

Racial and Ethnic Groups in the Gulf of Mexico Region

Native AmericansAn online supplement to
Research Report #120**History****Indian Eras**

Unfortunately, much of the scholarship about American Indian history begins with the arrival of Columbus, so relatively little is known about Native American life for the thousands of years prior to colonization (Fixco 1996). Yet, scholars commonly discuss several social and cultural changes the Native Americans were undergoing prior to the arrival of the Europeans. For example, social hierarchies, chiefdoms, extensive trade, mounds and complex religious ceremonies all emerged prior to the arrival of Europeans (Neuman 1984, Soule 1995 anderson and Gillam 2000, Perdue and Green 2001). There were approximately nine broad Indian cultural sequences that are discussed briefly in the following sections: Paleo Indian, Archaic, Poverty Point, Tchefuncte, Marksville, Troyville, Coles Creek, Plaquemine, Mississippi and Historic (Soule 1995).

Paleo-Indian

The Paleo-Indian Era refers to any time before 6000 B.C. when Indians were hunters that lived in small family groups. Indians in this era rarely stayed in one place very long and often left very little behind when they moved (Soule 1995). It is likely they hunted with short spears tipped with Clovis points that were left throughout the Southeastern United States, speaking to their historic presence. In addition to hunting, they also gathered wild plants and nuts (Perdue and Green 2001).

Meso-Indian

The Meso-Indian Era lasted from approximately 6000 B.C. to about 1200 B.C. (Soule 1995). Clothing during this era included animal skins, such as deer and bear and

tools became more refined, as did housing and food. Homes became more nomadic, with a few wooden shelters emerging. The weather became warmer during this period, causing the ice to melt and flood plains to form. Plants and animals were abundant and much of what we eat today was developed during this period. Mounds also began to appear during this period as Native Americans settled in areas with an abundant food source (Soule 1995).

Archaic Era (Poverty Point)

The Archaic Era lasted from approximately 2000 B.C. to 200 B.C. (Soule 1995). During the Archaic Era, the climate was stabilizing and spear points began changing to fit the regional cultures, the fit of the game, the raw stone materials that were available and the tastes of the tribe. Populations began to grow and rather than wandering to new places, many groups had several sites they frequented (Perdue and Green 2001). Because of the growing populations and stability, horticulture developed during this era and tribes became more sedentary – evident by the piles of fish bones found along shores, suggesting that people gathered and ate fish for long periods of time. Post molds from this era also suggest more permanent structures were built (Perdue and Green 2001). With tribes becoming more sedentary, long-distance trade also developed to help them obtain goods that were not readily available (Perdue and Green 2001). In addition to these economic changes, as tribal bands became sedentary, religious and emotional ties to place also developed.

Common clothing included breechclouts for men, skirts for women and pendants depicting animals made from stone, copper

or teeth. Cooking techniques also improved during this era as Native Americans began using cooking stones of different shapes and sizes heated in a convection earth oven to cook their food (Soule 1995).

The oldest known civilization on the entire continent of North America, Poverty Point, emerged during this era. It was a hub city that was home to several thousand people and more than 7.5 miles of man-made ridges that stood 5 to 10 feet high and were thought to be the foundations for houses (Soule 1995). Several towns made up the system linked by waterways and trade routes to Kentucky, Georgia, Arkansas, Michigan and even Canada (Soule 1995). The Poverty Point mound, which likely took millions of hours to build, is in the shape of a bird and is the largest of all the mounds from this time, measuring more than 680 feet at its widest point and likely once standing more than 100 feet tall (Soule 1995). The Poverty Point site in the far north-eastern portion of Louisiana can still be visited today.

Woodland Era

The Woodland Era began around 700 B.C. and being sedentary became the norm. There was an increasing dependence on horticulture and by 300 B.C., maize was a common crop (Perdue and Green 2001). During this era, complex death rituals also emerged, which suggests there was a social hierarchy of some kind, with chiefdoms likely emerging (Perdue and Green 2001).

Tchefuncte Period

The Tchefuncte Era lasted from approximately 400 B.C. to 200 A.D. and Native life resembled that of the Poverty Point and Woodland eras. One notable difference between

these eras is that in the Tchefuncte era more settlements began to emerge in the coastal marshes, on levees and along bayous and rivers (Soule 1995).

Marksville Period

The Marksville period lasted from approximately 200 A.D. to 400 A.D. (Soule 1995). Clothing and tools became more ornate and many cultural changes took place. For instance, religious ceremonies became more common and village farming was practiced (Soule 1995).

Troyville Period (Coles Creek, Early Caddoan)

The Troyville period lasted from 450 A.D. to 1100 A.D. (Soule 1995). The clothing, tools and houses resembled the Marksville era. Inland villages were growing and had ceremonial centers, while coastal villages typically were built on mound tops (Soule 1995). Mounds were still being constructed but were larger, more numerous and of a different shape. The mounds of this era resembled a truncated pyramid to accommodate religious temples on the top where chiefs and religious leaders were buried. Chipped stone points became smaller and the bow and arrow began replacing the spear and darts (Soule 1995). As village populations continued to grow, a more advanced social system developed that relied on a chief to maintain social order.

Plaquemine (Middle Caddoan)

This era extended from 1100 A.D. to 1450 A.D. Clothing was similar to other eras except feather head-dresses emerged for adornment (Soule 1995). Houses became dome shaped with woven mats. Villages were larger and surrounded by palisades for protection, with access to the water, and canoes were a common form of transportation. Chiefs continued to gain prominence and became the strong religious, social and political leaders of the villages. Hunting and fishing supplemented a

diet of primarily maize, and pottery techniques became more refined as elaborate designs were drawn on the surfaces and long-necked water bottles came into use (Soule 1995).

Mississippian Era (Late Caddoan)

Scholars don't agree on when the Mississippian Era began or ended. Some suggest the Mississippian era began around 800 to 1000 A.D., while others suggest the era did not begin until around 1400 A.D. and didn't end until 1700 A.D. (Soule 1995, Perdue and Green 2001). During this time, shell-tempered pottery, square houses and pyramidal mounds became more common. Most notably, stratification was common as the social order remained ranked. Due to vast population growth, maize became a staple of the Native American diet, with some societies relying on maize for up to 50 percent of their diet (Perdue and Green 2001).

Scholars suggest there are several scenarios that could have ushered in this new era of stratification such as a surplus of goods, war or some other catastrophic event that would require a strong sense of leadership and organization (Perdue and Green 2001). With a surplus of goods, trade and exchange with neighboring chiefdoms also increased, which ushered in more social change as the Native Americans living in the Southeastern United States were able to obtain goods they were unable to produce themselves.

For the most part, the clothing, tools and food of the Mississippian Era resembled that of previous eras. Houses were fortified huts with wattle and daub construction, thatched roofs and woven mats, and villages typically had a large central plaza surrounded by huts and fortified by palisades of wood or cane (Soule 1995). At one or both ends of the plaza was a large pyramid mound for the temple or the chief's house. Chiefs had a high degree of

power over their people during this time and established control by organizing projects to keep people occupied and by visually and physically setting themselves apart from commoners (Soule 1995).

In some tribes, head binding also began during this period. Infants were placed on a board, a strap was pulled very tightly around the head and the bone was pressed to flatten it. Pressure was released when the head turned black and blue and then tightened again. This process took years to accomplish and was extremely painful (Soule 1995). With time, it gave the head a flat appearance.

Often, the Mississippian Era is referred to as one of the most instrumental in terms of social change for the American Indians. Several scholars have studied communities from this era with the hope of gaining a better understanding of how Native Americans were living prior to European arrival and the ways in which colonization changed life for the American Indians. One commonly studied Mississippian community is Moundville in central Alabama (Perdue and Green 2001).

Historic Period

The Historic Period lasted from 1600 A.D. to the present (Soule 1995). Because the historic period encompasses such a vast amount of time and practices varied from tribe to tribe, it is difficult to generalize the era. Most notably, there was a decline of Native American culture marked by the arrival of Europeans who had advanced technology and an abundance of diseases. Agriculture remained a mainstay for quite some time after the European settlers arrived, along with trapping, hunting and fishing. Villages typically were small and often located along rivers and bayous. By 1700, however, the Native American population had been considerably reduced (Soule 1995).

The Native American diet was rich and varied throughout this era. Apart from fruit, Native Americans cooked all the food they consumed and drank only pure water. They incorporated a number of wild vegetables and fruits into their diet, as well. Corn was cultivated actively as were beans, squash and pumpkins. New foods, such as peaches, sweet potatoes, watermelons and cabbage, also were introduced by the Europeans (Soule 1995). Other plants were used for tool making. For instance, bass bark was used as bow strings and rope; cane was used for baskets, beds, spears and fences; oak was used for firewood, mortars and boat frames; and Spanish moss was used as head pillows, diapers and clothing (Soule 1995). Animals also were used commonly for food and tools, with essentially no part of the animal being wasted.

Clothing varied from tribe to tribe during this era. Before the European arrival, men usually wore breechcloths made of deerskin. During the winter months, a cloak and leggings were worn. Moccasins were used mostly for travel and occasionally during cold months. Women wore skirts that hung from the waist to the knees. During the winter, women wore robes and occasionally leggings. Women's moccasins came up much higher on the leg than men's (Soule 1995). Hair was particularly important among some tribes. Some wore their hair long, some in braids, and others shaved their heads on the side and front, leaving a ridge in the back that was decorated with feathers and rawhide strips (Soule 1995). If a woman was mourning, she typically cut her hair short. Gold and silver were worn, necklaces were popular and teeth often were blackened by rubbing them with tobacco and wood ash. Teeth's blackening was considered beautiful by most tribes (Soule 1995). Some tribes tattooed their bodies as decoration, and tattoos often were

awarded for brave deeds. Body and face painting also was common at social events, religious ceremonies and for war (Soule 1995). Children typically went nude until they hit puberty.

Until Native Americans began adopting the European way of life, homes made of wood and cane typically were built in a circle around a large open space used for games, dances, meetings and religious ceremonies (Soule 1995). The roofs usually were made of thatched palmetto leaves, grass and reeds, standing approximately 15 feet high, with no windows and only a small door. There often was a hole in the roof to allow smoke from a fire to escape (Soule 1995). Social life included gatherings, feasts, dances, games, sports, gambling and religious events. Spiritual preparation was important and preceded many events (Soule 1995).

Native Americans were very spiritual and considered all life to be sacred. They often acknowledged a Supreme Being, Creator or Great Spirit that is above all other life, and almost every ceremony had some religious connotations. The drum was a sacred symbol used in religious ceremonies, as well as social gatherings, and the beat was representative of the Native American heartbeat (Soule 1995). Europeans did not really attempt to understand the Native Americans' religious beliefs during this era and often mistakenly believed that Native Americans were pagan and illiterate savages. It is thought that many early tribal ceremonies were discontinued due to the Catholic and Protestant missionaries who fervently preached against them (Soule 1995). Historically, some ceremonies among the Native Americans even were prohibited by the government. In 1978, however, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed and protected the Native

Americans' right to traditional beliefs, forms of worship and the possession of sacred items (Soule 1995). Since the Historic Era is broad and a significant amount of change happened in this era as Europeans arrived and interacted with the American Indians, it may be useful to further examine European colonization and the effects it had on Native Americans living throughout the United States and specifically in the Gulf of Mexico Region.

European Settlements

America

European arrival in North America meant extensive change for the Native Americans living in the region, as colonists laid claim to the land and the Native Americans living on that land. When Columbus arrived, he was cruel and greedy, and his crew took hundreds of Indians as slaves, cutting off their hands if they did not bring their owners gold. It was not uncommon for Columbus to order mass suicides among the Native Americans that preferred death to slavery. In addition to taking slaves, his crew also raped and pillaged. In all, it is estimated Columbus and his crew killed between 125,000 and 500,000 Native Americans (Soule 1995). Unfortunately, as more Europeans arrived, cruelty often became the norm.

By 1519, Spain was organizing larger invasions and conquering the Native American empires of the mainland. Soon England and France also were seeking colonial empires. After the Revolutionary War, Europeans flooded the new world and only furthered this cultural and historic shift. Despite common interest in colonizing the "new world," Spain, England and France each had a particular culture and specific goals in colonization that allowed each nation to have a unique effect on the Native Americans living in the Gulf of Mexico Region.

Spain

In 1493, the Pope gave Spain a large donation to aid in the American quests Columbus had started. This donation resulted in a moral shift in Spanish exploration that made religious conversion a cornerstone of Spanish occupation (Hussey 1932, Sturtevant 1962, Perdue and Green 2001). After this donation, a series of laws and ordinances were passed that were meant to protect the Native Americans and push forward the Spanish goal of religious conversion. For instance, in 1512, the laws of Burgos passed. Those forbade the Spanish from enslaving the Native Americans and required them to pay Native American laborers with food, housing, protection and instruction in Christianity (Sturtevant 1962, Weber 1992, Perdue and Green 2001). Ultimately, priests were tasked with expanding the Spanish territory and attempted to win Native Americans over with love and generosity. In turn, the Spanish hoped this would create a working class of Native Americans who were willing to do the work of Spanish America. As Spanish bureaucracy continued to grow in North America, the missionization of Florida became one of the top priorities of the Spanish government (Perdue and Green 2001).

Spanish Missions

Since conversion was a priority for the Spanish government, several missionaries were sent to Florida to begin converting the Native Americans. By the 1570s, the Jesuits found ministering to the Native Americans difficult and fled the colony (Perdue and Green 2001). Franciscan priests arrived in 1573 to replace the Jesuits, and by the 1590s the Jesuits had launched a major missionary effort (Perdue and Green 2001). These efforts were not always met with gratitude and willing acceptance by the Native Americans, however. For instance, in addition to the missions in Florida, the Francis-

cans established a number of missions on the Georgia coast among the Guale Indians. As the Franciscans tried to force Spanish beliefs and culture upon the Guale, the Guale became increasingly angry and killed all but one of the missionaries and burned their churches (Perdue and Green 2001).

From the start, Spain's missionary goals were as much political and economic as they were religious. The Spanish mission system that prevailed in Florida had the primary goal of converting Native Americans to Christianity, but it also served a variety of other functions. Those in the system often exploited the Native Americans to provide both food and a labor force for the Spanish settlers and required the Native Americans to conform to Spanish moral expectations (Perdue and Green 2001). This is not to say the Native Americans did not also benefit from the mission system at times. During this period, Native Americans were introduced to new technologies, forged alliances with other tribes that changed the political climate and found refuge in the missions from their enemies (Perdue and Green 2001, Waters 2005). Although the missions initially were very attractive to many Native Americans, exploitation and poor treatment meant as many Native Americans fled the missions as joined them (Perdue and Green 2001). In other words, although the missions occasionally served as a source of food or refuge for the Native Americans, they were not welcome as permanent fixtures in the region and by 1708 there was only one Spanish mission left (Perdue and Green 2001).

England

In contrast to the Spain's religious goals, England sought colonization in America primarily for economic reasons, with the hope of finding gold and silver. Initially, the English

were not interested in either the human or the property rights of the Native Americans but regarded them primarily as potential purchasers of English goods (Perdue and Green 2001). In 1584, Queen Elizabeth authorized Walter Raleigh to discover, claim and occupy any "remote heathen and barbarous lands, countries and territories not actually possessed of any Christian prince or inhabited by Christian people" (Perdue and Green 2001). Unlike the Spanish, the English did not explicitly discuss how to treat the Native American people and thus it became a decision the colonists had to make on their own. In 1585, English colonists arrived in Roanoke, built a settlement and beheaded the chief of the Roanoke Indians. As time passed, the English colonists at Roanoke feared retaliation and eventually fled the colony. In 1587, another group of English colonists arrived in Roanoke to create a settlement, but when one of them sailed back to England in 1588 for supplies and failed to return until 1590, the colony vanished (Perdue and Green 2001).

These failures at Roanoke taught the English a few important lessons. First, new colonies needed greater care. Second, more money was needed if they were going to be successful. This need for more resources pushed the English government to seek charters that sponsored their efforts to colonize the Americas. In 1606, the Virginia Co. received its first charter and began to explore and settle in present day Virginia (Perdue and Green 2001). This time England specified that the Native Americans should be treated respectfully, and Jamestown was founded in 1607 among the Powhatan Indians. Other than the cultivation of tobacco and the legend of Pocahontas, Jamestown never amounted to much, so in 1733 the English continued to expand their colonization into Georgia (Anderson

1933, Perdue and Green 2001, Sweet 2005). With time, the plantation agricultural model became a way of life, and both the English and the Native Americans became agricultural people who were colliding in their efforts to control the land (Perdue and Green 2001). As the English outgrew their space, they looked to the Native Americans for more land, and if the natives were reluctant to surrender lands willingly, colonists tried to take it (Wright 2002). The struggle for land often turned violent, and many English colonists came to view the Native Americans as being “in the way” of English colonization and expansion (Perdue and Green 2001).

Although it was rare, slavery was known by the Native Americans in the South, and the English were particularly known to purchase and capture Indians to be sold into slavery (Perdue and Green 2001). Slaves often caught English diseases and died in slavery or were able to escape, return to their home and organize a counter attack. As a result of these retaliations, the English colonists began relying more heavily on African slaves and began shipping Native American slaves to the Caribbean. The Yamasee who lived at the Carolina-Georgia coast, the Chickasaws from northern Mississippi and the Chitimacha and Natchez from Louisiana were enslaved in particularly large numbers (Perdue and Green 2001). Those captured often were women. For instance, two-thirds of the Louisiana Native Americans enslaved during the mid-18th century were female (DuVal 2008).

France

Unlike Spain and England, France entered the Southeastern United States with greater experience with Native Americans. For almost two centuries, France had interacted with Native Americans in Canada and the Great Lakes country

(Perdue and Green 2001). Similar to the other European colonists, the French came to America for economic reasons. By the start of the 17th century, they entered the Indian trade network to obtain furs and skins, and by the end of the 17th century, the French began to expand their exploration beyond Canada. The French regarded the Mississippi River as particularly valuable because it connected Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and provided alternative trade routes (Perdue and Green 2001). In 1699, they built a post at Biloxi Bay; in 1702, they established a community in Mobile; and in 1718, they founded New Orleans (Gallay 2002). It was at this time that the French colony of Louisiana came into being, serving as a means of creating alliances with Southern tribes and blocking English expansion. In particular, an alliance with the Choctaws, the largest Native American group in the area, became the cornerstone of France’s strategic plan to expand (Perdue and Green 2001). Despite their seeming success, the French faced resistance from several fronts, as well, especially from the Natchez and Chickasaws.

Gulf of Mexico Region

When the Europeans arrived in the Southeastern United States, they entered a dynamic society but also introduced the need for new changes among the Native Americans. The European invasion in the region officially began when Ponce de Leon arrived in Florida in 1513 (Perdue and Green 2001). Although Ponce de Leon originally settled in the Caribbean, he needed labor to work on his sugar plantations, which pushed him inland. He tried to colonize several regions but failed repeatedly, resulting in a great number of deaths (Perdue and Green 2001). In 1539, De Soto traveled to Florida with 600 men, seeking riches for Spain. His writings, as he traveled from one perma-

nent village to another seeking food, shelter and riches, tell us a lot about the Southeastern Native Americans living in the region at the time. By the fall of 1539, De Soto had reached the Apalachee Indians in northern Florida. When he realized the Apalachee did not have the gold, silver, or jewels he was seeking, however, he continued traveling into the interior of the Southeast (Perdue and Green 2001). When he reached present day Mobile, more than 5,000 Indians attacked his men, resulting in 22 casualties and approximately 148 injuries. De Soto himself was injured but managed to escape and direct a counter attack. Ultimately, Mobile fell to the Spaniards, and more than 3,000 Native Americans were killed (Perdue and Green 2001). De Soto and his men continued traveling, eventually crossing the Mississippi River. Although De Soto died in 1542, his men continued on and reached Mexico in 1543, some four and a half years after their journey began (Perdue and Green 2001).

Just prior to the arrival of the European traders in the 18th century, the Native Americans in the Gulf of Mexico region already were undergoing massive change. Once the Europeans arrived, the Native Americans contracted European diseases for which they had no immunity and their populations drastically declined. Those who were able to survive one disease often were still on the mend when an outbreak of a new disease would strike. Native Americans believed disease had a spiritual cause, such as sinfulness, and typically sought to purify themselves of this sinfulness in sweat baths or icy rivers. Some Native Americans died attempting to treat their illnesses in these somewhat extreme ways. Those who were able to survive both the diseases and the extreme treatment often committed suicide because they could not bear the scars from treatment that reminded them of their impurities

(Perdue and Green 2001). It is estimated that almost 93 percent of the Native American population across the United States died between 1492 when Columbus arrived and 1900, with many of the deaths happening in the first 100 years of contact (Denevan 1992, Perdue and Green 2001). One of the most crucial effects of these diseases was that the diseases killed many of the Native Americans' spiritual leaders. Often, spiritual leaders were elders, and as a result of their age and frailty also were the most likely to contract and die from the new European diseases (Perdue and Green 2001). Similarly, children often were unable to fight off the diseases. Because of this, the disease outbreaks killed both the Native American past and the Native American future. Population decline after European arrival marked the end of a cultural era. Chiefdoms dissolved, tribes combined, mound building stopped and pottery making halted. Unfortunately, this vast population decline also obscured much of the Native American culture from this time.

The Imperial Wars

It was not long before the European colonists from England, France and Spain began having conflicts with one another. The struggle to master the continent began in 1689 with a series of wars that continued until the War of 1812 (Starkey 1998, Perdue and Green 2001). Although these conflicts often happened in the Northern states, Native Americans in the South often were recruited by both the English and French armies (Perdue and Green 2001). The French and Indian War is one notable example of such conflict. The Cherokees participated in the French and Indian War, which ended with an English victory, and as a result, the French relinquished Louisiana to Spain, and Spain relinquished Florida to England (Perdue and Green 2001). These land trades among the Europeans resulted

in drastic changes for the Native Americans, particularly in regard to trade.

The American Revolution was a disaster for Southern Indians, since the newfound power among English colonists resulted in intensified demands for Native American land and resources. The 1783 Treaty of Paris was particularly problematic for Native Americans because Britain gave the former colonists – the new Americans – title of all the land claimed by the king between the Great Lakes and Florida east of the Mississippi River. This left the English settlers to determine what rights the Indians had to the land they had occupied for hundreds of years (Perdue and Green 2001).

The 1780s were marked by continued war in the Southern frontier. During this time, George Washington and U.S. Secretary of War Henry Knox wrote a policy that suggested expansion should be done with “honor.” The basic idea of this policy was that expansion would continue by purchasing land from the Native Americans in peaceful negotiations and treaties (Horsman 1961, Berkhofer 1988, Perdue and Green 2001). By agreeing to give away some land, Native Americans were granted sovereignty within the boundaries of the land they retained. The idea that Native Americans would retreat from their land and be eager to sell proved unfounded, however. Instead, the Native Americans were highly invested in the land they already occupied and were determined to preserve what remained of their territories (Perdue and Green 2001). With time, the competition for land intensified, and expansion with honor was discarded for more forceful means of obtaining Native American land.

Civilization

In many ways, this “expansion with honor” plan assumed the Native Americans would want to adapt

to the “superior Anglo-American culture.” This dangerous assumption brought about another policy known as the “civilization policy” that would attempt to achieve the cultural transformation of the Native Americans (Perdue and Green 2001). Under this policy, when tribes ceded land, they were given livestock, agricultural implements and instruction on their use by the federal government. By creating this policy, Washington and Knox hoped Native Americans would have an incentive to become civilized. By becoming civilized, the Native Americans would need less land and would want more money, resulting in a willingness to sell their land to the colonists (Perdue and Green 2001). The policy was first articulated in 1790 in the Treaty of New York between the United States and the Creek Indians and was duplicated in 1791 in the Treaty of Holston with the Cherokee Indians (Wright 1981, Perdue and Green 2001).

Civilizing the Southern Native Americans meant a comprehensive cultural change. Gender roles would need to be reversed, since men would need to become farmers and the heads of households, while women should become homemakers. Civilized crops such as wheat and cotton should replace maize. Cotton would be turned into clothing, and adults would wear shoes, keep time with clocks and furnish their log houses with chairs, beds, tables and rugs. Children would need to attend school and learn to speak, read and write in English. They would need to study math and listen to history lessons that taught them George Washington was the father of their country (the one their ancestors had been living in for hundreds of years). Finally, the entire family would need to attend a protestant church on Sunday (Perdue and Green 2001). Remarkably, many of these changes did happen among Southern tribes. In the late 18th

century and early 19th century, missionaries began establishing schools among the Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians, allowing many of the Native Americans to become comfortable with English. Some Native Americans even became Christians, and a few men became farmers, although that was rare (Perdue and Green 2001).

Although the civilization policy brought about some changes among the Indians in the Southeastern United States, it was intermarriage between the Native Americans and the Scottish, English, Irish and French traders that had the most substantial effects on Native Americans (Perdue and Green 2001). When those marriages produced children, Native Americans considered non-native spouses as part of the tribe. Similarly, the children of these interracial marriages adapted not only to Native American life but also to the customs and ideas of their non-native fathers. It was not uncommon for these children to grow up speaking two languages and with the ability to participate in either the Native American or the Euro-American worlds (Perdue and Green 2001). By the end of the 18th century, all of the Southern tribes had several bicultural families (Perdue and Green 2001). Often in adulthood, bicultural children joined their fathers in trade and sought formal education. They typically dressed like the American settlers and furnished their houses similarly. As they explained to their Native American relatives why they were living a blended lifestyle, many Native Americans began to embrace the ideas and customs of their bicultural family members (Perdue and Green 2001). Many tribes willingly embraced many or all of the new practices, while others resisted the changes. For at least one tribe, this struggle between change and continuity turned violent.

Creek War

The Creek War began in 1811 and lasted for three years. Many scholars suggest that this war happened as the tribe negotiated the tension between maintaining their culture and adapting to the “American” way of life. As a result of this war, about a fourth of the Creek population died and they lost more than 20 million acres of land. The land they kept also was wrecked by war, and recovery was a long and difficult process (Halbert and Ball 1995, Perdue and Green 2001). Between the Creek War and the War of 1812 in the North, Indian country was weakened, devastated and defeated. Because of this devastation, the U.S. government proclaimed in 1818 that the Native Americans were no longer a significant military threat and that “our (American) views of their interests, not their own, should govern them” (Perdue and Green 2001).

The land taken from the Creeks during the Creek War was reorganized in 1817 as Alabama and was admitted to the Union as a state in 1819. Between 1815 and 1829, thousands of people from the region flocked to Alabama in hopes of finding rich land and high cotton prices. The cotton boom crashed in 1819, and many of the newly settled planters went bankrupt (Perdue and Green 2001, Dattel 2011). Recovery took much of the 1820s and depended on opening more land quickly to grow more cotton. The only land that remained to be claimed was owned by Southern tribes. Negotiating treaties was slow, tedious, expensive and uncertain because many of the tribes were reluctant or refused to sell. As a result, President Andrew Jackson believed confiscating the land from the Southern natives would be much easier and faster. Congress refused to agree and upheld the sovereign rights of the Southern tribes (Perdue and Green 2001).

Between 1816 and 1821, federal agents were able to negotiate nine treaties with Southern tribes. The Creeks surrendered a large tract of land in central Georgia. The Chickasaws sold western Kentucky, western Tennessee and land in northern Alabama. The Choctaws gave up land in western Mississippi and western Alabama, and the Cherokees ceded small parcels of land in northern Alabama, northern Georgia, eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina (Perdue and Green 2001). None of the Southern tribes gave the government everything they asked for, and the government often resorted to high-pressure tactics such as threats, intimidation and bribery to obtain the valuable cotton land that was ceded (Perdue and Green 2001). After the War of 1812, the populations in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi grew drastically, and few politicians worried about justice for Southern tribes (Perdue and Green 2001). In contrast, they became increasingly convinced the tribes were obstacles blocking progress, and tensions continued to increase. In other words, the days of “expansion with honor” officially were over.

Removal

In 1803, when Louisiana was being purchased, Thomas Jefferson began thinking of removing Eastern Indians to the region west of the Mississippi River (Perdue and Green 2001). Five of the largest tribes living in the Southeast were targeted for removal – the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks and Seminoles. Jefferson discussed his plan with Native American leaders, and a group of Cherokee Indians agreed in 1810 to relocate to the west; a migration that occurred between 1817 and 1819. In 1820, the Choctaws ceded 5 million acres of land in the Southeast in exchange for 13 million acres of land in the West (O’Brien 1989, Perdue and Green 2001). By 1817, James Monroe proclaimed

Indian removal was the goal of his presidential administration. He assumed that since removal already had begun on a small scale, continuing it would be relatively easy. Most of the remaining tribes rejected this plan, however, and refused to leave their land in the Gulf of Mexico region (Perdue and Green 2001).

When Native American leaders rejected removal, tensions increased, and the government looked for new ways to convince the Native Americans to leave. In 1824, Alabama refused to recognize the sovereignty of tribes and began extending their state laws into the Indian nation – although it refused to also extend civil and political rights offered to others by the state (Jack 1916, Perdue and Green 2001). In 1832, Alabama even went so far as to prohibit the Creek government from functioning. Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee followed Alabama's lead and limited the functionality of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Cherokee governments, making it evident their intentions were to make life for the Native Americans so miserable that Indians would be happy to move west (Perdue and Green 2001).

These laws and practices had complex and devastating effects on the Native Americans living in the Gulf of Mexico region and Native American leaders cried out to the federal government for protection from the states, but both Adams and Jackson refused to intervene. In fact, Jackson openly defended the states and suggested that if Indians were unhappy they could leave (Perdue and Green 2001). In 1830, Congress debated an act proposed by Jackson known as the Indian Removal Act. Jackson presented the plan as necessary for state economic development and the survival of the Native Americans. The bill passed with a three-vote margin, and Jackson signed the act into law on May 28, 1830 (Perdue and Green 2001,

Cave 2003). The Indian Removal Act allowed the president to enter into negotiations with Southern tribes and forge treaties that would stipulate an exchange of their land in the Southeast for equal or greater amounts of land in the West. The U.S. government would pay the moving costs of the people and provide support for the first year of residence in the West. Individuals also were to be compensated for the value of improvements and land left behind. The language of the act emphasized removal was completely voluntary (Perdue and Green 2001, Cave 2003). Although neither the states nor the federal government could force Native Americans to sign the treaties, states could make it so miserable for the Native Americans that they believed their only hope was to leave.

The first removal was negotiated by John Eaton, the secretary of war, with the Choctaws. Eaton told the Choctaw leaders if they refused to sign the treaty the president would declare war on them and send in the army (Perdue and Green 2001). Fearful that would happen, the Choctaw agreed to sell their land in Mississippi and move west. Removal began in the fall of 1831, with the first of what was to be three waves of 7,000 people each. They traveled with the Mississippi, Arkansas and Ouachita Rivers as far as the water would take them and walked the rest of the way. The winter was especially brutal, since the Native Americans lacked proper clothing and the government agents did not provide enough food (Foreman 1974, Perdue and Green 2001). The second wave of Choctaws had more favorable weather, but cholera killed many of the migrants. Because of the hardship of the first two waves of migration, by the third round of removal, only 900 of the remaining 7,000 agreed to go. In total, about 15,000 Choctaw left Mississippi, 2,500 died in the move

and 6,000 remained in Mississippi (Perdue and Green 2001). Of those who remained in Mississippi, many later migrated west to join friends and family.

When Eaton finished with the Choctaws, he ordered the Chickasaws to send leaders to his home to discuss removal. The Chickasaws agreed to move but inserted an article into the treaty declaring it null and void if suitable land could not be found in the West. A group of land rangers were unable to find suitable land, but neither the state of Mississippi nor the federal government was willing to accept failure, and a second treaty was signed in 1832 (Foreman 1974, Perdue and Green 2001). When the Chickasaw arrived in the West, they were unable to find suitable land and negotiated with the Choctaw to share land. In return, the Chickasaws gave the Choctaw \$530,000 and forfeited their national identity (Perdue and Green 2001). As unfortunate as this was, they were desperate to escape the harassment and threats in Mississippi. In 1855, the Chickasaws were able to buy some of the land from the Choctaw and reclaim their national identity.

The Creeks signed a treaty in 1832, although it was not explicitly a removal treaty. The Creeks already had obtained land in the West in a treaty signed with Georgia in 1826 in exchange for the sale of their land in the state. In the early 1830s, some 3,000 Creeks moved to the land in the West. When the Seminole war broke out in Florida, however, there was fear that if the Creeks aligned with the Seminoles the war could spread to Georgia and Alabama (Green 1982, Perdue and Green 2001). Due to this fear, the army began rounding up Creek people, dragging them from their homes and sending them west. They weren't allowed to gather their belongings or sell their land. In other

words, the Creeks marched west with virtually nothing. Throughout the winter of 1836 and into the spring of 1837, more than 15,000 Creeks were driven west – freezing, starving and drowning along the way (Green 1982, Perdue and Green 2001).

The Cherokees were the last to sign a removal treaty in December 1835 (Anderson 1991, Perdue and Green 2001). This treaty ended a legal battle that had started several years earlier when Georgia extended its jurisdiction and declared the Cherokee Nation was illegal. In 1838, Georgia and federal troops began gathering up Cherokee people in camps in preparation for the trek west. Within these camps, many Cherokee languished throughout the summer in stockades, and many died from sun exposure and starvation. Much of the death toll attributed to the “Trail of Tears” occurred in the Cherokee camps before the actual march even began (Anderson 1991, Perdue and Green 2001). Estimates suggest somewhere between 4,000 and 16,000 Cherokee people died in the trek, as well (Perdue and Green 2001).

In 1871, Congress ruled Indian tribes were no longer separate and independent governments, which gave the American government a means to disregard any treaties made with the Native Americans up to that point (Soule 1995). Without treaties to protect them, Native Americans faced starvation, war, imprisonment, disease and deadly marches to new land. The “Trail of Tears” is one of the most commonly known marches. During the trail of tears, many Native Americans died or were killed, and by 1890 more than half the Native American population once living in the Southeastern United States had died (Soule 1995). Removal did not completely empty Native Americans from the Southeastern United States, but

it certainly robbed the region of the political, economic and social dynamics the tribes had contributed to the region’s history, and many innocent Native Americans died or lost everything they owned.

Although removal was devastating for the larger Indian tribes living in the Gulf of Mexico region and resulted in them being forced from their homelands and ceding millions of acres of land to the government, smaller tribes that occupied marginal lands often were able to avoid removal. Unfortunately, since they were “invisible” to the 19th century Southerners, they have also been relatively invisible to many modern historians. Examples of these groups include the Tunica, Chitimacha, Alabama, Coushatta and Houma Indians (Perdue and Green 2001).

Life in the “West”

When the Native Americans arrived in their new homes in the West, they faced a host of issues. Almost every family had lost kin in the removal process, few people received adequate compensation for their land and wars were breaking out among and within tribes (Perdue and Green 2001). Despite these obstacles, the tribes recovered remarkably well before the Civil War began. Eventually four of the five tribes were able to reconstitute tribal nations in the Southeastern United States (Perdue and Green 2001).

Life in the Southeast After Removal

A number of circumstances allowed some Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks and Seminoles to remain in the Southeastern United States while the government was forcing their nations west of the Mississippi River. Some people were able to obtain land and be absorbed into the white population. Even those who did not receive the land they were promised were able to

remain. For instance, some 6,000 Choctaw chose to remain in Mississippi when their tribe was removed, but many did not receive the land and citizenship they were promised in the removal treaty (Perdue and Green 2001). Despite these circumstances, roughly 1,000 Choctaw remained in Mississippi and obtained land on their own. A few Creek Indians also stayed in Alabama when their nation moved west and became known as the Poarch Band of Creek Indians (Perdue and Green 2001, see section about specific tribes). The Native Americans who did to remain in the region after removal faced other issues such as the greed and racism of their white neighbors.

Retaining a Native American identity beyond 1835 in the Southeastern United States became increasingly difficult. In a culture in which white landowners relied on black slaves, there was little room for the Native Americans, most of whom were landless but free (Perdue and Green 2001, Perdue 2012). Historian James Merrell put it this way: “They had become an anomaly. Neither useful nor dangerous, neither black nor white, they did not fit into the South’s expanding biracial society” (Perdue and Green 2001).

This biracial society masked the distinct culture, history and problems Native Americans faced. One of the most common issues for the Native Americans at this time was education. Native Americans were expected to send children to African-American schools but often refused to do so. They usually could not afford to hire a teacher or build a school, however, leaving Native American children to remain either uneducated or severely undereducated (Perdue and Green 2001). Some tribes, such as the Waccamaws, were able to secure funding from families to hire a teacher, but funding often was tight and there

were years the school had to close. When they finally secured a teacher from the state, the building they were using was unsafe and inadequate, forcing them to close again (Perdue and Green 2001).

Most Native Americans embraced desegregation because it opened access to education, but it also weakened the community among Southern Native Americans. Without distinctly Native American schools, there was less direct interaction among Native American children. Similarly, young Native Americans began leaving their Indian communities to find employment (Perdue and Green 2001). Because of these issues and removal, recognition as Native Americans, creation of a land base, control of schools and churches and economic development became major concerns of the Native Southerners in the 20th century (Perdue and Green 2001).

Specific Tribes

The following section outlines some of the literature about a few specific tribes living in the Gulf of Mexico region. Although the tribes discussed here do not even begin to cover the vast Native American culture and history in the region, we hope readers will be able to recognize how complex and nuanced the Native American history is.

Apalachee

The Apalachee tribe inhabited the Gulf of Mexico region long before any European explorers arrived and were originally found in the area around what is today Tallahassee, Fla. (Covington 1972, Soule 1995). When Spanish explorers arrived in the region, tensions between the Native Americans and the Spanish became commonplace. By the time De Soto arrived in 1539, conflict was widespread, and by 1656, the Spanish had claimed more than 40 Apalachee settlements and converted more than 26,000 Native Ameri-

cans to Catholicism (Soule 1995). For those who converted to Catholicism, their culture, beliefs, society and religious practices essentially were abolished (Covington 1972).

In the early 1700s, war broke out between the Spanish and the English over land. The Apalachee allied with the Spanish and many of them were killed (Soule 1995). By 1704, the Spanish missions and Apalachee towns had been destroyed by the British, and the remaining 400 Native Americans fled west, seeking protection from the French (Soule 1995). After a lot of travel, the Apalachee ended up close to Fort Louis in Louisiana, and by 1720, it was almost impossible to find any Apalachee still in Florida (Covington 1972, Soule 1995).

When the treaty of Paris was signed in 1763 and the French withdrew from Louisiana, the Apalachee were left with little protection and they were one of the first tribes to request permission to move west of the Mississippi River (Soule 1995). In 1763, they obtained land and moved to Rapides Parish. The Apalachee eventually lost their land in Rapides Parish, and without land, many joined the Natchez Indians living in Cloutierville. Others remained remote and continued to operate as a tribe in secret (Soule 1995). It was not until the 1980s that a small band of Apalachee known as the Talimali band decided it was safe to admit their native heritage. In 1995, they organized and began the process of federal recognition, a process that remains ongoing today.

Atakapa

The Atakapa¹ were given their name, which literally means “man eater,” from the Choctaw Indians, because legend suggests the tribe practiced cannibalism, although this claim has been both corroborated and challenged by explorers who

lived among the tribe (Butler 1970, Post 1962). Historically, the Atakapa were not of particular interest to the European settlers in the region because they had little trade value and were relatively remote, living on lands the colonists were not interested in (Post 1962).

The Atakapa lived in southwestern Louisiana and in southeastern Texas in prairies, marshes and swamps where they could hunt and fish year-round (Post 1962, Butler 1970). By the late 18th century, there were three main bands of Atakapa, but the tribe remained relatively small (Butler 1970). It has been estimated that in 1650, there were only approximately 1,500 Atakapa, and by 1803, it appears as if the tribe was almost extinct – with fewer than 100 people (Butler 1970). By 1908, there were only nine known Atakapa still living (Post 1962). This decline happened for a number of reasons but most often is attributed to disease, starvation, war, maladjustment, alcoholism and other common issues Native Americans in the region faced. As a result of civilization and contact with Europeans, little evidence exists to speak to the history, culture and practices of the Atakapa (Butler 1970).

Bidai

The Bidai are a small southeastern Texas tribe that little is known about. Historically, the Bidai lived in present-day Madison, Walker and Grimes counties in Texas. It has been suggested, however, that they also migrated to Natchitoches, La., at times (Sjoberg 1951).

The Bidai name comes from the Caddo word that means “brushwood,” which likely refers to the lands on which the Bidai lived

¹ Atakapa is the traditional spelling of the tribe. Other spellings include Atacapas and incorrectly “Tuckapaw.” More recent scholars have used the modern spelling of Attakapa (Post 1962). For the purposes of this paper, Atakapa and Attakapa should be regarded as interchangeable.

(Sjoberg 1951). The Bidai were an agricultural group who cultivated maize and relied on hunting. Fishing also was important to the Bidai and they often moved along the coast during the summer months to fish (Sjoberg 1951). Like other Native Americans in the Southeast, the Bidai made baskets and shared customs such as religion, chiefdoms and music with their Southeastern neighbors. By the middle of the 19th century, many of the Bidai had died from disease. The survivors often blended with other tribes, such as the Atakapa, Akokisa, Caddo and Koasati. As a result of death and joining with other tribes, their unique recorded history spans little more than a century and a half (Sjoberg 1951).

Caddo

Despite being overlooked by many scholars, the Caddo Indians once were one of the strongest tribes on the Texas-Louisiana frontier (Smith 1989). The Caddo lived in this region for approximately 3,500 years before coming in contact with European settlers, and by the time Europeans arrived, the Caddo were approximately 8,000 in number and were living at the bend of the Red River near the Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma borders (Smith 1989). A smaller band of the Caddo known as the Yatasi moved south and settled near Natchitoches, La. (Smith 1989). The Caddo were granted Louisiana state recognition in 1993, with an estimated population of 2,000 members living near the Shreveport area, where many still live today (Soule 1995).

Cherokee

The Cherokee were one of the most important tribes in the Southeastern United States, and their land was once quite vast – extending from the Ohio River south to present-day Atlanta, Ga., and from Virginia and the Carolinas west across Tennessee, Kentucky and Al-

abama to the Illinois River (Thornton 1984). The Cherokee were the first of the “Five Tribes” to establish a centralized government and the earliest laws (Perdue and Green 2001). Within a decade of starting their government, the Cherokee had drafted a national constitution that increased the power of the principle chief and called for a two-house legislature, a national court system and an elected primary chief. The constitution also proclaimed sovereignty within the nation’s boundaries, and following a vote, the constitutional government of the Cherokees took office in 1828 (Perdue and Green 2001).

A number of changes led Europeans to the assumption that the Cherokees were the most “civilized” of all Native Americans. In 1820, the tribe had their own writing system, and by 1835, nearly 25 percent of all Cherokee were literate in their own language and slightly more than 50 percent of all Cherokee households had at least one member who could read Cherokee (Perdue and Green 2001). In 1828, Cherokee Phoenix, a bilingual newspaper first was published and it discussed both local and world news. This publication served as a means to educate the American public about the Cherokees since many American settlers subscribed to the publication (Perdue and Green 2001). The same year Cherokee Phoenix was founded, the state of Georgia took action to prohibit the functionality of the Cherokee Nation (Thornton 1984).

The following years were tumultuous and culminated with Cherokee removal in 1838 – when the tribe was disarmed and removal began. Tribal members were gathered up and put into removal camps, where thousands died waiting to march west. It is estimated that 13 groups of 1,000 individuals eventually traveled northwest toward Indian Territory (Thornton 1984). In all,

more than 4,000 Cherokees died in the removal process from diseases, accidents, cold, gunshot wounds and starvation (Thornton 1984). With time, the Cherokee were able to re-establish their tribe, and today the Cherokee nation has the largest membership of any of the federally recognized tribes in America.

Chickasaw

The early Chickasaw settlements were in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi (Gibson 1971). They ended up traveling and migrating throughout the region, creating settlements that extended south to the Gulf and as far north as the Ohio River. Their neighbors included the Choctaw, Natchez, Creek and Cherokee tribes, and their lives closely resembled that of their neighbors (Gibson 1971). The Chickasaw and Choctaw were so closely related that they essentially spoke the same language, just in a different dialect. The tribe ranged in size from 3,500 to 4,500 members and had a strong warrior tradition, resulting in continuous population loss (Gibson 1971).

Ultimately, what set the Chickasaw apart from their neighbors was that they were unconquerable. Their preoccupation with war gave them a strong defense that allowed them to defeat any challengers (Gibson 1971). Most often the Chickasaw Indians are remembered for their defeat of large French and Indian armies in 1736, 1739 and 1752 (St. Jean 2004).

The recounting of these great victories, however, masks the role that alliances with other Native Americans had in their success. The Chickasaw allied with their neighbors, who often sent military aid, escorted British convoys, relayed messages and offered a safe place for refugees (St. Jean 2004). It was only with this aid that the Chickasaw were able to maintain their lands and independence in the face of strong

enemies (Perdue and Green 2001). Because of the Indian Removal Act of the 1830s, most of the Chickasaw tribe and their descendants now live in Oklahoma.

Chitimacha

The Chitimacha once inhabited two villages that were swampy and easy to protect – one near Bayou Lafourche and the Mississippi River and the other near Grand Lake on Bayou Teche (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). Like other tribes, the Chitimacha were able to thrive in the Southeastern United States because of the favorable environment and abundant food supply (GCIA 1991).

According to Chitimacha legend, Europeans first arrived in the late 1600s but were pushed back. When they tried to return, the medicine men cast a spell to curse the shoreline, and the Spanish were defeated, once again retreating. In the process, the Chitimacha were attacked and many were killed, almost destroying the tribe completely. Only 40 men and women survived and began to rebuild the tribe (Soule 1995). Despite this great loss, the Chitimacha continued to war with the French, and peace didn't come until some 13 years later when Bienville and the Chitimacha chief met and reconciled. But many Chitimacha were killed, displaced or enslaved in the process (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995).

In 1762, when Cajuns began arriving in the area, intermarriage became common. Within a century, full blooded Chitimacha were rare, and the tribe began to speak Cajun French instead of its own language. Several also converted to Catholicism (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). By the 1800s, the remaining Chitimacha were struggling to survive, and by 1881, there were only 55 Chitimacha left. Many of those spoke other languages, such as Creole and Cajun French, and had lost much of their history, culture, customs and

traditions because of the devastation they faced (Soule 1995).

In 1905, the Chitimacha fought to retain 505 acres of their once vast territory but settled out of court for 280.36 acres (GCIA 1991). In 1919, Congress placed the land in trust for the tribe and established a roll of 90 known members (GCIA 1991). No government aid actually was received until the 1930s, when a school was built for the tribe, and in 1946, the tribe was urged to form a constitutional government, which ended the traditional chiefdom that had existed in the tribe since prehistoric times (GCIA 1991).

After World War II, several Chitimacha began working in the oil industry, both on shore and off shore. They were very successful in the oil field, which encouraged others to find middle income jobs as mechanics, plant workers, carpenters, mental health directors and administrators (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). In 1971, the Chitimacha became members of the first organized tribe in Louisiana to be recognized by the federal government (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). This recognition entitled them to federal aid that helped them revive their unique identity. Unfortunately, this help came too late to save the Chitimacha language and much of their traditions and culture (Soule 1995).

Today, there are approximately 850 Chitimacha, 350 of which live on the reservation in Charenton, La. In 1974, the tribal center was built and has since been expanded to include a police station, fire station, health and social services, tribal courts, a senior/youth center, the tribal school, the public works department and the tribal government center (Soule 1995). More recently, the Chitimacha built a large casino that has offered employment and economic opportunities for individuals and the tribe. The tribe hopes to use some of this money to buy

back a part of what was once their 260-acre reservation, which was lost along the way (Soule 1995).

Choctaw

According to legend, the Choctaw tribe originated from a sacred hill called Nanih Waya near Noxapater, Miss., long before white men lived on Earth (Soule 1995). Supposedly, there was a passage down the sacred mountain that led deep into the Earth, where the Choctaw lived before coming to the Earth's surface. Once there were animals, birds, trees, rivers and lakes on the Earth's surface, the Choctaw emerged from this passage and populated the Earth (Bushnell 1910). The Choctaw are closely related to the Chickasaws and speak the same language in a slightly different dialect. They also were excellent farmers who lived in central and southern Mississippi as well as southeastern Alabama (Soule 1995).

Choctaw society was divided into castes, and the social order was complex, as was the culture and the tribe's history (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). By 1540, the Spanish explorer De Soto began trading with the Choctaw (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). When one Choctaw man professed to not know of any gold, De Soto buried him alive. The Choctaw retaliated, but thousands of Indians were left homeless, mutilated or dead after the conflict (Soule 1995). It was another 150 years before white men returned to Choctaw territory, and when they returned, the Europeans listed more than 115 Choctaw villages – suggesting the tribe had recovered well (Soule 1995).

The Choctaw also extensively traded with the French, and by 1720, the Native Americans were wearing cotton and using copper and iron tools (Soule 1995). The French needed the Choctaw as guides along their trade routes to Canada, and as a result, many cities,

rivers and bayous along these routes still bear Choctaw names today (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). With time, the French became the Choctaw's neighbors, and the Choctaw adopted many of the French ideas, cultural attitudes and even language.

From 1754 to 1763, the Choctaw were almost in constant warfare, and in 1763, when the French and Indian war came to a close and Mississippi was ceded to England, the Choctaw nation became divided. Some aligned with the French, while others aligned with the British (GCIA 1991). This divide led to a civil war that lasted for several years. When the French retreated to New Orleans, however, they essentially deserted their Choctaw allies (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). Eventually, most of tribe migrated west of the Mississippi River. Between 1801 and 1830, those who remained were methodically negotiated off their tribal lands in Alabama and Mississippi.

The Choctaw had a complex government and hoped their formal legal institutions would protect them from complete removal. In 1830, however, they signed the Treaty of Dancing Creek, agreeing to leave their homelands and not return, which sent them on their way to Oklahoma (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). It should be noted that this was a treaty the Choctaw could neither read nor understand. When they arrived in Oklahoma territory (now Arkansas), they were surprised to find white men already had claimed much of the land they were promised (Soule 1995).

The 1839 Indian Removal Act made the move compulsory, and about 18,000 Choctaw were moved to Oklahoma (Soule 1995). The journey took three years to complete. Despite removal, a number of Choctaw remained in Mississippi, while

smaller bands migrated to northern and central Louisiana (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). Today, there are two bands of Choctaw living in Louisiana – the Apache band of Choctaw and the Jena band of Choctaw. The Apache have approximately 1,500 members, while the Jena population is much smaller, with only 188 members (GCIA 1991).

The Jena Band of Choctaw

After World War II, some of the Choctaw tried to join relatives in Oklahoma, but after nine months of walking, they were told there was no land waiting on them. So in 1902, they turned around and walked back to Louisiana, eventually settling near Jena (Soule 1995). By 1916, there were so few of the Jena band left that they began marrying non-natives, and it appeared as if the tribe soon would be nonexistent.

In 1919, however, a Choctaw man named Bill Lewis moved to Jena with his 15 children, an act that may have saved the tribe from extinction because his children intermarried with the Jena Choctaw and began repopulating the tribe (Soule 1995). In 1974, the Jena band incorporated and received state recognition. They immediately began working toward federal recognition but didn't gain it until 1995 (Soule 1995).

Through the year, it has been important to the Jena Choctaw to retain their language, customs and traditions. Hides still are tanned in the traditional way, and many older members still make baskets, wooden mortars and pestles, blowguns and traditional ceremonial dancing dresses (Soule 1995). Recently, it has been estimated that there are at least 12 tribal members who still speak the Choctaw language fluently (Soule 1995).

Apache of Ebarb Choctaw

The Apache band of Choctaw was a growing group of Native Ameri-

can mixes that included the Apache, Comanche, Bidai, Atakapa, Wichita, Yscani, Opelousa and Mexican tribes (Soule 1995). Most of their heritage came from the Spanish Lipan Apache and Choctaws who migrated from Mississippi. They eventually fled to Natchitoches and Nacogdoches and are working on federal recognition, although they have met only four of the seven requirements (Soule 1995, Rivers and Ebarb 2007). There currently are approximately 900 members in Sabine and Natchitoches parishes, plus about 900 living elsewhere in the United States (Soule 1995).

Clifton Choctaw

In 1764, some of the Choctaw living in Mississippi moved to central Louisiana and eventually became known as the Clifton Choctaw. Little was recorded about this splinter group, and what was recorded was destroyed by the Union Army when it burned Alexandria in 1864 (Soule 1995). The oral history has been handed down through the generations (Soule 1995).

In 1870, two tribal members built the first tribal meeting house, which also doubled as a school. They earned a living farming and selling small woven baskets. When big lumber companies moved into the region, they hired the Choctaw but eventually became greedy and bought up what little land the Choctaw owned there. In the 1950s, when the lumber companies left, so did many of the Choctaw (Soule 1995). Only 240 residents remained, representing only six surnames. It was not until 1978 that they were "discovered," and by then, they only owned 4.6 acres of land. In 1996, the Clifton Choctaw had more than 200 families and 400-500 members scattered throughout the state. The tribe currently is working toward obtaining federal recognition (Soule 1995).

St. Tammany Choctaw

In his book “The Choctaw of Bayou Lacomb,” Bushnell details the history and experiences of a band of Choctaw who lived near Bayou Lacomb. They were called the St. Tammany Choctaw (1909). Little is known about the history of this group, likely because they were historically a part of other tribes in the region such as the Choctaw or Acolapissa. The band claims to have lived in the region for several generations, and mounds, pottery and clam shells speak to their occupation of the region. Similarly, there are several Choctaw place names used throughout the region such as Abita, Chefuncte, Ponchitoawa, Bayou Lacomb and Pontchartrain, which also speak to their historic presence (Bushnell 1909).

Coushatta

It is believed there were two branches of Coushatta Indians. One group lived in Tennessee and remained there, while the other group lived near Alabama (Soule 1995). The Coushatta community of Louisiana (Kaosati) likely emerged from the Alabama branch (Jacobson 1960). The Coushatta emblem is the gar fish, and their name literally means “lost” (Soule 1995). Supposedly, the tribe received this name because a small group of Native Americans were searching for the rest of their tribe that had traveled ahead of them. When they were asked by some white men who they were, they didn’t understand and replied “Koashatt,” which meant lost (Soule 1995). As a result, some scholars refer to the Coushatta as Koasati.

The earliest known records that mention the Coushatta are found in the reports from De Soto from his expeditions to Georgia and Alabama (Jacobson 1960, GSRI 1973, GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). After 1541, there are no more records of the tribe for over a century (Soule 1995).

When the American colonies gained independence from England and the United States began acquiring land previously recognized as belonging to the Creek confederation, the Coushatta began heading west to the Spanish-held lands of Louisiana (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). The first movement of the Coushatta and Alabama into Louisiana occurred around 1795, when 20 families settled near the mouth of the Red River in Rapides Parish (GSRI 1973, GCIA 1991). This group later moved further west into Texas. A number of the Coushatta had problems with settlers in Texas, and many decided to return to Louisiana to the banks of the Calcasieu River (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). By the early 1860s, this settlement was called the “Indian Village” and had an estimated population of 250 (GCIA 1991). Around 1880, the Coushatta were forced to move again because settlers were pressuring them for their land. In 1884, many migrated to Bayou Blue in southeastern Allen Parish, though small relocations continued throughout the Coushatta history (Jacobson 1960, GSRI 1973, GCIA 1991).

In 1993, there were 657 Coushatta on the official rolls. Many of them now live in Texas, but a large group still remains in Louisiana (Soule 1995). Recently, the Coushatta built a casino, which has helped them buy back a lot of their land and establish housing, health services and income assistance for tribe members (Soule 1995). The Coushatta language remains in its pure form and is spoken as a first language, with fluency among almost 80 percent of the tribe (Gregory 1988, Soule 1995). Much of their culture also has survived, and their medicinal skills, basket weaving, bow and arrow making, blowgun crafting, cooking, ancient dances and traditional chants are encouraged among the tribe (Soule 1995).

Creek

Efforts to remove the Creeks from the Florida Panhandle began in 1821 so the government could gain valuable farming land (Debo 1979, Ellsworth and Dysart 1981). Removal didn’t begin until October 1832, and despite both the policy and active removal practices, Native Americans remained scattered throughout the area. Some groups were able to remain relatively intact, such as the Poarch band of Creeks who moved to Alabama (Ellsworth and Dysart 1981). In the 1950s, the Creeks were granted much of their land back from the government and in the 1970s, individual families received payouts for the removal they had experienced more than a hundred years prior. Although many of the Creeks still faced poverty, racial discrimination and unemployment, this payout marked the beginning of the rebuilding of the Creek identity (Ellsworth and Dysart 1981).

Houma

There are several pieces of evidence, such as unique crops and tools as well as contacts in South America, that suggest the Houma likely originated in South America (GCIA 1991). The French explorer LaSalle first encountered the Houma in 1682 in Wilkinson County in Mississippi and West Feliciana Parish in Louisiana and referred to them as “oumans” in his journal (GSRI 1973, Soule 1995, Davis 2001, D’Oney 2006). In 1698, d’Iberville visited the group and presented them with gifts, hoping to establish a stronger and more permanent alliance between the Native Americans and the French (GSRI 1973, Soule 1995). When he left in 1699, a war broke out between the Houma and the nearby Bayougoula Indians. In 1700, when the French returned to the area to negotiate peace between the two tribes, more than half of the tribe had died (GSRI 1973, Soule 1995).

Throughout the 1700s, the Houma migrated from place to place, and as their tribe died off, they partnered with other tribes and other racial groups to survive (Parenton and Pellegrin 1950). This partnering created a blend of cultures, making the partner tribes almost indistinguishable from one another. In 1706, the Houma and Tunica formed an alliance, but in 1709, the Tunica turned on the Houma, killing many of them (GSRI 1973, GCIA 1991). The Houma who survived this betrayal fled to Donaldsonville and New Orleans, and by 1718, the Houma had scattered into three villages – Bayou St. John, Grand Village and Petit Houmas Village near Bayou Lafourche (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995).

From 1820 to 1840, the Houma continued to migrate farther south until they reached the Gulf. They settled along the bayous and swamps in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes in an area that was shared with the French Acadians (GSRI 1973, GCIA 1991). With time, the Houma adopted much of the Cajun culture, including Catholicism and much of the French language (GSRI 1973, Gregory 1988, GCIA 1991).

In the 1920s, oil and gas were discovered on the Houma lands and they were tricked into signing a quit claim that would allow anyone who occupied the land uncontested ownership for 30 years (Soule 1995). The Houma wound up losing that land, but in 1940, they purchased 45 acres of land in Dulac. By the early 1970s, the Houma received state recognition, although they still don't have federal government recognition (Soule 1995). It is likely this lack of federal recognition is a result of the complex heritage of Native, European and African ancestry (Davis 2001). Similarly, because of their adaptation and historical movement, much of their history as told

by their Native American ancestors has been lost (Davis 2001).

Today, many of the Houma tribal members are concentrated in Terrebonne, Lafourche and Jefferson parishes (GCIA 1991). They support themselves with fishing, trapping and hunting. Others work on sugarcane plantations, offshore oil rigs or as toy makers (Soule 1995). They are now the largest Native American group in Louisiana, with more than 17,000 members on their tribal roles. They also have 14 council members and a headquarters located in Golden Meadow (GSRI 1973, Soule 1995). The tribe applied for federal recognition but was denied because the Bureau of Indian Affairs is not convinced the Houma communities living in Louisiana today are descendants of the historic Houma tribe (Duthu 1997). Since the Houma don't have historical treaties with the government, they had to establish their presence, show they are a distinct community commonly recognized as Native Americans by others and prove their history to receive federal recognition. There are several factors that make meeting these criteria nearly impossible.

Natchez

The historian Le Page du Pratz claims the Natchez originated in Mexico and were forced east by tribal disputes in their homeland (Woods 1978). The French explorer Iberville first came across the Natchez in 1699 in Adams County in Mississippi and noted in his journals that the Natchez were different from other natives in the region because they were less savage than other tribes and particularly strong and organized (Seyfried 2009). The tribe had a complex social order, political structure and moral code. This system was in effect long before the French arrived and served as a way to preserve order, stability, solidarity and continuity (Brain 1971).

The Natchez Indians most commonly are remembered for their defeat of the French in several battles. French and Natchez relations were not always so tumultuous. In the early 1700s, when the French explorer Iberville arrived among the 3,000 Natchez Indians, the French established peace with the Native Americans (Woods 1978). When the English arrived and began competing with the French for Native American allegiance, tensions began to rise. With time, the Native Americans essentially became pawns in the European rivalries for land (Woods 1978).

Eventually, the French decided to build a military post at Natchez called Fort Rosalie (Woods 1978). There were a series of conflicts between the French and the Natchez, and by the 1730s, the French had almost exterminated the Natchez. From the first attacks in the early 18th century until the final war at Ft. Rosalie in 1730, more than 240 Natchez warriors were killed, and approximately 440 Natchez Indians were sold into slavery. Those who survived were homeless refugees left to wander and merge with other tribes (Mooney 1899). As a result, there likely are fewer than 20 Natchez today (Mooney 1899).

Tunica-Biloxi

Nobody seems to know where the Tunica-Biloxi originated, but some believe the ancestors were mentioned by De Soto in his journals in 1541 (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). They aren't mentioned again by explorers until 1682, when the French reported two large villages – one on the Yazoo River in Mississippi and another on the Ouachita River in Louisiana (Soule 1995). In 1698, a small group of French missionaries visited the tribe and established a mission. They lived with the tribe for 20 years, although this once pleasant relationship eventually dissolved (Soule 1995).

After a series of wars and moves in the early 1800s, the Tunica continued to dwindle until they had just 130 acres of land and only 50 members (Soule 1995). Blending with a nearby tribe was one of the few options the Tunica had for retaining their tribal identity. That option presented itself when the Biloxi moved onto some land adjacent to the Tunica. The Biloxi were a Siouan tribe who lived near the Biloxi Bay in the 1690s and were first encountered by the French Explorer Iberville (Soule 1995). In 1763, the Biloxi moved and established two new villages (GCIA 1991, Soule 1995). One of these new villages adjoined the Tunica, and after the Biloxi sold their lands in 1800, many of the tribe's people blended with the Tunica (GCIA 1991). Others joined the nearby Choctaw or moved to Texas (GCIA 1991). Joining the Tunica was necessary, because when the French surrendered, the Biloxi were left without protection (Soule 1995).

Today, the Tunica-Biloxi are a blended tribe that has approximately 440 members (GCIA 1991). They have lost much of their language but retained some of their culture, crafts and traditions (Soule 1995). The Tunica received federal recognition in 1980, which allowed them to restore their roads, construct houses and build a tribal facility (Soule 1995). Eventually, a casino was built, which helped many of the Tunica-Biloxi get off public assistance and raised their standard of living. Others have looked for work in the manufacturing industry.

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