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Struggle for the Gulf Coast Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812–1815. By Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr.

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tem, the South Island Justice Project (SIJP) (chapter six). The now-defunct SIJP delegated jurisdiction provisionally and temporarily. The project failed to account for the various beliefs and practices, for generational differences, and for interfamilial suspicions and related confidentiality issues. The SIJP failed to determine who belongs in the category of honored elder and to define clearly the relations between band governments and tribal councils. Overall, the SIJP failed to account for real issues of community and power because while the Upper Skagit and Stó:lō justice programs were permanent systems with their own jurisdiction, the SIJP lacked cohesion: it was not directed by a tribal government, was not connected with treaty negotiation, and was not connected to the creation governance in the large sense.

The three Coast Salish communities examined in *The Problem of Justice: Traidition and Law in the Coast Salish World* share common cultural heritage, but colonial processes have changed and distorted their traditional systems, including the ways in which their tribal members understand their own traditional practices. In the conclusion Miller summarizes the ways in which community members' understanding of their own heritage have changed over time and outlines some of the related consequences for the development of community-level justice systems.

Miller's *The Problem of Justice: Tradition and Law in the Coast Salish World* is a well-researched book that compares, analyzes, and sheds light on the very complex and seldom-researched topic of small indigenous communities with a limited, yet still significant, amount of sovereignty over their own people. The compilation of ethnographic, historical, and comparative analysis on the three Coast Salish justice systems into a valuable book is a formidable task. While the quality of the data on the different Coast Salish communities is uneven, and the book could have been enriched by more even treatment of each case study, Miller succeeded in meeting the challenges before him. What makes justice a problem is that the legal projects in each of the case studies tends to place issues of dignity and empowerment at the forefront of its efforts to reclaim sovereignty and autonomy. Altogether, the three case studies have implications for all indigenous North American communities and thus make important reading for anyone interested in the struggle for sovereignty, identity, and justice.

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Struggle for the Gulf Coast Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812–1815. By Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000. 255 pages. $22.95 paper.

It is impossible to understand the history, culture, and politics of the contemporary Creek and Seminole peoples without understanding the disastrous consequences of the Creek War of 1813–1814. The outset of the war saw conservative and progressive tribal factions edging toward civil war. When the shooting stopped, after Andrew Jackson's swift, crushing offensive at Horseshoe Bend on the Tallapoosa River on March 27, 1814, the Creeks found themselves one small step away from complete removal from their ancestral lands, and no longer major players in the territorial sparring between Spain, England, and the United States.

Historian Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr. identifies the failure of the Creek War (for the Creeks) in the convergence of contingent issues of timing. First he fits the Creek War within the larger scope of the War of 1812, and by so doing shows how the Creek struggle would be swept up in the momentum of larger forces. Owsley argues that had the Creeks waited for British support (which was to come later) and not responded to the nativistic call of Tecumseh, they would have been better armed and in a stronger position to defend against the eventual American invasion. Following the prophets was a strategic error, a fatal mistake if your enemy is an emerging world power with a modern army and ambitious leaders at the reins. Tecumseh's visit to the Creeks in 1811 inflamed the growing rupture between those Indians comfortable with the prosperity brought by the US policy of agricultural free enterprise (promoted diligently by Creek Agent Benjamin Hawkins) and those uncomfortable with the loss of traditional values and beliefs. Tecumseh exhorted the Creeks to throw away the plow and loom and return to wearing the skins of beasts. Those who rose to the challenge became known as the Red Sticks. Tecumseh was believed by both the Creeks and Americans to be a British agent, incorrectly it turns out. His Red Stick followers, never numerous, nevertheless haunted the frontier with their lurking presence, and became a British-backed "Indian menace" to American settlers and politicians, to whom a military solution seemed a ready option.

A military solution to the Creek menace became convenient because American troops had already been deployed to the Gulf Coast region in anticipation of escalating tensions between both Spain and Britain. Spain still held Florida (and would until 1821), and the British did not recognize the Louisiana Purchase through which the United States acquired New Orleans and Mississippi River, access to the Gulf of Mexico. American control over the "Gulf Borderlands" was far from secure. The backdoor of this expanding nation was in danger of being landlocked by foreign countries. Any further volatility fueled by the actions of Creek Indians on American soil needed quick extinguishing. When the Creek War started with the actions by the Red Sticks at Burnt Corn and Fort Mims in July and August 1813, US troops were already well-positioned to intervene.

General Thomas Flourney failed through indecision to put a fast end to the Red Stick threat, and a new commanding officer was sought. Into the spotlight rode Andrew Jackson, poised to make his reputation as an Indian fighter and soon to vault onto the national stage through his victory at the Battle of New Orleans. Much to the benefit of the American military effort, argues Owsley, and much to the detriment of the Creeks, Jackson was a masterful strategist whose policy of total war brought the entire Creek Nation to its knees. His armies sought out and burned all food and shelter, driving the Creeks to the brink of starvation by the spring of 1814. A greatly weakened Creek resistance rallied for a last stand at Horseshoe Bend, where Jackson's superior tactics and firepower soundly whipped his opposition. According to Owsley, "the reduction of the Creek Nation made it possible to remove all Southern Indians from their lands east of the Mississippi," and further, "without an Indian buffer state, defenseless Spanish Florida was annexed to the United States" (p. 194). Significant consequences indeed.

Owsley's original contributions to this field of scholarship are important. He inserts the largely overlooked Spanish influence on the Creek War, and claims that it was Spain, not Britain, that extended support and encouragement to the Red Sticks, hoping that a Red Stick victory would impede US designs in Florida. When the Red Sticks on their own provoked military action by their attacks on other Creeks and US citizens, the Creek Nation became a training ground, a rehearsal of sorts, for an army and its general, who moved on to defeat the British at New Orleans in 1815.

The Battle of New Orleans did not end the British threat in the South, nor did Horseshoe Bend entirely stamp out Red Stick embers. Red Stick refugees filtered south into the swamps around the Apalachicola River in Spanish Florida, where they met the Lower Creeks, who had not participated in the Creek War and remained intact and unscathed by the American invasion. The undaunted British, who had mostly kept out of the Creek War, began pumping arms and supplies into these Lower Creeks and Red Stick refugees. In an initiative even more dangerous to American interests, they began recruiting troops from the slave populations of Georgia and Alabama. Jackson was called on yet again in the cause of US territorial expansion. His invasion of Spanish Florida to suppress the mounting British and Indian threat and to restore the runaway slaves to slavery is known to history as the First Seminole War.

Owsley makes it abundantly clear that the South's Gulf Borderlands from Florida to New Orleans were pieces of very complicated real estate. Boundaries of the United States as we now know them did not exist. In 1812, there were three major powers blocking the path of US expansion: Spain, Britain, and the Creek Nation. Over the next ten years, all these powers relinquished their claims through diplomacy carried on the barrel of a gun. Eventually the Creeks gave up Alabama and, with a few exceptions, were displaced to a western reservation. The Creeks in Florida became known as the Seminoles, and they were to lose Florida when Jackson became president. There is a lesson here for those who think that the current complexities of geopolitics are a unique feature of our time and have no precedent in American history.

This 2000 paperback is a republication of the original 1981 University Presses of Florida volume. In a new preface, the author states that his original scholarship remains strong and essentially unchallenged by subsequent studies. He points to the more recent works by J. Leitch Wright (1986), Joel Martin (1991), and Robert Remini as complementary but not identical. This is a very solid historical study that deserves the wider dissemination now made possible by the publication of this paperback edition.

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Telling Their Stories: Essays on American Indian Literatures and Cultures.