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**“We Do Not Live For Ourselves Only”
Seminole Black Perceptions
and the Second Seminole War**

Jill M. Watts

One day in early January, 1836, Seminole leaders—both Indian and Black—visited the slave quarters on the Gruger and DePeyster plantation.¹ These leaders sought recruits for the Seminole Indian and Black forces which were resisting removal from Florida by the American military. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Afro-Americans and remnants of various Indian tribes united to form the Seminole nation, making their home in Florida. In 1830, the government announced plans to relocate these Seminole people in Oklahoma. The Seminole nation rejected the government’s proposal and, in an effort to repel the advances of the American military, frequently solicited support from the Floridian slave community. The Seminoles found some sympathy on the Gruger and DePeyster plantation. After listening to the Seminole leaders’ arguments, some bondsmen readily volunteered to take up arms against the Americans. About sixty others remained hesitant, but were forcibly compelled to join the Seminole nation. One old man, however, remained steadfast in his refusal to leave the plantation. The Seminole forces set the plantation structures on fire, shot the old man, and threw him into a burning building to perish in the flames.

This single episode of the Second Seminole War, which raged from 1835 to 1842, reflects the central role of Afro-Americans in the movement to resist

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removal. Although historians have produced many works on the Second Seminole War, their analyses have either ignored Seminole Black participation or focused on the Seminole Blacks' fear of enslavement as the sole dimension of their response.² Clearly the threat of bondage stimulated Seminole Black resistance; however, their response must be examined in relation to the cultural components of the community which shaped their resistance. An investigation of Seminole Black social structure reveals that three major organizing features—religion, communalism and kinship—defined the Seminole Black value system and influenced their conduct during the war.³ An understanding of the Seminole Black world view indicates that their opposition developed out of the militant determination to protect and perpetuate the community as well as their right of self-determination. Seminole Black communities represented, both to Seminole Blacks and to Afro-Americans living within American society, a successful resistance to the domination of white culture.

An understanding of Seminole Black motivations during the Second Seminole War requires: first, an investigation of the migration of Seminole, Indians and Blacks to Florida and of the Seminole institution of slavery; second, a reconstruction of the characteristics and practices of Seminole Black communities; third, a probe into Seminole Black relationships with Indians, whites and non-Seminole Blacks; and, finally, an analysis of Seminole Black participation in the war.

The first migration to Florida of the bands of American Indians who would later join with fugitive slaves to form the Seminole nation began in the early eighteenth century. The territory of Northern Florida had served as a battlefield for the war between the Spanish and British, and by 1704, British campaigns succeeded in the final destruction of the majority of the native inhabitants of Northern Florida, leaving an unpopulated territory.⁴ The Spanish offered these lands to other Indian groups in an effort to create a buffer between themselves and the British. Between 1715 and 1814, various factions of the Creek nation journeyed south to Florida, joining with the remnants of indigenous Floridian Indians to re-establish villages and form the Seminole nation.⁵ Significantly, the Creek word "Seminole" means "wild," "outlaw," or "runaway."⁶

Many scholars have assumed that already established Seminole Indian communities took in runaway slaves and allowed them to organize their own black villages within Seminole territory. Black migration, however, began with and even predated the migration of the majority of Seminole Indian groups. Throughout the colonial period, the Spanish, promising freedom and protection to fugitive slaves from British colonies, had succeeded in enticing Afro-Americans to migrate to Florida. As early as 1699, the Spanish King issued a royal edict declaring that all Afro-American runaways from English colonies entering Florida who converted to Catholicism would be granted asylum.⁷ The Spaniards repeatedly extended this offer, and by 1738

the Spanish governor was granting fugitive slaves land at the head of Mosa Creek where they established villages and farms. In return, the former bondsmen agreed that when needed they would fight with Spain against the English.

From the eighteen and into the nineteenth centuries, runaway slaves sought refuge in Seminole Florida. They organized independent communities which often developed close ties with particular bands of Seminole Indians.⁸ In addition to those Afro-American communities, the black population of Seminole territory also included slaves belonging to Seminole Indians. Seminoles had initially acquired these slaves either through purchase from Euramericans or as compensation from Great Britain for their allegiance during the Revolutionary War.⁹

But Seminole conceptions of slavery differed greatly from the Euramerican institution of slavery.¹⁰ In the 1770's, William Bartram, a naturalist traveling through the South, observed the characteristics of Seminole slavery involving Indian prisoners of war, who the Seminoles classified as slaves.¹¹ Although these captives would be forever distinguished as slaves, their masters permitted them much freedom and encouraged their slaves to marry free members of the tribe. The Seminole considered the children of these unions free and treated them as equals. This limited form of slavery reflected an older institution practiced by Creek bands before the intrusion of Euramericans, defining the status of Afro-American bondsmen who lived among Seminole Indian bands.

The accounts of travelers and observers reveal that the treatment of Afro-American slaves within Seminole Indian society resembled the conditions of servitude imposed upon Indian captives. Apparently, Seminole masters allowed their Afro-American slaves freedom to determine the course of their lives within the villages. Slave families lived as the other villagers in their own dwellings.¹² Some slaves were even granted individual plots to till, with any excess corn or vegetables given to their masters.¹³ The Afro-Americans' knowledge of agriculture apparently benefitted their Indian masters, for Euramerican travelers in Florida commented that villages with Afro-American slaves had "better farms."¹⁴ The Seminole agent Gad Humphreys, however, noted that the labor required from Seminole Black slaves was minimal, for "... they only work when it suits their inclination."¹⁵

Seminole Indian masters also permitted intermarriage between Afro-American bondspersons and the free Indian population, and instances of such unions occurred frequently even among the upper hierarchy of Seminole Indian bands.¹⁶ For example, Eneha Micco (Bowlegs), who was the son of high ranking chief Seacoffee, purchased a black female slave named Beck from the British and her first child, Polly, became his wife. Micanopy, Seacoffee's grandnephew and hereditary "top chief" of the Seminole nation during the Second Seminole War, married a woman who was a mixture of black and Indian. Vacapechapa (Mulatto King or Cow Driver), the "second

chief" of the Seminole Village Choconika, was half Afro-American and half Seminole Indian, and may have come from the union of a black slave and a free Indian.¹⁷ The offspring of Afro-American slaves had the opportunity to enter the hierarchy of the Seminole villages.

Although observers indicated that Afro-American slaves saw Indians as kind masters who placed few restrictions on them, nevertheless distinctions existed between slaves and their masters. Seminole Black slaves could be bought, sold, or bequeathed within the Seminole Indian community; however, the transactions traditionally occurred between members of the same family. For example, Seacoffee willed an Afro-American female slave named Fai to one of his female relatives. Later his son Eneha Micco purchased Fai's child Flora, and he subsequently bequeathed Flora and her family to his daughter.¹⁸ Although Seminole Black slaves held a specific status which permitted Indian masters to buy or sell them, families were rarely broken up, and individuals were usually passed between family members living in the same vicinity. Euramerican observers testified that Seminole Indian masters would rarely sell Afro-American slaves to whites, especially if the slave expressed an unwillingness to be sold.¹⁹ There is, however, some evidence that slaves occupied an abject position and were, on occasion, subjected to harsh treatment. The nephew of the famous subchief Oeol, for example, recounted that upon the death of his mother, "a little negress was decapitated and placed beside her mistress as an attendant."²⁰

But the Afro-Americans who resided as slaves in Seminole Indian villages accounted for only a small percentage of the black population in Seminole Florida. The majority of the Seminole Black population lived in autonomous communities which determined their own leadership, economy and social practices and also received a constant influx of fugitive slaves from Euramerican plantations.²¹ Many such towns were situated in areas allocated by the "Payne's negro settlements."²² But, since runaways composed much of the Seminole Black town's population, more villages probably existed whose inhabitants would have avoided enumeration by the United States government. Furthermore, there is evidence that some of these communities had existed for over one hundred years, for many Seminole Blacks had been born and raised in these areas, some having had little or no contact with the outside world. Dr. William Hayne Simmons, a traveler who explored various areas of Florida, remarked that he had ". . . made a pedestrian excursion to the Alachua Savanna, guided by two Indian negroes . . . [who were most likely from King Heijah's town]. . . . These people, I was told, had never been far from their native settlement, and appeared as shy and ignorant as savages."²³ The existence of individuals growing to maturity in such isolation indicates the persistence of Seminole Black settlements as well as their detachment and independence from Euramerican society.

By the 1820's, observers estimated the Seminole Black population to be from 300 to 600 men, women and children.²⁴ Visitors to Seminole Black

villages during the 1820's testified that the Seminole Black lifestyles resembled that of their American Indian counterparts.²⁵ Many of the Seminole Black dwellings were similar to Indian structures, and the Seminole Blacks also adopted the Seminole Indian style of dress. During the war, Afro-Indian males were seen wearing turbans, the traditional headdress of Seminole Indian males.²⁶ Observers noted that, like Seminole Indian men, Seminole Black men possessed firearms which they used in hunting to provide food for their families.

Although hunting comprised a part of the Seminole Black subsistence, those communities were primarily centered and dependent upon agriculture. Both men and women labored in the fields. The villages practiced a communal style of cultivation, with everyone participated in planting, tilling and harvesting a common field.²⁷ The welfare of the community depended upon successful harvests; towns forced to move in order to protect their residents from slave raids by the Americans and the Northern Creeks were unable to grow crops, inducing starvation in these villages.²⁸

The Seminole Black mode of and dependency on agriculture indicates that a critical distinction existed between Blacks and Indians, and further suggests that the two groups maintained distinctly different world views. Seminole Black males, living either in independent communities or residing in Indian villages, took part in all aspects of agricultural production. Their Indian counterparts considered hunting their major duty and relegated agricultural tasks to Afro-Americans, women and children. In the 1820's an Indian agent observed a Seminole Indian man who worked his field himself and noted that his fellow male villagers laughed at him, remarking that he "works like a negro" and exclaiming, "Are we reduced to this degraded state?"²⁹

The collective mode of agriculture practiced by Seminole Blacks implies that they maintained distinctive concepts of ownership and labor which were integral parts of their social consciousness. Seminole Blacks perceived land as belonging to all members of the community, not as property that could be privately held by individual parties. Each member of the town was responsible for laboring in the communal field from which villagers would obtain provisions according to their needs. They shared land and labor, indicating the critical importance of collective cooperation within the Afro-Indian society and the willingness to subordinate individual wants to collective needs. They probably inherited their communally-oriented economy from African societies, but it also could have evolved as a mode of self-preservation since individual farms and a fragmented community would have been more vulnerable to attack by Euramericans. The fact that Seminole Blacks came from societies which stressed the importance of communal unity combined with the necessity of strong communal ties to counter threats from Euramerican culture mutually reinforced the Seminole Black value of collective solidarity and protection.

Religion, another collective activity central to the Seminole Black community, held a predominant place in society and, like slave religion on Euramerican plantations, combined elements of African religion and Christianity to produce a distinctive belief system. The earliest members of Seminole Black society were exposed to Christianity upon receiving their freedom from the Spanish, for the runaways had to be baptized into the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Spanish government assigned "a chaplin" to areas in which ex-slaves settled.³⁰ In 1822, a traveler to a Seminole Black village mentions that the building in which the Seminole Blacks offered him lodging was "a new and excellent house, which the Negroes had built to dance in on Christmas."³¹ This Euramerican outsider could have misinterpreted the purpose of the house; however, although Seminole Blacks were acquainted with Christianity, they celebrated holidays in their own distinctive manner. The celebration which took place on Christmas in the Seminole Black village resembled "the shout," a religious ritual with African roots, which included dancing and singing and was practiced by plantation slaves.³² This dance, drawing community members together in a collective celebration, functioned to sustain and reaffirm communal solidarity.

Recollections of Seminole Blacks removed to the West about religious rituals practiced in Florida provide another perspective about their religious practices.³³ Seminole Blacks, they recounted, held meetings in public structures, and members participated emotionally in services. Their churches contained "amen corners" for the most vociferous of the religious adherents. They followed the "call and response" exchange between preacher and congregation, a pattern of worship found among Afro-Americans on the plantation and common to indigenous African religion.³⁴

The process of becoming a church member exhibited influences from African, Christian, and American Indian religions. To become a member of the church, the individual was required to publicly confess his sins and ask the congregation to pray for him.³⁵ The prospective member was instructed to leave the church and pray over a long period which would end only after a vision indicating that he or she had fully accepted God. Then the candidate returned to church, related the contents of his vision, and if the experience was judged to be suitable, the individual was granted church membership. If the candidate's experience appeared lacking in some form, the individual continued to pray and wait for the distinguishing vision. This vision quest-conversion experience not only resembled American Indian religions and some Christian sects, but also Afro-American bondsmen on the plantation and may have been a derivation of initiation rites within African society.³⁶

Seminole Blacks also celebrated communion in a distinctive manner, combining certain features of Christianity with American Indian customs. Members of the Seminole Black community in the West recalled that tea, rather than wine, had been used in communion services in the belief that tea would "rid them of a possible evil."³⁷ Such a belief probably originated from

Seminole Black contact with the Indian custom of the Asseseheholar, or "Black Drink."³⁸ Before a major council meeting, Seminole leaders would drink an herbal tea, believing that such a tea purified the system and imparted clarity and wisdom to the drinker's mind. Black leaders, exposed to Asseseheholar when they took part in councils, most likely carried the custom into their communities.

Many other ceremonies, such as marriages and funerals, involved and depended on collective support and participation from members of Seminole Black society. The marriage ceremony entailed "jumping over," similar to "jumping the broom" practiced by Afro-American slaves on American plantations.³⁹ The entire community attended the rites, and when the wedding began, family members formed two lines, with the groom's family on one side and the bride's on the other. The fathers of the couple stood at the heads of the lines. Behind them stood the bride and groom followed by the rest of their respective families. A stick was given to the groom's father and he presented one end to the bride's father. First, the groom jumped the stick, and then the bride. After the nuptials, relatives of the bride and groom invited the community to join the wedding party in a feast. Although historians speculate that "jumping over" was devised by slaveholders but resented by slaves, the independent practice of "jumping over" by Seminole Blacks suggests that Afro-Americans accepted the ceremony and had either internalized or created the ritual.⁴⁰

Funerals also exhibited many similarities to Afro-American slave and African practices.⁴¹ When a death occurred, the family organized a "wake" during which relatives presented each member of the community to the deceased. After the presentations were completed, the family invited the guests to keep vigil before the funeral indicating that until internment the dead remained physically and spiritually a part of the community. The family provided food and the guests brought beverages and stayed through the night, eating, drinking, singing and praying together. The next day the deceased was buried in an emotional funeral ceremony.

Even though Seminole Blacks maintained a belief system flexible enough to combine elements from several religions, they still conserved their own distinctive religious consciousness. Their belief system was not subsumed under either Indian or Euramerican religions, and Seminole Blacks rejected perspectives from other religions which were not harmonious with their own beliefs. For example, Seminole Indians strongly believed that if a woman bore twins, one must be destroyed for one would be evil and the other good. However, one Seminole Black woman who gave birth to twins testified that she steadfastly refused to follow the Indians' suggestion that one of the babies be killed.⁴² Seminole Blacks maintained distinctive beliefs with a strong Afro-American identity, infusing Indian rituals with African and plantation slave practices.

Seminole Black rituals and patterns of worship reveal a structured belief

system which permeated most aspects of Afro-Indian life. Seminole Blacks believed in the existence of a supreme being who was present and active in the affairs of everyday life. This spirit communicated with man on the material plan through visions, an indication that Seminole Blacks perceived sacred forces to be active within the secular realm. Religious traditions also exhibited the intense value of kinship within their society, in that many rituals involved the whole family, each member taking an active role in the ceremony. Such ties were not only strengthened but also protected through these practices. Furthermore, many important passages in life—becoming a church member, marriage and death—involved not only the family but also the whole community. An individual's link to the greater whole was repeatedly reaffirmed in these rituals, illuminating the central value of collective cooperation and cohesiveness which in turn served to protect and perpetuate the existence of independent Seminole Black communities.

Leadership within these communities embodied values central to an Afro-Indian consciousness, and flowed from as well as extended to the communal whole. Individuals did not assume positions of power on the basis of wealth or property but by virtue of participation in promoting and protecting collective solidarity. Seminole Black villages do not appear to have had single leaders, but rather groups acting collectively in positions of authority.⁴³ A military official, for example, noted that the town of Pelahlikaha had three leaders, “. . . three principle men . . . with the distinguished names of July, August and Abram.”⁴⁴ War records list many Seminole Black leaders, some originating from the same villages and sharing the command of Seminole forces during the war.⁴⁵ Positions of leadership were occupied only by males, and United States Army prisoner records indicate that older men often occupied the positions of most authority.⁴⁶ Some Seminole Blacks demonstrated a special link with the spiritual and assumed leadership owing to the power derived from such a bond. One of the most visible Seminole Black leaders during the War, Abram, was considered a prophet. Seminoles, both Black and Indian, respected his alleged ability to foretell the future.⁴⁷

Seminole Blacks' distinctive consciousness shaped relations with various racial groups, permitting them to establish especially close ties with Seminole Indians residing nearby. Many Americans, both residents of Florida and government officials, contended that these Afro-Americans were also slaves to Seminole Indians. Furthermore, by the 1820's, Seminole Indians in their negotiations with the United States government referred to Afro-Americans who lived in independent villages as well as the Black bondsmen of Indian camps as slaves. Yet substantial evidence indicates that Black communities enjoyed a degree of autonomy, for they selected their own leadership and pursued their own communal practices. However, in some cases Seminole Indians interfered in the affairs of independent Black villages by demanding a tribute of produce.⁴⁸ In some Seminole Black villages, the population simply turned over excess crops, while in other instances the

he tries again, this time with success, producing a perfect man—a red man. Then the Great Spirit offers each man a box which holds the tools which that race will use to survive. Since he produced the white man first, the Great Spirit allows the white man first choice and he selects a box containing pens and paper. Although the Black man should have second choice, the Great Spirit disdainfully passes the two remaining boxes to his favorite, the red man. The red man selects the box of bows and arrows. The black man is left with a box which “was full of hoes and axes—plainly showing that the black man was made to labor for both the white and red man.”⁵² The myth goes on to state that since racial hierarchy is a divine mandate, it is inappropriate for individuals of one race to labor with the tools of another race.

This myth reflects values in a society which is in the process of redefining communal understandings as it comes into contact with new and vastly different cultures. On one level, the myth defends Indian autonomy through the internalization of select Euramerican concepts by the Seminole Indian society as it struggled to resist the imposition of white stereotypes of Indian inferiority. On another level, the myth served as an ideological justification for a level of economic exploitation of Afro-Americans by Indians. However, this was clearly not economic exploitation in the Euramerican sense. The produce that Seminole Indians derived from their black slaves was for subsistence and not for trade in a profit-oriented economy. Furthermore, the exploitation of Afro-Americans who tilled communal Indian fields was similar to that of Indian women, children and elderly men. The myth actually defined the economic roles of young males, Indian and Black, within Seminole society.

A closer examination of Seminole society reveals that the restrictions placed on Afro-Americans were limited to production. Rather than socially excluding Afro-Americans, the myth defines economic specialization. Certainly, Seminole Indians observed the central importance of agriculture within autonomous Black villages and this, coupled with their knowledge that Euramericans utilized Afro-Americans as field laborers, encouraged them to associate agriculture with Afro-Americans.

It seems unlikely that a population of runaway slaves, many of whom had freely established their settlements in Florida before the arrival of the majority of the Seminole Indians, would have enslaved themselves to these Indians. As noted earlier, Afro-American “slaves” living in Seminole Indian communities, could be bequeathed or sold, had been acquired as gifts, through purchase or as prisoners of war. Runaway plantation slaves who formed the free Seminole Black communities did not join Seminole societies in any of these manners, nor is there any evidence to indicate that they were bought, sold or bequeathed.

Nevertheless, an interdependency clearly existed between the Black and Indian communities, which the Seminole Indians defined as slavery accord-

ing to their flexible definition of the institution. The agricultural produce yielded by Seminole Black communities must have benefitted their Indian masters who were more dependent on hunting than on farming. In exchange, the Seminole Blacks living in independent villages established alliances through kinship and military ties which protected their communities. In part, the payment in crops by Seminole Blacks functioned as an exchange for cooperation in assuring protection of Seminole Black villages by their Indian counterparts. Seminole leaders most likely appreciated the Euramerican notion that Afro-Americans were property, and labeled their black counterparts as slaves in an effort to deal more effectively with the United States government.

In many ways the association between Seminole Indians and Seminole Blacks resembled that of allied, equal bands more than it did a master/servant relationship. Intermarriage and cultural exchange often occurred. Most Seminole Blacks spoke Muskogee fluently, and frequently Spanish and English as well.⁵³ This led Seminole Indian leaders to select Seminole Blacks—such as Abram, John Cavallo and Cudjoe—to serve as interpreters for the nation.⁵⁴ Seminole Black leaders participated as subchiefs in Seminole council meetings, and during the Second Seminole War, some chiefs appointed Seminole Blacks to be their “sense carriers” (ambassadors) in their negotiations with the United States.⁵⁵ The position of “sense carrier” was often given to a subchief who was a direct descendent from the Seacoffee family, considered the royal family within the Seminole nation, indicating the Seminole Indian chiefs accepted Seminole Blacks as legitimate subchiefs of allied bands. Therefore, Seminole Blacks occupied a status which allowed them the same privileges extended to the Indian members of the Seminole nation.

Given the historical experiences of the Seminole Indians—an alliance of various groups who had abandoned the Creek confederacy as it succumbed to Euramerican domination—it seems probable that Afro-Americans, also fleeing Euramerican repression, would be readily incorporated into the Seminole nation. The affiliation, however, was only in part based on military necessities. Clearly the two groups shared basic understandings and needs which provided a foundation for their alliance. Although the nature of Seminole Black and Seminole Indian societies differed in many ways, both societies maintained flexible cultural systems so that exchanges and intermarriages tied the two communities closely together. They shared a communally-oriented culture and a clear opposition to Euramerican domination. Seminole Blacks considered themselves equal members of the Seminole nation. As Abram stated during the war: “Are the Seminoles conquered by the Miccosucos [Mikasuki, a rival faction]—I am not, for one.”⁵⁶

The acquisition of Florida by the United States in 1821, created new pressures, for an increasing number of American citizens entered the territory and established large plantations. Seminole Blacks formed close ties with

plantation slave communities, and both blacks and Indians frequently visited the slave quarters on plantations.⁵⁷ Seminole Blacks intermarried with plantation slaves, who thus became familiar with the Afro-Indian lifestyle and may have assimilated some practices from Seminole society.⁵⁸ For example, the "Green Corn Dance," a popular celebration on the plantations, may have been taken from the traditional Seminole purification dance of the same name.⁵⁹

Since escape to Seminole territory was perceived as equivalent to freedom, the Seminole Black population received a constant infiltration of runaway slaves from plantations.⁶⁰ Once fugitive slaves arrived in Seminole Black camps, the community did everything possible to protect them from being sent back to their masters. An Indian agent reported in 1826 that he "had been at several negro villages for the purpose of recovering runaways . . . but could not find any runaways, the Indian Negroes are so artful, that it is impossible to gain any information relating to such property from them."⁶¹ The willingness of Seminole Blacks to absorb fugitive slaves into their communities and protect them from recapture reveals the unity between the two groups as well as the importance Seminole Blacks attached to communal solidarity.

Past experiences in bondage and frequent raids by Americans on the Seminole Black population forced them to regard United States citizens with distrust. Attacks on Seminole Black villages had driven the communities to flee from one refuge to another, often not leaving enough time to plant and harvest crops. The result was poverty, starvation, and bitter resentment.⁶² Although Seminole Blacks usually treated Euramerican travelers hospitably, they nevertheless told these visitors that they believed the United States government and its citizens planned to destroy their communities and enslave them under the harshest conditions.⁶³

Seminole Blacks maintained a consciousness of independence, and their construction of autonomous communities and establishment of a reciprocal alliance with a nation of free people served as an assertion of that consciousness. Seminole Blacks behaved in a confident and self-assured manner in their encounters with United States citizens. Euramericans often responded with shock and anger:

They had none of the servility of our Northern Blacks but were constantly offering their dirty paws with as much hauteur and nonchalance, as if they were conferring a vast deal of honour, of which we should be proud.⁶⁴

Seminole Blacks must have perceived the presence of Euramericans in Florida as a threat to their communities, yet they responded in a direct and independent manner. On the plantations of the antebellum South, from which many Seminole Blacks had originally come, offering one's hand to

a white man was more than dangerous, it was unthinkable. Seminole Blacks apparently reject such restrictions and, with a single gesture, demanded to be treated fairly and taken seriously by Euramericans. They expressed selfconsciousness as members of independent communities, an assertion born out through resistance against Euramerican intrusions during the Second Seminole War.

The factors which precipitated the Second Seminole War extend back to the period from 1810 to 1819, during which Seminole Blacks allied with Seminole Indians, Englishmen and Spaniards in efforts to repulse United States aggressions into portions of Florida occupied by European powers.⁶⁵ The hostilities in Florida from 1817 to 1818 are known as the First Seminole War. During this time, United States military forces conducted raids on Seminole Black and Indian communities in an effort to capture runaways, destroy havens for fugitive slaves, and break up Seminole support for the European forces. Under the command of Andrew Jackson, American forces roamed the countryside, ravaging Seminole villages, expelling the British and ultimately forcing the Spanish to surrender in 1819. As a result, in 1821, Florida officially became part of the United States.

Upon acquiring Florida, the United States government began efforts to open Indian lands for American settlement. In 1823, representatives of the Seminole nation signed the Treaty of Fort Moultrie, agreeing to relocate on reservations established by the American government in central Florida.⁶⁶ Seminole Indian leaders also agreed to return runaway slaves who had entered their territory to their rightful owners, while the United States government promised protection from Euramerican intrusion on Seminole lands.

As the Seminole nation attempted to comply with the terms of the treaty, they quickly realized that the United States government had little intention of abiding by its promises. American raids on Seminole Black communities continued, and the government remained unresponsive to Seminole Indian claims, charging that the Seminole nation harbored fugitive slaves.⁶⁷ Seminole Indian leaders denied this, accusing Americans of stealing a large number of slaves from the Indians.⁶⁸ Indian efforts to recover their slaves were further complicated by the government's requirement that the Indians file lawsuits in Florida courts in order to regain slaves seized by whites. However, Florida law ordered Seminole Indians to surrender immediately any slave claimed by Americans without requiring whites to give evidence of legal ownership.⁶⁹

As Seminole Indians and Blacks began to transplant their towns to the lands allocated by the American government, they found that those lands consisted mostly of swamps. The Seminole nation protested that the reserved lands were too small and poor in quality, and requested other lands in Florida which would provide better living conditions.⁷⁰ As early as 1824 the government responded with an offer to remove the Seminole to the West, a sugges-

tion violently opposed by Seminole leaders. The Seminole chiefs maintained that the Spanish had illegally sold Seminole lands to the United States and that the property rightfully belonged to the Seminole.⁷¹ Furthermore, the Treaty of Fort Moultrie guaranteed the Seminole homes in Florida for twenty years.

To make the American offer of removal worse, United States officials proposed that once in the West the Seminole be placed under the Creek confederacy. The Seminoles found this threatening and offensive, for they considered their nation independent from the Creek nation, and they declared their determination to remain autonomous.⁷² Moreover, the Creeks continually raided Seminole villages, capturing and enslaving Seminole Blacks. The proposed removal of Seminole Blacks into the center of Creek territory threatened the existence of these independent Afro-American communities.⁷³

On May 28, 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, requiring all Indian nations residing in the southeastern United States to relocate in territory west of the Mississippi where they would be permitted to establish, without interference, their own communities and governments.⁷⁴ Pressure for removal escalated, finally forcing Seminole Indian leaders to agree to send a delegation to examine the western lands offered by the United States.⁷⁵ On May 9, 1832, several Seminole Indian chiefs signed the Treaty of Payne's Landing, apparently under the impression that the agreement allowed a Seminole delegation to visit Oklahoma, inspect the proffered lands, and report their impressions to the council. After hearing the delegates' assessment of the lands, the council members representing the various bands within the Seminole nation would then decide on the merits of migration. American officials, on the other hand, believed that the Treaty of Payne's Landing guaranteed Seminole emigration.

In the early months of 1833, selected Seminole leaders, including the black leader Abram acting as their interpreter, visited Oklahoma. After the Seminole delegation had seen the lands, the agent John Phagan submitted an additional treaty for them to sign. This treaty stated that the Seminole leaders approved the lands and affirmed that the Seminole nation would emigrate. Initially, the delegates refused to sign, explaining that they alone could not decide on emigration for the whole nation.⁷⁶ Finally, Phagan threatened that he would not return the party to Florida until the representatives approved the agreement, forcing the leaders to capitulate and sign the treaty.

When the delegates returned to Florida and presented their assessment of the territory offered by the United States, the council voted against migration.⁷⁷ There had obviously been a breakdown of communication between the Indian leaders and the government officials as to the purpose of the western visit. The government blamed the misunderstanding on the interpreter Abram, arguing that he had knowingly deceived both the chiefs and

the government in an effort to collect a bribe of two hundred dollars from American representatives.⁷⁸

The charge that Abram betrayed both the Seminole, with whom he had lived for many years, and the Americans, whom he greatly distrusted, seems unlikely for several reasons. The "bribe" that the government offered Abram appears in the Treaty of Payne's Landing; it promised Abram and another Black interpreter, Cudjoe, two hundred dollars each upon removal.⁷⁹ The treaty specified that this was offered as compensation for improvements they had made on their property. Since the money could only be obtained upon removal, and Abram knew through his close association with Seminole Indians that migration was unlikely, this hardly seems to qualify as a bribe. Furthermore, an American interpreter participated in the translation of the conditions of the treaty to the Seminole leaders. If Abram purposely misinterpreted its terms to deceive the Americans, the United States interpreter would have been aware of it. Finally, Abram, as a Seminole Black, maintained a close affiliation with the Seminole Indians, especially with the hereditary chief Micanopy.⁸⁰ Given Abram's relationship with the Seminole, and his active leadership later in resistance to removal, it appears improbable that he would purposely have betrayed the nation. However, the ambiguous wording of the treaty and the actions of Phagan, coupled with the probability that Abram was illiterate and unable to read the treaty himself, suggests that the misunderstanding could have arisen out of deception by the government agents.⁸¹

The Second Seminole War grew out of the conflict over the Treaty of Payne's Landing; tensions increased as the Seminole steadfastly refused to emigrate, and as the United States government applied increasing pressure for relocation. The fact that the treaty contained no stipulations protecting Seminole Blacks, or for stopping the continued raids on their population, reinforced their fears that the government intended to destroy their society and enslave community members. Compliance with removal exposed them to being sold individually, breaking communal and family ties. Given the critical importance of kinship and community, they must have perceived that removal threatened not only lives, but also the values central to the Seminole Black world.

The issue was forced by the decay of Indian-white relations in Florida. Plantation owners had complained of raids on their stock and crops by Seminole Blacks and Indians. After the disagreement over the treaty, these raids became more frequent and violent.⁸² When, in April of 1834, the United States Congress passed a bill ordering the Seminole to be removed from Florida lands by 1837, the violence escalated further. By 1835 military officers, realizing that the Seminole were determined to resist, advocated the use of force to gain compliance. General D.L. Clinch appealed to Washington for "a stronger force than mere words," warning that "the whole frontier may be laid to waste by a combination of Indians, Indian Negroes and the Negroes

on the plantations.”⁸³ The government sent in more troops and on December 28, 1835, as Major Francis L. Dade marched with reinforcements to Fort King in the midst of Seminole territory, Indians and blacks ambushed the detachment, leaving only one survivor.⁸⁴

The military responded quickly to Dade’s “massacre,” initiating a formal campaign against the Seminole nation. This assault unified Seminole Indians and Blacks into inter-racial fighting forces.⁸⁵ Often Seminole Blacks served as leaders for detachments composed either partially or entirely of Seminole Indian warriors. Military officials reported that Seminole Blacks appeared to resist removal more vehemently than the Indians. If a faction of Indians decided to surrender, their Seminole Black allies were likely to leave that band to join another which continued to fight.⁸⁶ Seminole Blacks understood that removal posed a greater threat to their communities than to those of their Indian allies.

The support Seminole Blacks received from outside groups of Afro-Americans proved valuable to them as well as to the Seminole cause as a whole. Not only did free Blacks in St. Augustine aid the Seminole Black forces with secret contributions of gunpowder, but support also came from Afro-Americans enslaved on plantations.⁸⁷ Abram, accompanied by the Seminole chief Yaha Hago, successfully recruited at slave quarters for Seminole Black forces.⁸⁸ Throughout the war large numbers of plantation slaves who fled to or were captured by Seminole Blacks and Indians, joined the resistance effort. Those slaves who resisted joining the fight, like the old man on the Gruger and DePeyster plantation, received severe retribution for their dissident behavior.⁸⁹ Any assertion of individual will symbolically endangered the cause, and such cases illuminate Seminole Black intolerance of personal deviance from communal direction.

The support received from all sectors of the Floridian Afro-American community indicates that a common factor unified the resistance movement. Seminole Blacks, Floridian plantation slaves, and free blacks living in the cities shared both an African heritage and the repression of Euramerican society. As a result, these various Afro-American peoples maintained similar world views and shared certain cultural commitments. The one common element across all sectors of antebellum Florida’s Afro-American communities was their resistance to the domination of Euramerican society. Plantation slaves rebelled in various ways—including running away—and worked slowly to maintain their own cultural systems.⁹⁰ Free blacks, who were fewer in number and subjected to harsh Southern legal codes, also resisted white domination through their construction of separate social institutions. Although the character of their resistance differed, both Afro-Americans outside of the Seminole Black society, as well as Afro-Indians, united together in a struggle to resist the domination of Euramerican society. Floridian blacks perceived Seminole Black villages as havens of freedom where elements of Afro-American culture could flourish and they could control their

own lives. The threatened destruction of these villages drew support from these diverse Afro-American communities for it signified the closure of a possibility for escape from and resistance to Euramerican domination.

American military officers in the Second Seminole War viewed the self-assertion of Seminole Black communities and the sanctuaries they provided for runaway slaves as threats to the entire Southern plantation system. Although private citizens of Florida urged the government to remove only Seminole Indians and offer up their Seminole Black counterparts for sale, government officials recognized that the Indians would not leave Florida without the blacks members of the nation.⁹¹ Furthermore, many of the higher ranking officers feared that the spirit of resistance among Seminole Blacks could extend to Southern plantations, stimulating widespread slave revolts. This induced them to emphasize the importance of removing Seminole Blacks from the South.⁹² Some government officials believed that Seminole Blacks posed such a hazard to Southern plantations that they would be dangerous even in the West, and should instead be sent to American colonies in Africa.⁹³ Many American military officers argued that the Seminole Black communities and their leaders exercised such great influence that they essentially controlled and determined the actions of their Indian counterparts.⁹⁴ General Thomas Jessup, the commander of the troops in Florida, claimed that the Second Seminole War was not an Indian war but rather "a negro war" and that only after the defeat of Blacks would the removal of the Seminole Indians be possible.⁹⁵

An examination of Seminole Black leadership during the Second Seminole War offers insights into Seminole Black perceptions of the conflict. Even though large numbers of Seminole Blacks fought in the war, those who held positions of leadership alone remain historically accessible. Euramerican observers frequently mentioned the activities of the Seminole Black leader and interpreter Abram, who dealt with American spokesmen in major negotiations. An investigation into Abram's background, his actions during the war and his conceptions of the conflict contribute to a larger understanding of Seminole Black communities and their perception of the Second Seminole War.

Abram, born about 1790, spent his early years in slavery, reportedly belonging to a "Dr. Sierra" of Pensacola.⁹⁶ Evidently, around 1814, Abram, enticed by promises made by the British, fled to fight with them against the Americans.⁹⁷ At some point, Abram joined the Seminole Indians during the First Seminole War in the Battle of Suwannee. For his valor during the war the Seminole rewarded Abram with the warrior name "Souanaffe Tustenukke," a title which he used in his communications with the Indians during the Second Seminole War.⁹⁸ This indicates that Abram, although living in an independent Seminole black village, was culturally integrated into Seminole Indian practices and accepted as a fellow warrior.⁹⁹

By 1826, Abram resided at Pelahlikaha, a Seminole Black village closely allied with Micanopy. He occupied a status equivalent to that of a subchief within the Seminole nation. He participated in Seminole council decisions and acted as an ambassador as well as interpreter for the Seminole Indian chiefs.¹⁰⁰ Abram held a critical position of leadership within his village, and in the Seminole council meetings he represented black interests. As a leader on the battlefield, Abram commanded troops composed of both Indian and Black warriors.

Considered a prophet by the Seminoles, Abram utilized his spiritual power to further the Seminole cause, and his reputation enhanced his respect within the nation.¹⁰¹ American prisoners of war reported that Abram predicted to his fellow warriors that American General Wiley Thompson would be killed by Seminole Indians while taking a walk near his house. This indeed happened. Although Abram may have known of Seminole intentions in this case, he had reportedly demonstrated his prophetic powers in other unspecified instances. His declaration that God was on the side of the Seminole revealed his belief that a spiritual force operating within the material world would produce an outcome favorable to the Seminole.

Abram's forces faced American troops which had been ordered to ravage the countryside until the Seminole nation surrendered and agreed to emigrate to the assigned western lands. After conventional warfare proved ineffective, the American military concentrated on driving the Seminole from swamp to swamp, ruining crops and destroying homes and personal property.¹⁰² Since the Seminole Black community depended on agriculture, the constant harassment not only upset the economy but also threatened collective values by interrupting communal activities. Seminole Black resistance had begun in an effort to protect their own communities, but the destruction of both black and Indian villages forced the Seminole to band together as they retreated across Florida. Abram came to realize that the Americans intended to destroy the entire Seminole nation. He recalled after the war that during one battle he had attempted to negotiate a truce but the Americans answered back, "Go to hell, G—— D——— you! We ask no odds of you."¹⁰³

By the end of January of 1837, General Jessup's soldiers occupied positions only a few miles from the main Seminole stronghold.¹⁰⁴ Jessup offered to make peace on the condition that the Seminole nation comply with the treaty. Abram visited the general on January 31. The general apparently convinced Abram that a satisfactory agreement was possible, for this group of Seminole agreed to cease hostilities until February 18 when a conference would be held at Fort Dade. After almost three weeks of deliberations, on March 6, 1837, four Seminole Indian subchiefs and the Seminole Black leader John Cavallo (Cawyya) signed the Treaty of Fort Dade.¹⁰⁵ Article Five of this treaty for the first time offered assurances to Seminole Blacks, guaranteeing that Seminole Blacks, whom the government recognized as property of the Indians, would be permitted to migrate west.¹⁰⁶

In September of 1837, Abram, probably under instructions from General Jessup, sent a communication to the independent Seminole Indian leader Coe Hajo, urging him to surrender and emigrate.¹⁰⁷ Although General Jessup influenced Abram, the message permits some insight into Abram's perceptions of the war. Abram, reflecting on his trip to Oklahoma, contrasted the good lands of the West with the now decimated country of Florida:

. . . one rainy evening after passing a hill we sat down together on a bee tree which we had found and felled. The country was a good one. . . . Now remember that during the late Treaty you and I sat down one day on a pine tree near this post—The country around was pine barren and we were hungry and had nothing to eat.¹⁰⁸

Abrams statements defined the deep tie between Seminole Blacks and the land, for Seminole Black existence as well as values were linked to the communal activities and depended on the land. To stay in Florida meant certain destruction, for the country was impoverished and the Americans were intent on destroying the whole nation. Removal represented an opportunity to preserve their communities in a richer country, away from the pressures of Euramerican society.

Abram, in a letter to General Jessup dated April, 1838, utilized images of the earth to express a tempered militancy and a distrust of the intentions of the Americans. Abram voiced a fear that the United States government would again come between the Seminole Black people and their land. "When we reach our new home we hope we shall be permitted to remain while the woods remain green, and the water runs."¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the ambiguous ending of his letter suggests a suspicion that the government would not deal fairly with those Seminole Blacks who had assembled for emigration: "All the Black people are contented I hope."¹¹⁰ Abram had reason to worry, for in March Jessup had separated blacks from Indians, planning to have the two groups emigrate separately.¹¹¹ Conscious of the American desire to enslave them, Seminole Blacks must have viewed this situation with concern. Given the kinship affiliations between blacks and Indians, segregated migration would result in the disruption of many families. Abram tried to express to Jessup the importance of kinship within the Seminole Black community:

We do not live for ourselves only, but for our wives and children who are as dear to us as those of any other man.¹¹²

Abram's statement not only affirms the strong Seminole Black devotion to family but also reveals the collective purpose of the resistance movement.

Jessup, recognizing the strength of kinship ties, seized Abram's family,

threatening to sell them if Abram did not agree to serve the United States as a guide and interpreter.¹¹³ Abram and his family reportedly "belonged" to Micanopy, but Jessup promised Abram "the freedom of his family if he be faithful to us; and I shall certainly hang him if he be not faithful."¹¹⁴ Jessup used this approach on other Seminole Blacks, forcing them into service on behalf of the United States government.

In addition to stressing values of kinship and communal solidarity, Abram's letter to General Jessup displayed his strong sense of cultural identity. As noted earlier, these Afro-Americans considered themselves Seminole, members of a nation which was composed of many communities of various origins. Abram referred to this amalgam as "Seminole Bretheren [sic]," indicating that he perceived the association to be united not only through intimate family ties, but also through a broader kinship system.¹¹⁵ However, Abram's letter reveals that he also considered the nation to be divided into "the red people" and the "black people." Therefore, even though members of the Seminole nation shared cultural ties, the blacks maintained an identity separate from the Indians. Afro-Indians developed and conserved their own cultural systems and did not simply assume those of Indian society.

The Seminole Black leadership did not uniformly agree with Abram's decision to surrender. Many of the active leaders, such as John Cavallo, refused to emigrate until the spring of 1838.¹¹⁶ Although John Cavallo signed the Treaty of Fort Dade, shortly afterward he fled from the fort with a large group of Seminole Blacks when they heard that the Florida legislators had passed a bill allowing private citizens to seize any Seminole Black they suspected to be a fugitive slave. Perhaps the break within Black leadership resulted from the divisions between various Seminole Indian chiefs. Abram had been closely allied with Micanopy, and although Micanopy did not favor emigration, he did encourage peace and thus many Seminole considered him an ineffective leader.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, John Cavallo had allied his people with Micanopy's nephew Coacoochee's (Wildcat) band. Coacoochee maintained an intense suspicion of whites and militantly refused to surrender to United States government demands.¹¹⁸ Although eventually forced to capitulate, the more aggressive attitude of Coacoochee may have attracted Seminole Blacks who could not bring themselves to trust General Jessup. Nevertheless, Abram's meetings with the more militant Afro-Indian leaders eventually induced the surrender of these groups of Seminole Blacks.¹¹⁹

By 1838 most of the blacks had either surrendered or been captured, and by 1841 the last party of black migrants arrived in Oklahoma bringing their population in the West to a total of about 500.¹²⁰ Evidently, Jessup did not completely keep his promise to remove all Seminole Blacks, for records show that over 900 Seminole Blacks registered for migration. The possibility exists that a large number of Seminole Blacks perished on the trip to Oklahoma, although no records indicate such losses. Most likely, those Seminole Blacks who remain unaccounted for were sold into slavery.

The foregoing examination of Seminole Black communities indicates that these societies originated out of Afro-American acts of self-assertion against repressive Euramericans. Within these societies Afro-Americans maintained their own leadership, belief systems, and modes of agriculture, all based on the central values of communalism, religion and kinship. As Euramerican aggression threatened to destroy their independent communities, Seminole Black opposition was shaped by their distinctive world view and self-identity. The study of Seminole Blacks offers an opportunity for further investigations into Afro-American cultures, as well as the relationship between Afro-Americans and Native Americans. Examinations of Seminole Black activities in and perceptions of the Second Seminole War disclose that Afro-Americans, in general, were not simply reacting to or absorbing Euramerican culture. Rather, Seminole Black participation in the war was a self-directed act of resistance against Euramerican interference. During the years 1835 to 1841, the battles fought by Seminole Blacks in an alliance with Seminole Indians were extensions of the long struggle to resist Euramerican domination, a struggle executed in multifaceted ways by all sectors of Afro-American society.

NOTES

¹From *Florida Herald*, January 13, 1836, reprinted in Motte, *Journey Into the Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1963), 281.

²Numerous works exist which examine the Second Seminole War. They include Charles H. Coe, *Red Patriots: The Story of the Seminoles* (Gainesville, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1974) reprint of 1898 edition; Arthur E. Francke, *Fort Mellon 1837-42: A Microcosm of the Second Seminole War* (Miami, Florida: Banyan Books, Inc., 1977); John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville, Florida: The University Presses of Florida, 1967); Virginia Bergman Peters, *The Florida Wars* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1979). Works which directly address the Afro-American role in the Second Seminole War are Daniel F. Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977) and Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971).

³The orientation for an investigation into Afro-Indian world views lies in the recent historiography on the slave community. Rather than accepting the notions that slave culture was a simple imitation of Euramerican culture, and that slaves did very little to resist bondage, recent social historians contend that slave culture was a mixture of African and Euramerican components and that Afro-americans resisted slavery in both passive and active forms. See John Blasingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974); Herbert Butman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); and Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁴John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 120-23, 389-99.

⁵In 1774 William Bartram interviewed an old Seminole chief, apparently from the Oconee band, who declared that his band left the northern lands because of the overpopulation of the Creek nation. William Bartram, "Travels in Georgia and Florida, 1773-1774: A Report to Dr.

John Fothergill," *Transaction of the American Philosophical Society* Vol. 33 (1943), 171; William Bartram, *Travels of William Bartram* (New York: Dover Publication, Inc., 1955) Reprint of 1791 edition, 306-7; Daniel G. Brinton, *Notes on the Floridian Peninsula: Its Literary History, Indian Tribes and Antiquities* (New York: Paladin Press, 1969) Reprint of 1958 edition, 145. Wars with Euramericans and other Indian tribes forced other bands, like the Yamasse, to migrate to Florida. Swanton, 398.

⁶Benjamin Hawkins, *A Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1798 and 1799* (American Book Company, 1938), 24; R.M. Loughridge, *English and Muskogee Dictionary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1914), 183; George McCall, *Letters from the Frontiers* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1974) Reprint of 1868 edition, 145.

⁷Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontiers* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1974), 145.

8. McCall, 160; Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Davis and Force, 1822), 308.

⁹Afro-American slaves received as rewards from the British reportedly referred to themselves as "King's Gifts." Hawkins, 63; *U.S., Congress, House, House Document 225, 25th Congress, 2nd Session*, 119. Hereafter referred to as *HD 225*.

¹⁰David Littlefield contends that the character of Seminole bondage developed out of and took on certain features from the military alliances between Seminole Indians and Blacks. He describes the relationship between Afro-Americans and Seminole Indians as being that of "comrades at arms," emerging during the 1780's when the two groups fought together against the British. Before this period, intermarriage and cultural exchanges occurred between independent Seminole Black and Indian villages. Furthermore, Seminole Indians had migrated to the Florida frontier with both Afro-American and Indian bondsmen and must have already maintained a system of slavery within their society. Littlefield, 3-13.

¹¹Bartram, 164.

¹²N.M. Cohen, *Notices of Florida and the Campaigns* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1964) Reprint of 1836 edition, 78.

¹³Morse, 309.

¹⁴Hawkins, 63.

¹⁵Quoted in Porter, 239; William Hayne Simmone, *Notices of East Florida* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1973) Reprint of 1822 edition, 50.

¹⁶Cohen, 238; *HD 225*, 119.

¹⁷Morse, 306-8; James Dorestor to E. Henry, Nov. 13, 1833, *Records of the Office of Indian Affairs: Letters Received, Letters Sent and Report Books* (National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy M234), reel 806. Hereafter referred to as *M234*.

¹⁸*HD 225*, 119-120.

¹⁹Wiley Thompson to Secretary of War, 1835. Quoted in Littlefield, 11-12; Simmons, 50.

²⁰The nephew, Oceola Nikkanoochee, was a Red Stick and a recent immigrant to Florida. Perhaps the Red Sticks maintained a harsher institution of slavery because they had more recent ties with the Creek nation, which by this time had also evolved a more rigid system of Afro-American slavery. John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress and Conclusion of the Florida War* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1964) Reprint of 1848 edition, 100; Andrew Welch, *A Narrative of the Early Days and Remembrances of Oceola Mikkanoochee* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1973) Reprint of 1841 edition, 77.

²¹Mores, 306-309.

²²Mores, 306.

²³Simmons, 47.

²⁴At this time, the Seminole Black population was in the process of rebuilding itself. In 1816, the year preceding the First Seminole War (1817-1818), the Seminole Black forces recruited by the British occupied Negro Fort and were joined by about one thousand Afro-Americans who established villages in the vicinity of the fort. The Americans soundly defeated the Seminole Blacks of Negro Fort, killing approximately two hundred and fifty and capturing fifty. The rest

of the population escaped to the backcountry and re-established their villages. Littlefield, 7; Porter, 215-20; D.L. Clinch to R. Butler, August 2, 1816, reprinted in Charles Vignoles, *Observations Upon the Floridas* (Gainesville, Florida: The University Presses of Florida, 1977) Reprint of 1823 edition, 220-205; Morse, 307-309; Simmons, 75.

²⁵Morse, 306-9; Simmons, 41-45, 76.

²⁶Charles Coe, *Red Patriots: The Story of the Seminoles* (Gainesville, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1974) Reprint of 1898 edition, 26.

²⁷Simmons, 76.

²⁸Simmons, 41.

²⁹Morse, 309.

³¹Simmons, 44.

³²Genovese, 233-34.

³³In the 1930's, anthropologist Laurence Foster conducted interviews with Seminole Blacks living in Texas, Oklahoma and Mexico. Foster's informants described many religious rituals which had been practiced in Florida. Some of these traditions had been discarded during relocation, while others still figured in the religious celebrations of the twentieth century Seminole Black communities. Laurence Foster, *Negro-Indian Relationships in the Southeast* (New York: AMS Press, 1978).

³⁴Genovese, 271.

³⁵Foster, 53-54.

³⁶Levine, 36-37.

³⁷Foster, 53-54.

³⁸Sprague, 100.

³⁹Foster's informants noted that "jumping over" was almost exclusively practiced in Florida and rarely occurred once the Seminole Blacks moved west. Foster, 57.

⁴⁰Genovese, 481.

⁴¹Foster, 54-55; Genovese, 197-98.

⁴²Simmons, 67.

⁴³HD 225, 66-69; Littlefield, 206-255.

⁴⁴McCall, 160.

⁴⁵HD 225, 66-9; Littlefield, 206-255.

⁴⁶Clearly errors exist within the records of Seminole Black prisoners who were registered upon surrender, but there is a consistent correlation between age and observed influence. HD 225, 66-69.

⁴⁷Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journey into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1963), 210-11; *Army and Navy Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 1836.

⁴⁸Simmons, 75.

⁴⁹McCall, 160.

⁵⁰Simmons, 41.

⁵¹Reprinted from the "Indian Advocate," Oct. 1847, in William G. McLoughlin, "Red Indians, Black Slavery and White Racism: America's Slave-holding Indians," *American Quarterly* Vol. 24 (October, 1974), 384-85.

⁵²Porter, 160.

⁵³Simmons, 75.

⁵⁴M.M. Cohen, *Notices of Florida and the Campaigns* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida, 1964) Reprint of 1836 edition, 239; Motte, 138; Sprague, 61-62.

⁵⁵Cohen, 239; Motte, 210-11.

⁵⁶Abram to Coe Hajo, Sept. 11, 1837, reprinted in Porter, 334.

⁵⁷Cohen, 81.

⁵⁸Porter, 240-41.

⁵⁹For a detailed description of the Green Corn Dance see: Welch, 147-153; George Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography; Florida Narratives*. Vol. 17 (Westport,

Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), 97.

⁶⁰Rawick, 83.

⁶¹Oren Marsh to T.S. McKenziey, May 17, 1826, *M235*, reel 800.

⁶²Simmons, 41.

⁶³Cohen, 45; Simmons, 41, 44.

⁶⁴Motte, 210.

⁶⁵Virginia Bergman Peters, *The Florida Wars* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1979), 17-63.

⁶⁶Sprague, 20-24.

⁶⁷Talks given by Seminole Chiefs, May 17, 1828, October 9, 1828, January 16, 1825, *M234*, reels 800, 806.

⁶⁸Talk given by Seminole Chiefs, October 9, 1828, *M234*, reel 800.

⁶⁹W. Duvall to Gad Humphreys, March 20, 1827, reprinted in Sprague, 42.

⁷⁰Talk given by Micanopy, 1824, *M234*, reel 806; talk given by the Indian chiefs, May 16, 1825, *M234*, reel 800.

⁷¹Talk given by Micanopy, 1824, *M234*, reel 806.

⁷²Talk given by Seminole Indian Chiefs, May 16, 1825, *M234*, reel 800.

⁷³Porter, 242.

⁷⁴Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 9-31.

⁷⁵McCall, 301-2.

⁷⁶Ethan Allen Hitchcock, *Fifty Years in Camp and Field* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 80.

⁷⁷Hitchcock, 80-81; McCall, 301-2.

⁷⁸Hitchcock, 79.

⁷⁹Sprague, 74.

⁸⁰Cohen, 239; Motte, 210; Sprague, 100.

⁸¹Abram signed treaties with an "X" indicating that he was most likely illiterate. However, the possibility exists that he may have been able to read but unwilling to reveal this to Euramericans.

⁸²Complaints filed by residents of Alachua County, December 30, 1825, *M234*, reel 800; Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971), 151-170.

⁸³Clarence Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States: The Territory of Florida*. Vol. 26 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1962), 210.

⁸⁴Wilcomb Washburn, ed., *The Surprising Adventures of Ramson Clark Among the Indians in Florida: Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captivities*. Vol. 54 (Washington, D.C.: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), 13-14.

⁸⁵Carter, 25:357-58.

⁸⁶Carter, 25:133.

⁸⁷Porter, 262-294.

⁸⁸Cohen, 81.

⁸⁹From *Florida Herald*, January 13, 1836, reprinted in Motte, 281; Cohen, 81; Carter, 26:323-329.

⁹⁰Early pathbreaking work on Slave resistance can be found in Herbut Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1963); Vincent Harding, *The Other American Revolution* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Publications, 1980).

⁹¹Letter from C. Harris, July 11, 1835, *M234*, reel 806.

⁹²One general, Joseph Hernandez, speculated that the Seminole nation was "under the influence of" Northern abolitionists whose goal was to destroy the Southern institution of slavery. Carter, *The Territorial Papers*, 26:210; *HD 225*, 70.

⁹³*HD 225*, 70, 121.

⁹⁴*HD 225*, 11; McCall, 301-2.

⁹⁵Porter, 238; Littlefield, 15-31.

⁹⁶Kenneth Porter, in several essays, has investigated Abram's life, concentrating on his interactions with the United States government. Although Porter's account is both useful and revealing, it does contain occasional inaccuracies. One error which appears consistently in other works that refer to Porter is Porter's claim that Abram was married to Polly, the widow of sub-chief Eneha Mathla. However, a check of Porter's sources reveals that Polly at the time of removal was married to another very active Seminole Black leader, Toney Barnett. Porter, 295-337; *HD 225*, 69.

⁹⁷Porter, 265-99.

⁹⁸Hawkins, 67.

⁹⁹Cohen, 239.

¹⁰⁰McCall, 160; Porter, 304; Cohen, 239; Motte, 210-11; Sprague, 100.

¹⁰¹*Army and Navy Chronicle*, November 3, 1836; Motte, 210-11.

¹⁰²Report from Colonel Henderson, January 28, 1837; Speech made by Florida Governor Reid, December 10, 1829, reprinted in Sprague, 174-77, 239.

¹⁰³Hitchcock, 138.

¹⁰⁴T.S. Jessup to R. Jones, February 7, 1837, reprinted in Sprague, 170-73.

¹⁰⁵*HD 225*, 52-53.

¹⁰⁶*HD 225*, 52-53.

¹⁰⁷Abram to Coe Hajo, September 11, 1837, reprinted in Porter, 333-34.

¹⁰⁸Porter, 333-34.

¹⁰⁹Abram to T.S. Jessup, April 25, 1838, reprinted in Porter, 332-33.

¹¹⁰Porter, 332-33.

¹¹¹*HD 225*, 25.

¹¹²Abram to T.S. Jessup, April 25, 1838, reprinted in Porter, 332.

¹¹³*HD 225*, 21-22.

¹¹⁴*HD 225*, 21-22.

¹¹⁵Porter, 314-16.

¹¹⁶*HD 225*, 11-13. John Cavallo occupied a position of leadership within the Seminole nation, acting as a subchief, warrior leader, and "sense bearer" for the most militant of the Seminole forces. However, most participants in the war, as well as later scholars, appear to be confused as to John Cavallo's loyalties. Most authors and contemporaries identify John Cavallo as Gopher John, McCall claiming that the name originated when John Cavallo, at the age of fourteen, duped an army officer into repeatedly purchasing the same two gophers. Once the deceived officer discovered the trick, he recognized the audacity of the young man and nicknamed him "Gopher John." Cavallo assumed an aggressive position in the Seminole forces during the war, and later, in an effort to escape Euramerican and Creek domination in the West, joined Coacoochee in leading a group of Seminole Blacks and Indians into Mexican lands. At the same time, contemporaries portray Gopher John as an individual who remained loyal to the American cause, even fighting for the Americans against the Blacks and Indians. Foster, 43-45; McCall, 164-65; Sprague, 459.

¹¹⁷McCall, 146; Sprague, 93.

¹¹⁸Hitchcock, 122.

¹¹⁹Porter, 254-56.

¹²⁰Seminole Blacks set about re-establishing their villages in Oklahoma. However, the more militant factions of the Seminole Black community immediately left Oklahoma to stake out villages in Texas and Mexico. Littlefield, 12.