement could have described the actual relationship between the Seminoles and the Upper Creeks or served as diplomatic distancing from the Florida towns to avoid complications with the Spanish government for Seminole actions.

considered part of the Muskogean linguistic family. The Mikasukis and a number of other ethnicities in the Creek Confederacy were non-Muskogee speakers. These groups learned Muskogee, and it served as a lingua franca; but scholars argue that the Muskogee and non-Muskogee divide was significant in terms of power relations, even if ethnic lines often blurred. West posits that Mikasuki aggressiveness and defiance toward the Creek Confederacy stemmed from their “strong sense of heritage” and rootedness. Furthermore, the principal town of Mikasuki and its satellite settlements were, relative to other Florida towns, economically and politically ascendant. Kinache, as the prominent leader, could deploy two hundred fighters while controlling important trade networks that yielded substantial numbers of cattle and slaves. Consequently, the Mikasukis’ strong ethnic self-awareness and geopolitical situation negated any sense of inferiority or submissiveness toward the Creeks.

As an emerging core within overlapping indigenous and colonial borderlands, the Mikasukis occupied a strategic point that made them formidable actors capable of thwarting the designs of other regional powers. Ambiguously identified as either Seminoles or Lower Creeks, the Mikasukis and their Apalache homeland occupied a liminal space between both groups. More broadly speaking, Mikasuki stood on a nexus between spheres of influence emanating from the Creek Confederacy, Spanish Florida, the U.S. Southeast, and the Atlantic world. The location was ideal for trading, since the Saint Marks and Wakulla rivers feed into the Apalachee Bay, which gave Panton, Leslie & Company traders easy access to local goods.

Furthermore, the presence of a Spanish outpost at Saint Marks, with a garrison too weak to project coercive power, facilitated favorable relations with a European ally.43 These advantages gave Kinache a standing similar to those of indigenous leaders such as John Galphin and John Cannard, who lived in similarly strategic locations, amassed sizable wealth, and were vital intermediaries between the Spanish and the Lower Creeks.44

In spite of Kinache’s strong position, a period of economic uncertainty led to Mikasuki vulnerability. Consequently, Mikasuki-Spanish relations soured because of dissatisfaction over trade concerns that threatened Native autonomy.45 The Mikasukis began targeting Panton, Leslie & Company, whose mercantile activities were supported by the Spanish government. When the trading firm adequately supplied the “Indian trade,” it lent credibility and prestige to the Spanish. For indigenous towns like Mikasuki, a steady supply of trade, especially munitions, assuaged domestic tensions and was central to issues of security. Conversely, Spain’s failure to deliver adequate trade, whether owing to punitive policies or scarcity, signaled a breach in diplomatic relations and created an opening for rivals.46

The trade situation grew worse when the French Revolution disrupted existing networks.47 Consequently, Lower Creek and Mikasuki headmen however, this relationship did not deter his later attacks on the trading firm and the Spanish.

43. Although Kinache was allied with the Spanish, he preferred and longed for an economic and military partnership with the British. For the Mikasuki leader’s favor toward the British, see West, “Abiaka, or Sam Jones, in Context,” 370–72.

44. Further detail on Galphin can be found in Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 174; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 100–101. For more information on Cannard, whose name has a number of spelling variations depending on the source, see Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 188–89; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 56, 109–10, 124, 133–34, 201, 223.

45. Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 198. In addition to trade and geopolitical issues, a rumor existed that a Spanish official’s wife had insulted Kinache and ignited his hostility toward the colonial administration.

46. Payne to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, January 31, 1794, EFP, reel 43, PKY; during a turbulent period when Seminole support was vital, the Alachua headman Payne reminded the Spanish East Florida governor to maintain a steady supply of trade. John Forrester to Enrique White, April 19, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; during the Mikasuki-Spanish War, Forrester, a Spanish agent, warned that the Alachua Seminoles could ally with the Mikasukis because of the lack of goods coming from the Spanish.

found themselves increasingly mired in debt and yet reliant on an ever-decreasing supply of trade goods. In 1798 Panton, Leslie & Company began sounding out the Upper Creeks about granting land to the firm in exchange for retiring Native debt. Rumors of land sales often met with intense resistance because the further loss of hunting grounds made producing deerskins more difficult, which exacerbated the cycle of debt.

Seeking an alternative to their dire economic situation, the Mikasukis hoped Bowles, who presented himself as a British official, could provide direct and more favorable access to British trade. Potentially, well-supplied Mikasuki towns would diminish the influence that the Spanish and their trading partners wielded and would restructure indigenous communication and trade networks. As Robert Paulett notes, in the Southeast, control of trading paths was an avenue to gaining power and influence. With Bowles providing British support and a secure trade network, Mikasuki would become an even more important indigenous settlement and even theoretically reshape power dynamics that had been dominated by the more northerly Creeks.

The opening salvo in the Mikasuki-Spanish War occurred as Bowles sought to return to his former allies. Typical for the “Director General,” he miraculously escaped from Spanish incarceration and set sail for Florida, only to shipwreck near the entrance of the Apalachicola River. Low on supplies and morale, the adventurer sought succor from an unlikely source—Andrew Ellicott, a U.S. surveyor tasked with mapping the boundary line negotiated in the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo (Pinckney’s Treaty).

48. For a list of individual debts from the Apalache store during the 1790s, as well as specific damages from the 1792 Bowles-related sacking of the store, see List of Debts, 1792–1800, Panton, Leslie & Company Papers (hereafter cited as PLC), reel 6, Oviatt Library, California State University–Northridge, Los Angeles (hereafter cited as OL); Statement of Debts, 1800, PLC, reel 12, OL. Kinache and a number of Mikasuki headmen are listed as debtors. Coker and Watson, Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands, 252. Creek and Seminole debts totaled nearly twenty thousand dollars excluding damages because of robberies. For Upper Creek resistance to initial land cession proposals, see Daniel McGillivray to William Panton, April 24, 1798, PLC, reel 11, OL.


50. Paulett, An Empire of Small Places, 27.
Days earlier, a group of Mikasukis and Upper Creeks ambushed Ellicott's American survey team and their Spanish counterparts. Obviously shaken, the surveyor later recounted a guerrilla campaign by the "most unprincipled villains in existence" designed to harass and disrupt the creation of mounds meant to mark the new international border. 

But what seemed to American agents as irrational acts of hostility because of indigenous misunderstandings of national borders were, in fact, a Mikasuki response to U.S., Spanish, and Creek policies threatening their political independence.

When the United States and Spain agreed to settle the border between Georgia and Florida, American agents understood that they needed Creek support "to run the line." In the Treaty of Colerain (1796), Superintendent for Indian Affairs Benjamin Hawkins inserted an article requiring the Creeks to provide two "chiefs" as well as guides and hunters for the border survey expedition. Not simply concerned with logistics, the stipulation served as evidence of Creek acquiescence to the new border. The Florida-Georgia boundary, however, was only briefly mentioned during the entire treaty negotiations, and even Hawkins admitted it needed further explanation.

Creek spokesmen, mainly from Lower Creek towns, were understandably more concerned with land cessions in Georgia than with an issue that was either a low priority, poorly explained, or presented ambiguously. As for the Mikasukis, only one of their leaders signed the treaty, which


52. Treaty of Colerain, January 4, 1797, ASP, IA, vol. 1, 587, LC. The fifth article of the Treaty of Colerain stipulated the furnishing of Creek representatives, hunters, and guides. For sources discussing the use of the treaty article as proof of Native adherence to the border, see James Seagrove to Methogley, June 15, 1799, PLC, reel 12, OL; Doster, *The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands*, 1:206. Concerning Creek understandings of the treaty's fifth article, Hawkins states that it was "explained fully, and they acquiesced; yet some further explanations will be necessary, to remove the jealousy attached to every act, relative to their boundary." Although it behooved Hawkins as treaty commissioner to present the issue as having been thoroughly discussed, its lack of mention during the heart of the negotiations contradicts his claim. For Hawkins's explanation, see Report on the Treaty of Colerain, July 1, 1796, ASP, IA, 1:610-11, LC. The Mikasuki leader Methogley stated that Hawkins did not consult with the "Indians in that part of the nation where I live"; for Methogley's account, see Methogley to Seagrove, June 14, 1799, Edward E. Ayer Collection (hereafter cited as EAC), MS 797, Newberry Library, Chicago (hereafter cited as NL).
signified a lack of consultation. Thus, in May 1799 Kinache confronted the Spanish commander at Fort Saint Marks and claimed to have little knowledge of the purpose of the boundary. If the line meant Euro-American settlement, the indigenous leader asserted, then he would not allow it to be “carried into effect.” And rather than soothe Kinache and his advisers, as was his intention, the Spanish commandant’s claim that the border would not affect Native peoples only spread further antagonism. Consequently, Kinache ignored Hawkins’s calls to serve as an escort for the expedition.

With the new border nearly slicing through the Mikasuki towns, Kinache and his allies took issue with what they viewed as a violation of their territory. Methogley, the second-most prominent Mikasuki leader, explained the situation in stark terms to the former U.S. Indian agent James Seagrove. He warned that the region’s indigenous groups would “engage in a war against any nation or people, and sooner sacrifise their lives to a man, than be robbed of their lands which is their only support.” To give his words greater weight, Methogley, using a common diplomatic device, declared that he spoke not only for the entire Creek nation but also for the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws. In reality, only a smattering of Creek and Seminole insurgents, most notably the Upper Creek forces of Hoboithle Micco (Tame King), found common cause against the United States, Spain, and the Creek National Council. Indeed, Methogley’s comments betrayed the fact that he spoke only for the “towns” directly affected by the proposed

53. Thoma´s Portell to the South Carolina State Gazette, March 11, 1800, EFP, reel 40, PKY; Doster, The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1:201–3; Methogley to Seagrove, June 14, 1799, EAC, MS 797, NL. Methogley stated that the meeting with the Spanish official gave the Mikasuki delegation the impression that the Spanish would take their land, enslave them, and control their women and children. Ellicott to Timothy Pickering, October 9, 1799, AEP, box 3, reel 1, LC; the U.S. agent believed that indigenous hostility could be blamed not on the Spanish official but, rather, on a faulty interpretation of his talk.

54. For sources that mention Hoboithle Micco’s resistance to the creation of the Florida-Georgia border, see Andrew Ellicott, The Journal of Andrew Ellicott, Late Commissioner on Behalf of the United States . . . for Determining the Boundary between the United States and the . . . Six Maps . . . To Which Is Added an Appendix (Philadelphia: Budd & Bartram, 1803), 214, 225–26; Holmes, “The Southern Boundary Commission,” 338. Doster, The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1:208, writes that the involvement of Upper Creek Tallasses instigated hostility to the survey expedition. He cites Ellicott’s belief that the fighters were part of Hoboithle Micco’s earlier entourage to Pensacola. Doster notes, however, the limitations of the “documentary record of just who did what and why.”
boundary.\textsuperscript{55} The indigenous leader’s letter is a clear enunciation of Mikasuki beliefs and intentions toward any power infringing on their autonomy.

Endeavoring to defuse a “storm ready to burst on the heads of innocent people,” Seagrove informed Methogley that his “nation” had consented to the boundary, and he also argued that indigenous property would be unmo- lested. With the Treaty of Colerain sprawled out in front of him, Seagrove responded that the “article entered into by your nation” bound the Mikasukis to support the border commission. Perhaps taking advantage of Methogley’s claim to represent the Creek nation, he felt that the Upper and Lower Creek signatories had legitimately spoken for the Mikasukis. He omitted mentioning that Kinache and Methogley had not signed the treaty. Essentially, Seagrove felt the conflict was due to the Mikasukis’ inability to understand the concept of national borders, and he condescendingly told Methogley that the delineation of Spanish and U.S. jurisdiction would not affect the indigenous population.\textsuperscript{56} Although Seagrove was right in the sense that Native peoples retained immediate control over the border, Methogley and Kinache understood that their sovereignty, nonetheless, was being compromised, and they probably recognized the long-term implications.

Last-minute negotiations only antagonized the Mikasukis and their fellow insurgents. Esteban Minor, the Spanish border commissioner, was upset that Kinache sought to rally opposition to the expedition, and he accused the headman of being the only one “opposed to what the Creek Nation had agreed on.” With evident frustration, Minor threatened to withdraw Spanish recognition of Kinache’s leadership and cut off all trade. Believing that the Mikasukis and Seminoles had finally acquiesced, he

\textsuperscript{55} Methogley to Seagrove, June 14, 1799, EAC, MS 797, NL; Robert S. Cot- terill, \textit{The Southern Indians: The Story of the Civilized Tribes} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 126. Methogley was not from Mikasuki but from nearby Tamatle, a satellite town of Tallahassee. Collectively these towns were part of a larger political entity (Mikasuki). Within the primary source material and secondary source texts, Methogley’s name has many alternative spellings, such as Macloggy, Mislogue, and Mitloque. For discussions of Methogley, see Din, \textit{War on the Gulf Coast}, 91, 108, 115, 160; Saunt, \textit{A New Order of Things}, 223–25; Snyder, \textit{Slavery in Indian Country}, 127–28, 138–39.

\textsuperscript{56} Seagrove to Methogley, June 15, 1799, PLC, reel 12, OL; Cotterill, \textit{The Southern Indians}, 126. For analysis of the border expedition incident and the correspondence between Methogley and Seagrove, see Hudson, \textit{Creek Paths and Federal Roads}, 39–44.
described Kinache as “upset and confused.” In all likelihood, the commissioner’s haranguing of the leader sealed the latter’s decision to attack. Spanish and U.S. officials had labored to convince the Mikasukis that the border would not affect their sovereignty, but Minor’s comments directly undermined Kinache’s political standing. Informed that he was both to abide by the wishes of his “nation” (the Creeks) and to recognize that he lived in “His Majesty’s territory,” the indigenous commander sought to reassert his power.57

The Mikasukis and their allies were unmoved by Minor’s performance and began harassing the commissioners through the late summer and early fall of 1799. Eventually, Ellicott retreated down the Apalachicola River, where he found his support ship sabotaged.58 Meanwhile, Hawkins called for Lower Creek support to salvage the expedition and told the attackers to “conduct themselves agreeable to the voice of their nation.”59 The Creeks, for their part, had warned that separate talks with the Seminoles (Mikasukis) were necessary, but although he ignored their concerns, Hawkins nevertheless requested and received escorts numbering around two hundred men.60 Later, he called on the Upper Creeks to punish the insurgents. The Upper Creeks uncharacteristically displayed aspects of coercive centralized authority by beating a number of their dissidents who were involved in the incident.61 Creek society did have mechanisms for disciplinary action, but these corrective measures traditionally functioned within the kinship system. In this particular incident, however, Creek elites, encouraged by Hawkins, used their newly centralized power to reprimand the militants.62 Although the Upper Creeks lacked the means to punish Kinache, they nonetheless claimed jurisdiction over him. Tustunnue Haujo, an Upper Creek man involved in meting out the punishments, pledged to send the “stick” used to beat the Upper Creek dissidents to both the Lower

Creeks and “Seminoles,” thereby sending a message of potential retributive justice.\(^{63}\)

As Methogley’s letter and Minor’s imprudent speech demonstrate, the Mikasukis attacked the survey expedition of their own volition. They confronted U.S. and Spanish officials about the international boundary as early as the spring of 1799. Bowles sent advance warning of his return in early September and arrived as the border dispute reached its apex.\(^{64}\) His presence, rather than being the primary cause of the conflict, only reinforced an ongoing resistance movement. Nevertheless, Hawkins, Ellicott, Minor, and even Bowles himself argued that the adventurer’s rumored return was the catalyst for the indigenous unrest.\(^{65}\)

Rather than understanding Native motives for the conflict, thereby possibly confronting their culpability, Spanish and U.S. officials preferred to believe that a cunning white man was misleading naive indigenous peoples. For John Forrester, a Spanish agent and Panton, Leslie & Company partner, the white man did not necessarily even have to be cunning (an apparent dig at Bowles), as he stated that “a fool may insinuate evil into an Indian, which a wise man cannot persuade out of him.”\(^{66}\) Native diplomats grasped the importance that their counterparts placed on these instigators and recognized the advantages of assigning them blame.\(^{67}\)

\(^{63}\) Report of Tustunnue Haujo and Walton to Hawkins, November 4, 1799, AEP, box 2, reel 1, LC.


\(^{65}\) Hawkins to Folch, August 22, 1799, PLC, reel 12, OL; Hawkins to Ellicott, October 30, 1799, PLC, reel 12, OL; Hawkins to Folch, November 17, 1799, PLC, reel 12, OL; Minor to Gayoso, August 16, 1799, PC, reel 382, PKY; Ellicott, The Journal of Andrew Ellicott, 228; Benjamin Hawkins, Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins, ed. C. L. Grant (Savannah, Ga.: Beehive Press, 1980), 1:259, 261; Doster, The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1:207; Holmes, “The Southern Boundary Commission,” 340; Wright, William Augustus Bowles, 115; For a recent text that highlights Bowles’s role in disrupting the survey expedition, see Roger G. Kennedy, Cotton and Conquest: How the Plantation System Acquired Texas (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 109–24.

\(^{66}\) Forrester to White, April 19, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Doster, The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1:219.

\(^{67}\) An example of this can be found in Creek negotiation tactics at the time of the Treaty of Colerain, when they blamed Bowles for being the source of their
Euro-American powers, if seeking reconciliation, had a further incentive to hold nefarious white men responsible, as Jacobo Dubreuil, the commandant at Fort Saint Marks, vividly demonstrated in 1801, when he offered to pardon fifteen Mikasukis if Bowles was brought to him, dead or alive.\footnote{68} Throughout the ensuing strife, Spanish and American agents obsessively sought Bowles’s capture while his supposed partisans pursued their objectives.

Mikasuki and Creek dissident attacks on the border commission marked the beginning of the Mikasuki-Spanish War, a conflict traditionally identified as Bowles's final Florida campaign.\footnote{69} Despite his self-appointed title of “Director General,” Bowles was in fact a junior partner who faced censure if he did not embrace Kinache’s policies. For instance, Kinache instructed Bowles not to bring any white troops into Mikasuki-controlled Apalache but instead to send them to Saint Augustine.\footnote{70} Rather than simply seeking to elevate Bowles to power, the war was a Mikasuki gambit to break with the Spanish, who had undermined their autonomy through both inadequate trade and a complicit stance toward the new international boundary.

The Mikasuki offensive plunged the Spanish into a precarious situation and left them little choice but to appeal to neighboring indigenous powers for assistance. These Native groups decided, on the basis of their own respective geopolitical calculations, to maintain their relationships with the Spanish and Panton, Leslie & Company. Upper and Lower Creek headmen, in Hawkins’s looming presence, released a statement in November 1799 that provided much-needed aid to the Spanish. From the square ground in Tuckabatche, Efau Haujo, speaker of the Creek National Council, disavowed any association with Bowles.\footnote{71} He chastised the Mikasukis as previous aggressiveness; see Minutes of the Negotiations for the Treaty of Colerain, June 21, 1796, ASP, IA, 1:599, LC.

\footnote{68} Jacobo Dubreuil to Mikasukis, October 17, 1801, PC, reel 381, PKY. The Spanish officer quoted a previous reciprocal agreement with Native leaders that called for the execution of murderers. Rather than have multiple executions, Dubreuil offered pardons for Bowles's capture or death because he was the “author” of the disturbances.

\footnote{69} Snyder, \textit{Slavery in Indian Country}, 127. Snyder coined the phrase “Mikasuki War”; she examines the raids on the East Floridian plantations beginning in the summer of 1800. With her focus on captivity and slavery, Snyder discusses aspects of the conflict related only to seizures of slaves and inhabitants.

\footnote{70} Daniel McGillivray to Panton, October 13, 1800, PLC, reel 13, OL.

“our mischief makers” and implicitly chided them for allowing an outsider to pose as a “chief.” More significantly, the leader addressed reports that the Seminoles had given Bowles a land grant on the Apalachicola River. Despite the land’s proximity to Mikasuki and Lower Creek settlements, the Upper Creek dignitary asserted that Tuckabatche was the legitimate location for any land negotiations. The Creeks were asserting their authority over Florida’s indigenous peoples and usurping their ability to conduct foreign policy. Rather than submitting to this, the Mikasukis ignored Creek directives, while the Alachua Seminoles tried to weather the tumult.

ALACHUA DIPLOMACY

The emergence of an effective Mikasuki strategy that targeted East Florida plantations threatened to engulf the Alachua Seminoles in their northwestern neighbors’ conflict. By July 1800 the Mikasukis and Bowles had taken but promptly ceded Fort Saint Marks in Apalache. Although they did try to recapture the outpost, the Mikasukis focused their efforts against softer targets. Meanwhile, in addition to larger geopolitical concerns, young Native fighters used these raids to exhibit their military abilities in hopes of social and political advancement. They began raiding plantations to the east, where they seized inhabitants, slaves, and livestock.

Frustrated with Mikasuki attacks, the Spanish took Methogley hostage, a maneuver that caused tension within Mikasuki ranks, and the once-aggressive towns of Tamatle and Tallahassee became more responsive to

72. Ibid., 33–34; A partial record of the Creek statement can be found in “A Talk of the Creek Nation,” November 25, 1799, PC, reel 186, PKY. Din, War on the Gulf Coast, 93–94, argues that the Seminole land grant to Bowles was “an act of independence” from the Creeks. For authors who contend that Native land grants to individual white men were strategic economic arrangements rather than an act of coercion or manipulation, see Alan Taylor, The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution (New York: Knopf, 2006), 169–202; Alan Gallay, The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 144.

73. West, “Abiaka, or Sam Jones, in Context,” 370.

74. For plantation raids in June and July 1800 conducted against Spanish subjects such as Francis Philip Fatio Sr. and George Fleming, see White to Fatio Sr., June 25, 1800, EFP, reel 55, PKY; Fatio Sr. to White, June 25, 1800, EFP, reel 55, PKY; Forrester to White, July 16, 1800, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Junta de Guerra, August 14, 1800, EFP, reel 117, PKY. See also Snyder, Slavery in Indian Country, 127.
Spanish diplomatic overtures in hopes of freeing their leader. But other Mikasukis stepped up their raids on the Saint Johns River and seized the holdings of prominent planters such as Francis Philip Fatio. Incensed Spanish officials then began pressuring their Alachua Seminole allies for information and assistance.

While the Mikasukis pursued military action, the Alachuas opted mostly for diplomacy, a strategy rooted in their strategic considerations. Payne, a prominent Alachua leader, had joined Kinache to protest the surveying of the Florida-Georgia border, and some Alachua may have participated in the attack on that expedition. Nonetheless, Payne was not as militarily aggressive as his Mikasuki counterpart and quickly reverted to a diplomatic stance. Although their northern hunting grounds were threatened, the Alachua towns located in the East Florida interior faced fewer disruptions because of the border. They maintained access to the Spanish provincial capital of Saint Augustine and the trading posts on the Saint Johns River. The Alachuas were rarely present at Creek conferences, and the new border threatened to cut off lines of communication that were already sporadic at best. Furthermore, the Alachuas did not have the population and military strength of the Mikasukis. As a result, Payne maintained the autonomy of his towns by walking a diplomatic tightrope, often engaging in skillful negotiation and alliance building. The turmoil over the plantation raids tested his abilities as he tried to placate his Spanish allies while not antagonizing the more powerful Mikasukis.

Immediately following the initial raids in mid-1800, Payne cemented his role as a neutral intermediary. His first objective was to avoid any implication that the Alachuas participated in the recent Mikasuki attacks.

75. John Cannard to White, October 2, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; White to Marqués de Someruelos, December 2, 1801, PC, reel 35, PKY; Din, *War on the Gulf Coast*, 160–63, 167–68, 184. Small delegations of Tamatle and Tallahassee Indians provided supplies to Fort Saint Marks and participated in peace talks because of Methogley’s captivity. Methogley also sent out peace overtures, but many were not delivered.

76. Minor to Gayoso, August 16, 1799, PC, reel 382, PKY; Minor to Nicolas D’Auoy, September 24, 1799, PC, reel 33, PKY; Saunt, “A New Order of Things,” 338; Doster, *The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands*, 1:206.

77. Sattler, “Remnants, Renegades, and Runaways,” 51; Doster, *The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands*, 1:265, states that the Alachua and Mikasuki Seminoles did not always participate in Creek conferences because of distance and “motivation.”

78. White to Cannard, July 14, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 138–39.
met John Forrester at the Seminole-Spanish border town of Picolata to proclaim his objective to “keep the peace” and maintain a line of communication with the governor. Although he never directly confronted the Mikasukis, the indigenous leader nonetheless presented himself as a staunch Spanish ally ready to rein in Bowles’s influence and assist in the return of the plundered slaves. He told the agent that he sent messages to the Seminole towns and claimed that his persuasive dispatches had denied Bowles any Alachua support and even thwarted further raids. Despite Payne’s cooperation, East Florida Governor Enrique White pushed back, declaring that some of the Alachua Seminoles had seized slaves during the incursions and were harboring a murderer.79 Since Payne’s leadership operated through consensus rather than coercion, he was not able to dissuade all factions from participating in the attacks. Nonetheless, he maintained an accommodating diplomatic posture whereby he promoted himself as a man of influence who could broker congenial relations.

When a new round of raids hit the East Florida plantations in the summer of 1801, Payne felt pressured by a Spanish embargo on gunpowder to deliver on his promises.80 The detention of Methogley during the previous spring had been a new source of agitation that led to another Mikasuki seizure of slaves from the Fatio plantation.81 In November, Payne and another Alachua headman, Bowlegs, escorted Fatio’s son to Mikasuki to recover the family’s slaves, but Fatio Jr. was disappointed with the results; he even had his horse pilfered into the bargain. Fatio Jr. directly confronted Bowles and Kinache, and during his encounter with the adventurer he took note of the man’s ragged clothing and observed that he was “fed by the bounty of Kinache.” Meanwhile, the resolute Native leader lectured Fatio

79. Forrester to White, June 17, 1800, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Forrester to White, June 21, 1800, EFP, reel 43, PKY; White to Forrester; July 4, 1800, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Forrester to White, July 5, 1800, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Forrester to White, July 16, 1800, EFP, reel 43, PKY; White to Payne, July 18, 1800, EFP, reel 43, PKY.

80. Forrester to White, July 7, 1801, EFP, reel 44, PKY. Although Forrester noted the suspension of gunpowder sales, the Alachua Seminoles still managed to have access to ammunition, which they sold to the Mikasukis a few months later. This was either because of illicit trade or because the trade embargo was sporadic. Public Notice, November 17, 1801, EFP, reel 118, PKY.

81. For information on the Fatio plantation raids in 1801, see Forrester to White, August 31, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Forrester to White, September 10, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; White to Folch, September 12, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Forrester to White, September 16, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Timothy Bernard to White, September 27, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; White to Someruelos, December 2, 1801, PC, reel 35, PKY.
Jr. about Mikasuki grievances. Unlike his guest, Kinache stated that he would never ask for the return of “their horses, their negroes, their goods, and even one of their people.” He again invoked Methogley’s captivity by telling his visitor that unlike the headman, Fatio Jr. was free to return home. Nonetheless, Kinache decided, in consultation with the Mikasuki council rather than with Bowles, to entertain the Fatio family’s ransom offer.82 In the end, Fatio Jr. felt vulnerable and rescinded the offer, but he left Mikasuki with more respect for his adversaries than for his allies. In regard to Payne, Fatio Jr. said the leader displayed “fear and indifference,” attitudes that gave way to brash self-confidence with every step the party took away from Mikasuki. Meanwhile, Bowlegs, unlike Payne, spoke up during the “public assembly” but was quickly marginalized when the Mikasukis said that it was “extraordinary that he an Indian should interest himself in such a matter.”83

Fatio Jr. thought that the way Payne and Bowlegs performed at Mikasuki showed the Alachuas to be a weak power ineffectively running Spanish errands. But this simplistic view, which was colored by Payne’s deferential diplomatic posture, ignores evidence of subversive behavior. Although Bowlegs took the time to escort a planter’s son, he also used the opportunity to pack several horses full of goods and ammunition that he unloaded in Mikasuki. Alachua Seminoles had often traded with the Mikasukis, providing them with munitions purchased in Saint Augustine that not only undermined the effectiveness of the Spanish embargo, but may also explain why the Alachuas and Mikasukis remained on peaceful terms.84 In other areas, the Alachuas also subtly defied the governor. For instance, Payne refused to extradite a Black Seminole accused of murder, insisting that the suspect

---

82. A year later Payne again sought to recover the slaves but was thwarted by the Mikasukis. Unlike Fatio Jr., who claimed that Kinache and his council decided whether to release the slaves, Payne asserted that Bowles, who avoided the Alachua headman during his visit, interfered with the release of the captives. Since this account contradicts other occasions in which the Mikasuki leader was the dominant partner, the episode may have been another example of a Native leader effectively using Bowles as a scapegoat during diplomatic talks. For a discussion of Payne’s trip to Mikasuki, see Payne to White, May 11, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Doster, The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1:224.

83. Fatio Jr. to Fatio Sr., October 2, 1801, EFP, reel 83, PKY; Fatio Jr. to Fatio Sr., November 12, 1801, EFP, reel 83, PKY.

84. Fatio Jr. to Fatio Sr., November 12, 1801, EFP, reel 83, PKY; White to Someruelos, December 2, 1801, PC, reel 35, PKY; Someruelos to White, December 19, 1801, PC, reel 35, PKY.
perished in an apparent drowning.\textsuperscript{85} Although Payne claimed his people remained loyal to their Spanish allies, Forrester warned that Mikasuki recruitment efforts among the Alachuaas would be irresistible if Bowles established viable trade networks.\textsuperscript{86} Nevertheless, Payne opted for a more conservative, yet calculating, strategy that maintained existing relationships with neighboring powers.

Spanish efforts to prompt Payne’s intercession in the conflict pushed against the reality of indigenous power dynamics. In January 1802 a Mikasuki raiding party seized enslaved Africans, killed Tomas Bonelli, a Minorcan settler, and captured his mother and siblings.\textsuperscript{87} The abduction of a white family scandalized the province and stoked an already inflamed situation. Euro-American planters vented their frustration over the colonial government’s lack of response. The governor, in turn, tightened the vise on Payne by extending the trade embargo and seizing members of his entourage.\textsuperscript{88} In June the exasperated headman reported no progress in acquiring the white captives. Despite his self-portrayal as an influential power broker, Payne had to admit that the Alachuaas had “nothing to say to the Mikasouky Indians we are a people to ourself.”\textsuperscript{89} Although this tactical statement distanced his people from Mikasuki belligerence, it reflected the relationship among Florida’s indigenous people at the time. Despite sharing cultural affinities, these groups operated as independent political powers.\textsuperscript{90} They advanced separate foreign policies that were based on calculations that reflected geopolitical standing, economic considerations, strategic objectives, and internal dynamics. The result was a borderlands in which conflict and negotiation did not follow along monolithic lines pitting Indians against Europeans and vice versa.

\textsuperscript{85} Payne to White, July 29, 1800, EFP, reel 43, PKY.
\textsuperscript{86} Forrester to White, April 19, 1801, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Doster, \textit{The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands}, 1:219.
\textsuperscript{87} For the capture of the Bonelli family, see Josiah Dupont Account, January 24, 1802, EFP, reel 83, PKY; Notice of Captives in Mikasuki, January 27, 1803, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Mary Antonia Bonelli Testimony, October 1, 1835, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (hereafter cited as BIA), RG 75, M234, reel 800, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as NA); Snyder, \textit{Slavery in Indian Country}, 128, 138–39, 142–43, 148–49.
\textsuperscript{88} Petition to the East Florida Governor, February 16, 1802, PC, reel 37, PKY; White to Someruelos, March 31, 1802, PC, reel 37, PKY; Payne to White, May 22, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY; White to Payne, May 26, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY.
\textsuperscript{89} Payne to White, June 5, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY.
\textsuperscript{90} Sattler, “Remnants, Renegades, and Runaways,” 55–57.
THE CREEK NATIONAL COUNCIL INTERCEDES

The turning point in the Mikasuki-Spanish War occurred when the Creek Confederacy compelled Kinache to capitulate. Under significant strain and recognizing his limitations, Payne encouraged the Spanish to appeal to the Creeks. He recommended that they seek the advice of John Cannard, a friendly Lower Creek leader. Payne proposed a new trip to Mikasuki with Forrester but hoped to gain his fellow headman's backing.91 In July 1802 the two men set out for Cannard's settlement on the Flint River, where they received not only his assistance, but also the support of the Creek National Council. During the Treaty of Fort Wilkinson negotiations, conducted the previous month, U.S. agents, including Hawkins, had prodded the Creeks to rein in their dissidents who supported Bowles as well as the Seminoles (Mikasukis).92 Following Hawkins’s advice, the Upper Creek leader Efau Haujo informed the Mikasukis that he had not “thrown” them away but had “thought” of them. He lectured Kinache to alter his “conduct” and “listen to the voice of the chiefs of the nation.”93 Thus, when Forrester and Payne delivered the Spanish governor’s peace overture, the council, which had convened to discuss issues stemming from the recent treaty, was amenable.94 Initially the council was willing to send thirty or forty fighters to Mikasuki, but Forrester convinced the entire delegation and their military support to descend on the town. In August a large Creek force of three to four hundred men arrived in Mikasuki to persuade Kinache to sue for peace.95

Creek and Spanish efforts to force an end to Mikasuki combat operations underscored Kinache’s role as the central actor in the conflict. The council had entered Mikasuki with a two-to-one advantage in troop strength, and

91. Payne to White, March 2, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Payne to White, May 22, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY; White to Someruelos, July 5, 1802, PC, reel 38, PKY.
92. Although the Bowles-related conflict was occurring in Spanish Florida, some Upper and Lower Creek dissidents were participating in the fighting. Consequently, U.S. agents were obliged by the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo with Spain to suppress any cross-border hostilities undertaken by Native peoples residing within its borders.
94. White to Cannard, July 14, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY. The East Florida governor informed the Creeks that he would reestablish trade if the raids on the plantations ended. He called for the headmen to control the Seminoles and bring Kinache to peace talks.
95. Forrester to White, September 7, 1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY.
the Creeks informed their surprised host that they were heading to Apa-
lache for a peace conference with the Spanish. 96 Despite this overt show of
force, as well as previous messages of admonishment, Kinache remained
defiant. He claimed to be “sensible” to Bowles’s deception, but he was not
ready to discard the adventurer. The Mikasuki commander told the Creek
degregation to make its way to Fort Saint Marks and make peace with the
Spanish, telling them that he would do the same after their “return.” Sens-
ing subterfuge, the Spanish enticed the headman to the fort by releasing
Methogley from his confinement, a move that indigenous leaders like Payne
and Cannard had previously proposed. 97 This gesture created the antici-
pated goodwill, and successful negotiations produced a preliminary peace
treaty. 98 A number of factors explain Kinache’s decision to negotiate despite
his initial hesitation. First, peace meant a resumption of trade, which would
alleviate critical shortages. 99 Second, an agreement would hasten the depar-
ture of the Creek forces back to their towns in the north. Third, the accord
fell short of demanding Bowles’s capture, calling instead for a pledge that
the Mikasukis terminate their support for the filibuster. Although Kinache
reneged on this stipulation, raiding in East Florida ended and some
captives, including members of the Bonelli family, were ransomed or
released. 100

Despite lingering tensions with the Spanish and a continuing, albeit more
limited, association with Bowles, Kinache’s actions spoke to his growing
realization that war against the Spanish and insurgency against the Creeks
were no longer viable. But even if the Mikasuki leader had wanted a pretext
for renewing hostilities, he displayed considerable restraint, especially with
the news of his brother’s murder aboard a Spanish fishing vessel in Tampa
Bay. The incident occurred during one of Bowles’s raids on the Spanish

96. The Mikasukis could muster 180–200 combatants, according to Fatio Jr.’s
estimate, made the previous year; see Fatio Jr. to Fatio Sr., November 12, 1801,
EFP, reel 83, PKY.
97. For Payne’s suggestion to release Methogley, see Payne to White, May 11,
1802, EFP, reel 43, PKY; Doster, The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1:224;
Din, War on the Gulf Coast, 197.
98. Doster, The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands, 1:224; Din, War on the
Gulf Coast, 195–201, provides a detailed account of the treaty negotiations and the
final agreement.
100. Preliminary Treaty of Apalache, August 20, 1802, PC, reel 39, PKY; Din,
War on the Gulf Coast, 199–200; Forrester to White, September 7, 1802, EFP, reel
43, PKY; Bonelli Testimony, October 1, 1835, BIA, RG 75, M234, reel 800, NA.
fishermen who routinely made seasonal voyages to Florida’s western coast. Kinache was dissatisfied with the explanations for his brother’s death, which soured his relations with the Spanish. Nonetheless, he was pressed by his people’s desperate need for supplies and trade to ratify a treaty with the Spanish on December 25, 1802. Despite this conciliatory move, Kinache did not wholly abandon Bowles, who had taken an ill-fated recruitment mission among the Creeks but then returned to Mikasuki. Kinache’s attachment to Bowles has been described as an infatuation, but it was rooted in the optimistic view that his associate, despite his poor reputation, could deliver on his promise to establish an alternative British-based trade network. But Bowles’s capture or death would destroy Kinache’s ambitious plans and force him to accept restrictions on Mikasuki autonomy.

As their power waned, and in the face of inherent disadvantages, Kinache, Methogley, and Bowles journeyed to a major conference hosted by the Creek National Council and held in the Upper Creek town of Ocheopofau, which was commonly known as Hickory Ground. The Mikasuki delegation’s reasons for attending, despite the stinging rebuke its members were sure to face, remains unclear. Bowles, still confident about his powers of persuasion, tried to reverse his dire military situation through a dramatic diplomatic coup that, if successful, could gain him not only Creek backing, but also support from the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee delegates present. The adventurer wasted no time implementing his strategy to undermine Hawkins, asserting that the agent was a negative influence among the Creeks and motivated solely by a desire to acquire Indian lands for the United States. But Bowles’s gambit failed, and by late May 1803 the Upper Creeks had seized him and turned him over to the Spanish.

Although they tried to handle the affair discreetly, Kinache and the Mikasukis nevertheless registered their discontent. According to Esteban Folch, a West Florida cadet and son of the governor sent to act as a Spanish representative, and John Forbes, a leading partner in Panton, Leslie & Company, the Creeks subsequently subjected Kinache to public humiliation.

101. Dubreuil to White, October 26, 1803, EFP, reel 43, PKY; White to Someruelos, November 5, 1802, PC, reel 39, PKY; Someruelos to White, December 17, 1802, PC, reel 39, PKY; Ratification of the Treaty of Apalache, December 25, 1802, PC, reel 41, PKY; White to Someruelos, January 3, 1803, PC, reel 41, PKY; White to Someruelos, January 24, 1803, PC, reel 41, PKY; White to Someruelos, January 26, 1803, PC, reel 41, PKY; Din, War on the Gulf Coast, 205.

102. Din, War on the Gulf Coast, 204–8.

in front of representatives of every major southeastern power. The Mikasukis were mocked for “crying in a corner,” and the headman had to formally apologize to Folch in front of the entire congregation. Looking “agitated,” Kinache “declared that it was not his intentions to harm the Spaniards, that the man who had occasioned it was now gone, and he hoped that all would be forgot.”104 The accuracy of the Folch and Forbes accounts of Kinache’s shaming notwithstanding, the Creek National Council had now imposed its will on the Mikasukis and censured its leader.

At Hickory Ground the Mikasukis confronted the same powers that had led them to embark on their independent militaristic policies in 1799. In addition to the U.S., Spanish, and Creek emissaries at the assembly, Forbes had arrived to represent the firm’s interests. He bided his time until Bowles’s capture and then addressed the council about debt repayment. Forbes envisioned a Creek land sale to the United States, the revenues being used to pay him. Absent this, he wanted a direct Florida land grant made to the company. The Lower Creek headman Thomas Perryman had approached Forbes about a land grant east of the Apalachicola River that encroached on Mikasuki territory only to learn that the potential deal was contingent on Bowles’s capture and Mikasuki consent.105 Forbes knew that the Mikasukis would have challenged the arrangement if they remained hopeful Bowles could establish new sources of trade, but with the adventurer out of the picture, Apalache’s Native peoples had little choice but to accede to Forbes if they wanted another trading post in the area. The haggling over an eventual agreement that led to a Florida land grant to Panton, Leslie & Company began at Hickory Ground and continued over the next few years. And although Kinache and Semathly, an emerging leader who joined him, offered resistance during the negotiations, they eventually gave way to political pressure and economic realities.106


CONCLUSION

In spite of Kinache’s bowing to the combined forces of the region’s major powers, the Mikasukis continued to pursue policies aimed at safeguarding their increasingly threatened autonomy. Scholars have thus argued that the early nineteenth century brought independence to nearly all Florida’s Native peoples. Although the Alachuas and Mikasukis had not yet developed a singular Seminole identity, they nonetheless provided a bulwark against the centralization process promoted by some Creek elites. The Creek National Council, an emerging political entity supported by the U.S. agent Benjamin Hawkins, had demonstrated its potential for coercive action when it suppressed the Mikasukis; apprehension over the council’s power led to tensions among the Creeks and brought about a Creek Civil War in 1813. Appropriately, Kinache, with his history of defiance toward the council, joined the militant Red Stick movement and Mikasuki became a refuge for Creek dissidents, especially after their defeat at Horseshoe Bend. Then, on the eve of the 1818 American invasion of Mikasuki, Kinache warned an American military officer that he would “use force to stop any armed Americans from passing my towns or my lands.” This warning echoed the sentiments that motivated the 1799 Mikasuki attack on the U.S.-Spanish border expedition, but the Mikasukis could not prevent the new incursion into their territory. The U.S. offensive effectively ended Kinache’s tenure as principal leader, although his legacy lived on in the Mikasukis, who relocated after the invasion and fought in the Second U.S.-Seminole War (1835–42).

The dominant narrative of the Florida borderlands centers on the transformation of fluid and dynamic indigenous and Spanish societies into racially and politically rigid U.S. settlements. During the 1820s the Seminoles were confined to a landlocked reservation while territorial officials


109. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 44; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 214. In the aftermath of the destruction of Mikasuki, Wright states that a body was misidentified as Kinache, which led to the belief that he had died defending the settlement. He writes, however, that Kinache lived on and made a voyage to the Bahamas, where he unsuccessfully petitioned the British governor for support. For further information on Kinache’s trip to the Bahamas and resettlement in southern Florida, see West, “Abiaka, or Sam Jones, in Context,” 371–73.
called for their complete removal, and despite an effective guerrilla warfare campaign, the majority of Seminoles and Black Seminoles would be relocated to Indian Territory during the Second U.S.-Seminole War. The fate of both groups thus fits comfortably within the familiar “borderlands to borders” framework. This model, adjusted in terms of chronology and place, remains persuasive because of its analytical accessibility and ability to account for the nation-state’s ever-increasing power. This narrative arc cements perceptions of indigenous subjugation and decline beginning in the nineteenth century. In addition to illuminating colonialism’s tragic cost and legacy, however, the narrative should also emphasize episodes of vitality and resilience. Examining the emergence of Seminole and Mikasuki identities apart from the Creek Confederacy reveals their respective and particular survival strategies. Meanwhile, the focus on inter- and intra-indigenous dynamics complicates and decenters the narrative away from a generalized conflict between whites and Native peoples.

The Mikasuki-Spanish War highlights Native Floridians’ ability to implement innovative strategies that simultaneously addressed colonial pressures and asserted their independence from more powerful indigenous polities, especially when their strategic objectives diverged. Recognized territorial spheres of influence, in terms of hunting grounds and trading paths, a legacy of political decentralization, and the fluidity of Native societies, created a Native borderlands in the Southeast. Although current scholarship typically associates borderlands with zones of interaction between imperial European powers, the concept has utility for examining internal and external indigenous relationships. This reconceptualization provides a more comprehensive and complex rendering of early American history and better contextualizes Native peoples’ actions toward colonial and national entities. The colonial process was not isolated from internal indigenous societal dynamics. When Native leaders used Euro-American economic and political alliances to bolster their domestic standing, they were proactively channeling colonial processes into “Indian Country.” Indigenous allies, as was the case in the Mikasuki-Spanish War and later the Creek Civil War, often accompanied the Euro-American military forces in their expansionist endeavors. By closely interrogating the narrative of unified Indian resistance to colonialism, a Native borderlands framework establishes the complex roles played by indigenous peoples.

110. According to Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” 816, groups using physical borderland spaces found that the transition to national borders served to narrow “the scope for political independence.”