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# Horses, Culture, and Trade: The Impact of the Horse on Southeastern Native Nations, 1650-1830

Jacob Featherling

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HORSES, CULTURE, AND TRADE: THE IMPACT OF THE HORSE ON  
SOUTHEASTERN NATIVE NATIONS, 1650-1830

by

Jacob Featherling

A Thesis  
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and the School of Humanities  
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for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved by:

Dr. Joshua Haynes, Committee Chair  
Dr. Kyle Zelner  
Dr. Max Grivno

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Dr. Joshua Haynes  
Committee Chair

---

Dr. Luis Iglesias  
Director of School

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Dr. Karen S. Coats  
Dean of the Graduate School

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## ABSTRACT

A small portion of the regional literature details the impact of horses on Southeastern Native nations and focuses on a few of the larger groups, particularly the Choctaw, from the mid-eighteenth to the nineteenth century. This thesis intends to increase the scope to analyze the entire Southeastern region, as well as multiple Native nations in the area. The thesis argues that Southeastern Natives slowly adopted horses into their economies and cultures over a longer period of time than previously believed, allowing them to increase their use of horses easily to meet market demands. Instead of southeastern nations rapidly adapting their lives around horses after being introduced into a colonial economy, this research shows these Native groups were already familiar with horses and began to shape their culture around them by associating them with prestige, using them for hunting, and adopting them into important community ceremonies. Southeastern Indian groups assigned horses cultural value as prestige goods in the late seventeenth century, and increasingly assigned them economic value as beasts of burden, gradually increasing their use of horses throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as demand for the animals increased for both Natives and colonists. The argument relies on documentary evidence from European perspectives but also utilizes archaeological evidence and Native records to include Native voices in their own history. The thesis will help to fill a large gap in the historiography of the southeastern nations' market and cultural relationships with horses.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee, Dr. Joshua Haynes, Dr. Kyle Zelner, and Dr. Max Grivno for their continued patience and support for the project. This thesis was made possible through their aid and reassurance. I would also like to thank my cohort of graduate students who served as unofficial editors and a support group for my time here at the University of Southern Mississippi. Without them this thesis would certainly not be what is it today.

## DEDICATION

For my mother, Lynn, and my father, Mark, and other family who made this research possible through their support and efforts to push me to be who I am today, and for my friends who never doubted me, even when I doubted myself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..... iv

DEDICATION ..... v

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION ..... 1

CHAPTER II – BIG DEER AND SWIFT MEN: ANIMALS, LANGUAGE, AND  
CULUTRE IN SOUTHEASTERN NATIVE SOCIETY ..... 14

CHAPTER III - TREASURE TO TRANSPORTATION: HORSES IN THE  
SOUTHEAST BEFORE AND DURING THE DEERSKIN TRADE, 1663 - 1776 ..... 38

CHAPTER IV – DEERSKIN DECLINE AND HORSEMEN RISE: HORSE THEFTS  
AND THE SOUTHEASTERN BORDERLAND ECONOMY, 1776 - 1840 ..... 62

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION ..... 83

Bibliography ..... 86

## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

In the mid eighteenth century, William Bartram traveled in North America in order to document exciting new discoveries of the foreign land. Perhaps comparable to a modern day travel blogger, in his *Travels of the American southeast*, he notes “the towering Magnolia grandiflora and transcendent Palm.”<sup>1</sup> He continues with “innumerable droves of cattle,” “herds of sprightly deer,” “flocks of turkeys,” and “civilized communities of the sonorous watchful crane.”<sup>2</sup> This description may not sound too extraordinary for the American southeast, but Bartram notes one more thing: “squadrons of the beautiful fleet Seminole horse.”<sup>3</sup> Horses are not commonly thought of when discussing this region, and a tie to the Seminole nation begs the question: “what were the Seminoles’ relationship with the horse?”

This thesis analyzes southeastern Native Americans and their cultural and economic relationship with European horses. It argues that individuals in these Native groups began to identify cultural uses for horses in the late seventeenth century, started developing equestrian skills with the expansion of the deerskin trade in the eighteenth century, and became adept horsemen by the early nineteenth century. This research finds that these indigenous peoples gradually adopted the European beasts into their economies and cultures as their usefulness steadily increased in meeting Euro-Native market demands for Indian slaves, deerskins, and eventually horses themselves. Instead of southeastern nations rapidly adapting their subsistence strategies, political systems, and

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<sup>1</sup> William Bartram, *Travels and Other Writings*, ed. Thomas P. Slaughter (New York City: Literary Classics of the United States Inc., 1996), 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

social organizations around horses after increasing their interaction with a capitalist world economy, this thesis argues instead the tribes were already familiar with horses' economic and cultural value by the early eighteenth century. Southeastern Natives rather increased the use of horses as they became more valuable and available in the mid-1700s, though they already had introduced them into their cultures in the late 1600s and early 1700s and understood their applications in trade. However, this is not to say that every member of every group developed equestrian skills in the same capacity. Rather, individuals made choices based on their relationships to European traders and market availability.

Horses in southeastern Native American historiography have received some attention, but little in depth economic and cultural analysis. Historian James Taylor Carson produced the most influential material on the subject, starting with his 1995 article "Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 1690-1840."<sup>4</sup> He would later expand the article into a book titled *Searching for the Bright Path*.<sup>5</sup> Carson's works heavily influenced this thesis in scope and method. His argument traces the Choctaws's use of horses in their culture and economy and ultimately ends with the transition to an agricultural society. This thesis is in most direct conversation with Carson but analyzes the region as a whole. This research affirms the idea of horses flowing in from the Great Plains but contends that Natives stole and traded for horses from European settlers in the east as well. Another vital argument of this thesis is southeastern

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<sup>4</sup> James Taylor Carson, "Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 1690-1840," *Ethnohistory* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 495-513.

<sup>5</sup> James Taylor Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path: The Mississippi Choctaws from Prehistory to Removal* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

Indians increased their use of horses throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in tandem with increasing production of desirable trade goods and the use of other technologies introduced by Europeans. In fact, the historiography consistently shows these groups adapting their lives to meet increased market opportunities for deerskins and slaves and utilizing newly introduced firearms extremely effectively to do so.

In fact, the deerskin trade is an integral part of this thesis, and the topic's historiography makes significant contributions to its argument and context. Kathryn Braund's *Deerskin and Duffels* is a landmark work for Native trade in the southeast.<sup>6</sup> She studies the Creek nation exclusively, and deeply analyzes the deerskin trade and its effects. Jessica Stern's more contemporary monograph, *The Lives in Objects*, also discusses the deerskin trade more broadly.<sup>7</sup> While the book focuses on the cultures of the trading groups and their interactions, Stern clearly shows Natives increasing production of trading goods to meet Europeans' demands. Braund's work on the Creeks comes to similar conclusions. Because horses were an integral part of the deerskin trade for transportation, this thesis utilizes works on the subject to help contextualize this trading relationship while bringing the horse to the forefront.

Another thoroughly researched part of southeastern Native historiography is the indigenous slave trade and its effects on the region. Two of the most influential works dedicated to Native slave trading are Alan Galloway's *The Indian Slave Trade* and Christina

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<sup>6</sup> Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Jessica Yirush Stern, *The Lives in Objects: Native Americans, British Colonists, and Cultures of Labor and Exchange in the Southeast* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

Snyder's *Slavery in Indian Country*.<sup>8</sup> These spend much time on the cultural and social effects of the increased slave trafficking. However, both of these researchers clearly show Europeans demanded indigenous slaves, and the powerful nations of the area increased their captive taking to trade for goods and to create or strengthen alliances. This thesis is, in part, an extension of these scholars' ideas on Native Americans' ability to increase production of goods to meet demands.

One of the European goods southeastern Natives desired was firearms. While much research analyzes the introduction, integration, and eventual dependency on European firearms, David Silverman's *Thundersticks* dedicates an entire book to the subject.<sup>9</sup> Since *Thundersticks* is a continental study of firearms, he does not spend much time on the southeast. Nevertheless, the time he dedicates to the region is vital in understanding the effects of the European technology on the Natives. Firearms, like horses, saw an increase in use once Native Americans understood how the technology could help with trade, but also had cultural implications for masculinity, just as the horse did.

While James Carson's works most heavily examine Choctaw horses, other historians discuss the southeastern Natives' use of the animals in a more specialized manner. David Nichols' "The Enterprise of War: The Military Economy of the

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> David J. Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016). See also: Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*; Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*; Stern, *The Lives in Objects*; William L. Ramsey, *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2008); and Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Chickasaw Indians, 1715-1815” takes a more military oriented approach.<sup>10</sup> Warfare was a major part of not only Chickasaw society, but all of southeastern Native society. More importantly, warfare encompassed both Native-versus-Native and Native-versus-European conflict. Different groups prepared for war, fought differently, and took different spoils. Works such as Nichols’ provide some details of horse use by Natives but serve as a reminder to look at warfare as cultural and material exchange.

Robbie Ethridge’s *From Chicaza to Chickasaw* focuses exclusively on Chickasaw society and its development beginning in pre-colonial era.<sup>11</sup> Another of her books, *Creek Country*, takes a similar approach, but applies it to the Creek nation.<sup>12</sup> While Ethridge does not look at horses in the exact same way as Carson and Nichols, her works provide this thesis with two important things. First, Ethridge’s analyses allow for a fuller picture of the southeast with its incorporation of two more leading Native nations, along with some detail on their use of the horse. Second, Ethridge’s anthropology background makes the work an excellent source of ethnohistoric method. Ethnohistories incorporate traditional documentary evidence, but also utilize anthropological methods and archeological sources in order to create the clearest and truest representation of Native Americans as possible. Being a work of Ethnohistory, this thesis will follow this methodology.

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<sup>10</sup> David A. Nichols, “The Enterprise of War: The Military Economy of the Chickasaw Indians, 1715-1815,” in *The Native South: New Histories and Enduring Legacies*, eds. Tim Alan Garrison and Greg O’Brien (Columbia: The University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippi World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country*.

Influencing Ethridge and many others, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* is another vital source on Ethnohistorical method.<sup>13</sup> Smith, a Maori from New Zealand, discusses at length imperialism, colonialism, and a "western way of knowing," and their effects on indigenous research. Western sources, as with all writing, detail the point of view of the author which includes their biases. Smith encourages researchers to "decolonize" their minds to rid them of the same biases as their sources, and to think about writing indigenous histories to give back to the peoples.

The historiography of southeastern Natives spends limited time on horse usage in those societies. Therefore, this thesis draws from studies on different regions to influence methodology. Northeastern North America, much like the southeast, possesses few examinations on the relationship between European horses and indigenous peoples. However, Virginia Anderson's *Creatures of Empire* attempts to fill as much of the gap as possible.<sup>14</sup> Anderson looks at the introduction of livestock to the northeast and traces how it affected not only Native life, but Native-European interaction. In a way, this work fits in between Carson and Ethridge. Anderson spends much more time on livestock and horses than Ethridge, but her scope is far broader in both animals and nations studied than Carson. However, Anderson's research methods are still applicable in many ways to the southeast. Her broader-scoped analysis and documentation of Native-European relationships in exchange of livestock helps influence this thesis' scope.

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<sup>13</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Virginia Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2004).

By far the most developed area in regards to Native horse historiography is the American Great Plains. This region saw the most widespread adoption and integration of the horse into indigenous society. With many works on Plains Indians, two stand out as pinnacles in the historiography. Pekka Hämäläinen's *The Comanche Empire* details the birth, rise, and fall of the Comanches in the Great Plains.<sup>15</sup> Hämäläinen's work provides a great amount of detail on horses in Comanche life and society. Hämäläinen also discusses at length the Comanche's interaction with European empires, as well as the United States. Even though the region differs, Hämäläinen aids in this thesis' methodological approaches via his use of Euro-American sources. However, it is important to note that Hämäläinen's work does not incorporate Native voices into the history exceptionally well, which helps remind this thesis of the importance of ethnohistorical approaches and analysis.

A work that received much higher praise from the Ethnohistorical community for adhering to its methodology is Ned Blackhawk's *Violence Over the Land*.<sup>16</sup> Blackhawk takes a broader view of the Great Plains nations but spends a substantial amount of time discussing the Comanche due to their influence. Because he does not look exclusively at one nation, Blackhawk focuses his study by looking at conflict. Due to the Plains Indians's reliance on the horse, the animals dominate the work. Blackhawk also incorporates many other Native perspectives as well as European and American views. Again, much like Anderson, the research tools used by both Blackhawk and Hämäläinen inform this thesis' method, even though the regions differ greatly. However, on top of the

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<sup>15</sup> Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

better incorporation of Native voice, Blackhawk's focus on violence informs this thesis by showing that violence and its effect on Native societies help to influence their trade and culture.

This thesis makes a significant contribution to the historiography by challenging Carson's findings on southeastern Natives and horses by broadening the scope, ultimately arguing that many different Indians in the southeast recognized the cultural and economic potential of horses soon after their introduction. The research also contends that southeastern Natives' use of horses fits with their historic trend of increased production of tradable goods like deerskins and slaves and use of more efficient technologies like firearms to meet increasing European demand. However, due to the underdeveloped nature of the historiography, this research draws from works done on Natives and horses from the northeast and Great Plains for methodological approaches. In addition, this work includes elements of anthropological method and incorporates archeological evidence to adhere to ethnohistory practices. Finding and displaying Native voice and agency to aid in the telling of their own histories is of paramount importance.

Original historical research hinges on accounts from individuals who experienced events first hand. These primary sources, whether published or unpublished, provide the evidence needed to construct accurate and compelling arguments about the past. This thesis, while incorporating some archival material, relies predominantly on published primary sources. A wealth of published writings exists about European interactions with southeastern Natives. Such sources contain important material often overlooked by researchers. Part of the reason for this thesis is to reorient the field to think of these sources in new ways. For example, many works on the Natives in the southeast draw

from James Adair's *History of the American Indians*.<sup>17</sup> Adair's *History* is a firsthand account written after researching various nations in the southeast. While he originally wrote the book to argue the Natives descended from the Jewish people, he lived among the groups to study them for his work. His writings on the day to day lives, customs, and interactions of the Native groups with various others are of particular interest for this thesis, because Adair spared little detail about Indians' lives in his nearly five-hundred-page book. His work is vital to this research, informing much of Chapter III, Continental Contest & Conflict: 1663 – 1776.

Similar to Adair, many individuals traveled with and lived among Native groups in the eighteenth century. Thomas Nairne, John Lawson, and William Bartram are all examples of travelers who journaled their interaction with indigenous peoples.<sup>18</sup> Compared to authors such as Adair, these writers took more personalized first-hand accounts of their experiences instead of focusing on evidence to construct an argument. The journals are especially important to this thesis because of that fact. Nairne, Pope, and Bartram detail the more trivial, day-to-day personal interactions between the Natives, traders and travelers. However, that does not mean these works are free of biases, and one must read the accounts with that in mind. Regardless, sources such as these provide in-depth and intimate details on indigenous life and practices. The third chapter of this work

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<sup>17</sup> James Adair, *Adair's History of the American Indians*, edited by Samuel Cole Williams (New York City: Promontory Press, 1930.)

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Nairne, *Nairne's Muskhogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River*, edited by Alexander Moore (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1988); John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), Accessed online <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1838/1838-h/1838-h.htm>; Bartam, *Travels and Other Writings*.

relies heavily on the journals to show evidence of Native Americans using horses that previous researchers have overlooked.

While the interaction between individuals tells one story, interactions with governments show a different side altogether. Governments constantly keep records of dealings with individuals, groups, and other nations, and the subject of these documents give historians an additional lens. Official collections like *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, and *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* provide researchers insight on governments' relationships with Native Americans.<sup>19</sup> Treaties are important for this research because they exemplify conflicts and agreements between southeastern Natives and Europeans and Americans. The treaties are often specific enough to allow historians to infer the involved parties and their purpose. These collections of primary sources inform much of the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Government leaders also left behind records that explain their personal accounts of involvement in events of the past and serve as a hybrid between official government documents and journals of travelers. One of the most important government officials for this research is Benjamin Hawkins. After serving in the Revolutionary War and as a United States Senator, President George Washington chose him to be "Principal Temporary Agent for Indian Affairs South of the Ohio River" in 1796.<sup>20</sup> This

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<sup>19</sup> John T. Juricek ed., "Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776" in *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws*, edited by Alden T. Vaughn (University Publications of America, 2002); Francis Paul Prucha ed., *Documents of United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Charles J. Kappler ed, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II* (Washington D.C.: The United States Government Printing Office, 1904).

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Hawkins, *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810*, edited by H. Thomas Foster II, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), vii.

appointment forced Hawkins to directly connect and interact with various southeastern Native nations where he helped settle disputes between American settlers and the Natives, some of which directly involve horses and horse use. This unique position makes Hawkins' documents extremely valuable to researchers who study the American southeast, and vital to chapter IV of this work.

Finally, another vital group of sources for this project come from salvage ethnography. Ethnographers in the nineteenth century, such as John Swanton and James Mooney, produced works detailing a surviving record of Native cultures by combining surviving Native testimonies and primary source material. While these ethnographies tell us much about southeastern Natives in the nineteenth century, Ethnohistorical method includes a process called "upstreaming" which allows for the study of a broader period. Upstreaming is a process in which recorded ethnographies of peoples from a future time are used to make conclusions on their cultures in the past. The foundation of the practice rests on the notion that cultures change slowly over time, therefore, surviving records of cultural practices and events would not be significantly different in the past. Upstreaming is used in conjunction with other surviving records of the time period to corroborate claims made utilizing this method, and informs chapters II, III, and IV.

Chapter II opens with an analysis of indigenous oral traditions, emphasizing those with animals to show a deep connection between animals and Southeastern culture. In particular, legends involving deer take up much of this analysis. Deer were a vital part of not only the culture of this region's Natives, and the deerskin trade would aid in the increased use of horses. Thus, deer, much like horses, are an important cultural and economic resource, and serve as an example of another animal serving a dual purpose for

southeastern nations. Another important cultural component is language. Chapter II analysis the relationship in language between horse and other animals and establishes that multiple southeastern nations made explicit connections between their words for horse and deer. On top of this, analyzing the language surrounding other foreign or domestic animals these Natives were familiar with helps show that these peoples chose to incorporate the horse under their own terms.

Chapter III examines the colonization efforts by European powers and focuses on the deerskin trade. This trade of animal skins was the main economic market after the collapse of the indigenous slave trade in the region. Because of the increased demands for the commodity, Native men extended their hunts and began to incorporate individualized techniques to move as much product as possible. One of these new techniques was the adoption of horses to help move trade goods. Moreover, this chapter shows that the Native use of horses fits a pattern of using Europeans goods such as firearms to increase production. While the practice of incorporating European animals into Native societies was beginning to become more widely adopted, examining different cultural revivals of the period shows some nations beginning to see horses as a fundamental part of their culture, while demonizing other European beasts.

Chapter IV begins with the collapse of the deerskin trade after the American Revolution. Horse thieving gradually increased with the collapse of the deerskin trade but exploded after the American Revolution and the increase of white settlers pushing southwest. In addition, the United States government began to pressure the regional Natives into a European agrarian lifestyle. Horses were increasingly valuable, and Native men used these horses to help fill the economic gaps left by the deerskin trade. This

concludes by showing southeastern Indians fully utilizing horses in both trade, theft, and ranching up until removal.

Chapter V serves as a conclusion while cementing the continuity of the horse in southeastern Native culture. It opens with a contemporary news story of a Choctaw horse breed being discovered in the wild. The news story acts as an example of horses still being a part of southeastern Native America. The conclusion will then briefly recount the main points of each chapter, tying everything back to the thesis of this paper: since the late seventeenth century southeastern Native Americans have utilized horses in their cultures and economies, increasing the animals' roles in their societies as horses became more useful to them. However, Natives adopted the horse on their terms, and continued to develop a relationship with the animal outside of Euro-American influence.

## CHAPTER II – BIG DEER AND SWIFT MEN: ANIMALS, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE IN SOUTHEASTERN NATIVE SOCIETY

In the early twentieth century anthropologist John Swanton began researching and collecting information on the surviving Native tribes of the southeast for the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology. He is the credited author of several books detailing spiritual practices, origin stories, and other significant cultural events for the various Native nations of the region and is considered to be one of the forefathers of the ethnohistoric method. Ethnohistorians that study the southeast all rely on the materials he produced due to the wealth of information he was able to obtain from the surviving members of the indigenous societies. In his works readers find tales of culturally significant beings of the southeast. Through these mythical tales a deeper understanding of southeastern Native culture can be achieved.

In his work titled *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians*, Swanton recorded a story named "The Deer Taboos."<sup>21</sup> "The Deer Taboos" depicts an indigenous hunter who is invited by deer to follow them to their home. At the abode of his prey the hunter becomes "fascinated by [crowns made of deer horns] and [the deer] put one on his head and he went out with it."<sup>22</sup> After "wander[ing] about eating acorns" other Native hunters shoot and skin him.<sup>23</sup> The hunter-turned-deer then returns to the home of the deer where a cycle of him being hunted and returning to the deer for a new skin and crown repeats. Another instance of a human-deer hybrid is seen in the description of Kashehotapalo,

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<sup>21</sup> John R. Swanton, *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians* (Washington D.C.: The United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 126.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

found in Swanton's *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*.<sup>24</sup> Swanton describes the Kashehotapalo as "a combination of man and deer who delights in frightening hunters."<sup>25</sup> These two instances of men becoming deer and their relationship to hunting signify that the deer was an important part of southeastern Native culture, especially masculinity. Additionally, since deer held such a high place in these societies, anything related or associated with these prestigious animals could also be considered important to the southeastern Indians.

This chapter explores the cultural significance of the deer in the southeast and the relationship between horses and deer after their introduction in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries. It argues that the indigenous peoples of the region began to fit horses into the same cultural category as the deer and accelerated this process as the population of white-tailed deer declined throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By analyzing rituals, hunting, worn adornments and clothing, and language this chapter claims that shortly after their introduction Native actively related horses to deer and began to use them as supplements to deer in cultural practices. This chapter leads with a further dissection of the deer's role in southeastern Native society and evidence of horses supplementing or replacing them in various cultural practices. Next, a linguistic analysis of Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw languages will show that members of the Muskeogen language family derived their word for horse directly from deer, linking them again. Finally, the chapter will end with a comparison between the

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<sup>24</sup> John R. Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians* (Washington D.C.: The United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 198.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

adoption of the horse and the cow, and how the differences between the two show a closer link between horses and deer comparatively.

*Deer and Horses in Southeastern Spiritual Practices, Ceremonies, & Culture*

The deer was a spiritual cornerstone for southeastern Natives. Before the nineteenth century, deer were more than plentiful in the southeast, with one early twentieth century researcher's estimate being as many as forty million.<sup>26</sup> While the estimate might be more generous than realistic, the fact remains that the bountiful population of deer gave southeastern Indians a reliable resource for food, clothing, and tools, which they had been utilizing since Mississippian times. Robbie Ethridge states that Mississippian Natives developed core tenants of their society based around deer hunting: "Because of the abundance of game in [the southeast], especially white-tail deer, in the late winter and fall people abandoned their farmsteads for communal hunting activities."<sup>27</sup> From her work, it is clear that the ancestors of the Chickasaw and other regional nations split their subsistence strategies between farming and hunting, but, more importantly, since the hunts were communal we can see them as a foundation to their societies. In the early 1700s and before, hunting was not the task for one man or a small group of men, but a process in which the whole community participated, signifying its importance to the culture. Additionally, taking into account the writings of travelers, surveyors, and traders, Mississippian descendants continued regular deer hunting throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The fact that the seasonal deer hunts

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<sup>26</sup> Ernest Thompson Seton in Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York City: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 153.

<sup>27</sup> Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 32.

continued from Mississippian times throughout the early nineteenth century shows that deer and deer hunting were important to southeastern Natives' lives and societies.

More evidence of the deer being a pillar of southeastern Native society comes from Native origin stories, hunting songs, rituals, and cultural objects that place the animal in a significant role, if not the centerpiece to their story. Anthropologists, such as Shepard Krech III, have worked to record and analyze these peoples' relationship with the deer. He writes, "[Deer] meat and skins circulated [in the southeast] as objects of practical or symbolic significance in a number of social contexts."<sup>28</sup> He elaborates by providing examples such as entire families or clans including deer in their name, or Chickasaw girls being called "doe" or "little fawn."<sup>29</sup> John Swanton also found that the Creek and Seminole peoples both had clans named after the deer, and that they were present in thirty-seven of the forty-four towns he studied.<sup>30</sup> Names and identity, both literally and culturally, are fundamentally linked. The existence of groups or individuals being named after the deer is another case of a reverence to the animal on a broad level.

Dances for the southeastern peoples also signify as certain reverence to animals in general. In his work on the culture of the indigenous southeast, anthropologist Charles Hudson states "many of the dances were named after animals, and the Indians believed that these dances affected the animals and their relations to man."<sup>31</sup> Hudson offers an example via the horned-owl or snake dance: "The Alabamas would not dance the horned-

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<sup>28</sup> Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 155.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>30</sup> John R. Swanton, *Social Organization and Social Usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy* (Washington D.C.: The United States Government Printing Office, 1928), 123-127.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 403.

owl or snake dance in June, July, or August because both dances employed a serpentine movement that was believed to make snakes angry or vengeful.”<sup>32</sup> So, any dance named after horse or deer, or incorporate the animals would signify an importance to their culture. The very same horned-owl dance involves a break for the men to go deer hunting to bring back venison that is exchanged with the women for bread.<sup>33</sup> This exchange is important because it exemplifies a commitment to traditional gender roles of men hunting deer and women cooking. In essence, the horned-owl dance is not only a celebration, but an act of upkeep and restating fundamental parts of Southeastern culture.

Southeastern Native response to any threat on their deer or land where the deer resided also provides insight on their feelings towards the animal. Krech III later states that “the Yamasee declared war against Carolina colonists, in part from the destruction of white-tails along the coast.”<sup>34</sup> While the anger for the destruction of the deer by the hands of the British might have been partially motivated by hurting food or trade resources, seeing how important the deer was to the southeastern Natives’ culture it makes sense that the declaration of war was culturally motivated as well.

Moreover, the hunting and processing of the deerskin was another vital part of southeastern Native society, with men and women both having distinct, vital roles in the process. For example, Creek men on the hunt would perform a ritualistic cleaning of their bodies and weapons, and “carried charms attractive to deer” in hopes that the spirits associated with the deer would find them worthy.<sup>35</sup> They would also carry with them a

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<sup>32</sup> Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 403.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 405-406.

<sup>34</sup> Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 161.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

“sabia” which was a special piece of deer skin with red paint inside of it with which they would mark their face to attract the deer.<sup>36</sup> Songs also played a part in the hunt, some of which had the power to attract or blind the deer being tracked by the Creek men.<sup>37</sup> Creek women, on the other hand, held rituals and superstitions of their own involving deer. In his work on Creek life, Swanton quotes Adair saying: “the Indian women always throw a small piece of the fattest of the meat into the fire when they are eating, and frequently before they begin to eat. Sometimes they view it with a pleasing attention and pretend to draw omens from it. They firmly believe such a method to be a great means of producing temporal good things, and of averting those that are evil.”<sup>38</sup> To the Creek, the deer was not just a means for food and clothing, but something with supernatural significance, and connections to such an animal would not be made lightly.

The horse enters the Creek mythos with appearances involving natural phenomena as well as being a part of important cultural displays such as communal dances. John Swanton’s *Creek Religion and Medicine* quotes early Creek anthropologist W. O. Tuggle findings on where thunder and lightning come from: “The [Creek] say of lightning that a little man rides a yellow horse, and when he shoots his arrows, it thunders.”<sup>39</sup> The fact that the horse is used to explain something naturally powerful and fundamentally curious suggests that the Creek understood the horse or one’s ability to control a horse to be related to strength or speed. Also, this story links horses with the

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<sup>36</sup> John Reed Swanton, *Creek Medicine and Religion*, reprinted (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 499.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 499.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 517.

<sup>39</sup> W.O. Tuggle in Swanton, *Creek Medicine and Religion*, 487.

traditionally masculine role of bow handling in Creek society, which suggests that horse riding was further becoming linked to men.

Perhaps a more powerful example of horses being integrated into Creek society comes from Swanton's retelling of the annual busk ceremony. The busk, as Swanton notes, is a perversion from "poskita" or "boskita" and is a fast accompanied by dances to celebrate the Creek New Year.<sup>40</sup> Wondering about the busk's origin, a Creek from Coweta reportedly told Swanton that the ceremonies were "given by God when he made the world."<sup>41</sup> As an event handed down by their creator, the busk is understood to be one of the most important cultural ceremonies in Creek society. Importantly, the horse makes an appearance with a dance named for it, and as a necessary part of other dances.

Unfortunately, Swanton did not record the role of the Horse Dance, nor any detail of the dance itself, but keeping in mind Hudson's statements on animals in dances, the fact that it makes a named appearance shows that the Creek had a high enough reverence for the animal. However, the horse's minor role in another dance, the Wolf Dance, provides more evidence to the horse's uses in Creek events. A Creek informant explains: "To dance the Wolf Dance the men rise very early on a day that has been previously fixed upon and meet at the square, each riding his best pony."<sup>42</sup> While the men do not dance on their horses for the Wolf Dance, each man was required to ride his best horse which suggests that some men likely owned multiple to choose from, and that one's quality of horse mattered for Creek men. Additionally, taking into account Hudson's example of the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 546.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 546.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 556.

horned-owl dance, since men are culturally expected, if not required, to ride a horse, this could be a restated connection between masculinity and equestrianism in Creek society.

Analyzing the Chickasaw's culture reveals they shared very similar ideas about the importance of the deer with the Creek. Swanton, who also studied the Chickasaw, claims that hunters would carry a special root called the "deer tail" which they believed "charm[ed] the game."<sup>43</sup> Chickasaw legends also speak of the "iyaganasha" who were small beings, only seen by hunters and doctors. These "little people" instructed only the hunters they found worthy, and taught them how to more successfully find deer because they were "experts in pursuing game."<sup>44</sup> Additionally, Adair says the Chickasaw sacrificed a portion of, if not the entire first deer of the summer and winter hunts "either as a thanksgiving for the recovery of health and for their former success in hunting; or that the divine care and goodness may still be continued to them."<sup>45</sup> Chickasaw women share the belief that burning deer fat in fire can predict bounties and omens depending on how the fat burns.<sup>46</sup> Adair makes another connection between the Creek and Chickasaw when it comes to why the two groups, especially men, preferred to eat deer over other animals.

"[The Chickasaws and Creeks] believe that nature is possessed of such a property as to transfuse into men and animals the qualities either of the food they use or of those objects that are presented to their senses. He who feeds on venison is, according to their physical system, swifter and more sagacious than the man who lives on the flesh of the clumsy bear or helpless dunghill fowls, the slow-footed tame cattle, or the heavy wallowing swine."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> John Reed Swanton, *Chickasaw Society and Religion*, reprinted with a foreword by Greg O'Brian (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 69.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>45</sup> Adair, *Adair's History of the American Indians*, 123-124.

<sup>46</sup> Swanton, *Chickasaw Society and Religion*, 81.

<sup>47</sup> Adair, *Adair's History of the American Indians*, 139.

The Choctaw also place deer as a vital part of their society and culture. Again, Swanton covers the Choctaw in the same ways as his works on the Chickasaw and Creek, even going as far as to state: “as a whole their manner of life was similar to that of the Creeks.”<sup>48</sup> In his writings, he states that a Choctaw man sporting a deer tail was seen in the society as a successful hunter, so appearances and identity for men were linked in Choctaw society.<sup>49</sup> The Choctaw also named individuals after deer, with Swanton mentioning a man named Isi mallei, meaning “Running Deer.”<sup>50</sup> Swanton also displays a section of Simpson Tubby’s, an American agent and informant of the Choctaw, report on the headwear of Choctaw headmen saying it “could be made of any kind of skin,” but his captains’ “could be made of any material except deer, bear, and opossum skin.”<sup>51</sup> While deerskin was one of the primary sources of clothing for the Choctaw, the fact that only headmen could adorn headwear made of deerskin implies a connection to status or prestige that shows a distinction not only to his council but to his entire chiefdom and surrounding chiefdoms.

One key display of the importance of deerskins to the Choctaw is by analyzing its many uses in their communal games. Deerskins were a necessary part for the popular Choctaw ball game “ishatoli,” which was another way for men to display their physical prowess, and for men and women alike to wager on their teams.<sup>52</sup> Choctaw women would also play after the men’s game, but this seems to be almost exclusive to this nation. The

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<sup>48</sup> Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 44.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Simpson Tubby in Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 102.

<sup>52</sup> Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 140.

games were festivals accompanied by singing, dancing and music, with members of both sexes dressing “in their finest costumes,” which adds a certain significance to the events.<sup>53</sup> The drums used in the music were often covered in deerskin as well as the wooden sticks used to capture the ball, and the ball itself was fashioned by rolling deerskins tightly in on itself.<sup>54</sup> However, it is in this ball game where the connection between deer and horses are more clearly defined in Choctaw culture. Swanton states “a deer tail, or, failing that, a horse tail, was mounted on a stick and fastened behind a man who was a fast runner, particularly by a ball player.”<sup>55</sup> Here is a firm example of a horse entering the same realm of deer in Choctaw culture, with masculinity being a key component of the relationship. Adding this instance to the discussion of deer parts signifying importance or status shows that the Choctaw had truly begun to intertwine deer and horse through cultural signals.

In addition to the horse tail substitution, the Choctaw’s consumption of horse meat may further reveal a connection between their understanding the spiritual power of deer and horses. Adair states that the Choctaw “took to eat[ing] horse-flesh,” and Carson also finds that the Choctaw ate horses as part of a communal funeral feast by the early eighteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, French traveler Louis le Clerc Milfort found that in the mid eighteenth century during his travels amongst the Choctaw that “they are very fond of horse flesh; and when they find any of them dead even from natural causes, they

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<sup>53</sup> Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 140.

<sup>54</sup> Bossu in Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians* 140, 224.

<sup>55</sup> Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 44.

<sup>56</sup> Adair, *Adair’s History of the American Indians*, 139; Carson, “Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 504.

prefer them to beef and to any other meat.”<sup>57</sup> Considering how southeastern nations believed that adorning animal parts or consuming the meat of animals provided them with enhanced abilities, it is plausible that the Choctaw understood that eating horses may have granted them swiftness. While Adair states that the Creeks and Chickasaw believed in the transferring of physical properties through consumption, the Choctaw could have believed something similar. As seen in this chapter, the Natives of the southeast share similar hunting practices, naming of individuals or groups, and are all in some decedents of the Mississippian society. Additionally, Swanton argues that the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek all share a related social organization, and, as stated above, that the Choctaw and Creek lifestyles were very similar.<sup>58</sup> While it may not be the sole cause, the Choctaw’s consumption of horse meat to gain the animal’s abilities aligns with other held beliefs of the Choctaw and their related neighboring nations.

The Cherokee also place deer in a high cultural place, with the horse also having some important roles. James Mooney, another agent of the Bureau of American Ethnology, did extensive research on the Cherokee which resulted in his *Myths of the Cherokee*. In this work he states that Cherokee hunters “had many songs intended to call up the deer...They were sung, by the hunter...before starting out or on reaching the hunting ground.”<sup>59</sup> Hudson states that “among the Southeastern Indians music was closely tied to dance” which suggests a similar relationship between songs and dances

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<sup>57</sup> Louis le Clerc Milfort, *Memoirs; or a Quick Glance at My Various Travels and My Sojourn in the Creek Nation*, translated and edited by Ben C. McCary (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1972), 123.

<sup>58</sup> Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, 1, 44.

<sup>59</sup> James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, reprinted (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 435.

when dealing with animals.<sup>60</sup> While southeastern Natives avoided dances that used snake-like movement to avoid upsetting them, the Cherokee also sang songs to the deer to attract them before their hunts, which shows that the Cherokee believed that their ceremonial actions directly influenced their lives.

The Cherokee origin myths are also full of deer related stories. Mooney recorded one of the most famous Cherokee tales on the creation of game and corn about Kanati and Selu. To begin, it is important to note that Mooney's literal translation of Kanati is "The Lucky Hunter" and Selu is "Corn" which shows that hunting, and deer by extension, as well as corn are fundamental pillars of Cherokee society.<sup>61</sup> Gender roles are established in this story as well with Kanati "never fail[ing] to bring back a load of game" which Selu "would cut up and prepare."<sup>62</sup> Kanati and Selu's two sons, which are representative of the Cherokee people, also let loose all of the animals into the forest, and as a punishment they are required to hunt the wild game in the woods with no guarantee of success.<sup>63</sup> However, the story concludes with the sons passing down songs that "call up the deer" two of which were still sung when the story was recorded.<sup>64</sup> From the beginning to the end of Kanati and Selu's story the deer is a focal point, and from this it is clear that the animals are an integral part of many aspects of Cherokee life.

The horse makes an appearance in Cherokee legend with the story "The Man Who Married the Thunder's Sister." The story opens with a dance celebration and a

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<sup>60</sup> Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 403.

<sup>61</sup> Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 242.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 243-244

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

“young warrior fall[ing] in love” with a young woman accompanied with her sister.<sup>65</sup> He asks her to marry him to which she “replied that her brother at home must first be consulted.”<sup>66</sup> The woman’s brother agrees to meet the warrior and she leads him back to her home. Shortly after they arrived a “loud roll of thunder” occurred, to which the woman said, “now our brother is home.”<sup>67</sup> Taking this context and the title of the story into account, the thunder is the woman’s brother that he must discuss the marriage with. The man was frightened, but the thunder invited him to a council which the man agreed to go on the condition he had a horse to ride.<sup>68</sup> The man is provided with “a great uktena snake” which the woman and the thunder insisted was a horse.<sup>69</sup> After more hesitation the thunder provides a saddle and arm bands for the uktena which turn out to be a turtle and snakes, respectively.<sup>70</sup> The man cries out that he could not live in such conditions to which the thunder replied by casting him out of their abode.<sup>71</sup> While the horse does not have a main role in the story, the fact that the warrior requested one after being asked to travel suggests that Cherokee men used were expected to arrive on horse when attending a council, or that the Cherokee were used to utilizing horses to travel great distances. Additionally, since the thunder offered the warrior a saddle and reins as a means of comfort, it shows that the Cherokee had long been utilizing horse tack and that it was commonplace in their culture.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 346.

Like the Cherokee, deer and horses served various cultural functions throughout the different societies of the southeast. We see these animals playing important roles in stories on origin or involving supernatural beings, games, songs, dances, and superstitions. A close tie to masculinity is also present for horses and especially deer throughout the entire region. Women also participated culturally via the preparation and cooking of the meat of both deer and horses. With that said, a look at the linguistic connection between deer and horse offers additional evidence at their relationship in the Natives' eyes.

#### *Native Language and Linguistic Connections*

Historian James Taylor Carson shows that by the 1690s, the Choctaw acquired horses from western Native nations, such as the Caddo and Osage, which shows that the southeast was beginning to familiarize itself with the animals by the late seventeenth century.<sup>72</sup> Carson also looks at the cultural differences between the two nations to show that the Choctaw, from the beginning, understood horses in their own terms.

“[The Caddo’s] name for horses, *cavali*, derived from the Spanish *caballo*, suggests the regional trade of horses in conformity with Spanish conceptions of trade and alliance. Consequently, horses served these tribes as an important exchangeable commodity in the trade with Europeans for guns, cloth, and other manufactured items. Unlike the Caddo, the Choctaws developed an indigenous term for the new animal. Jesuit priest Jacques Gravier recorded in 1701 that Choctaws called horses *isuba*, which derived from *isi holba*, or deer-resembler.”<sup>73</sup>

The report by Gravier is bolstered by the Byington Choctaw dictionary, a dictionary compiled in the nineteenth century by a Smithsonian agent, which also defines

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<sup>72</sup> Carson, “Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 1690-1840,” 497.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 497. The emphasis in the text is the author’s.

“isuba” as horse and deer as “isi,” firmly linking the two words linguistically.<sup>74</sup> More importantly, looking at how the Choctaw word for horse changed from literally meaning “deer-resembler” to a new, closely related word that simply includes a prefix related to deer is another example of the Choctaw fully committing to identifying with horses and incorporating them into their culture on their own terms. After 1701, the year Gravier recorded “isuba,” horse population in Choctaw country consistently trended upward due to more European commitment to colonization and trade. Carson states that in 1829 the Choctaw nations had a recorded population of fifteen thousand horses which was “a ratio of .8 horse per capita.”<sup>75</sup> With Carson showing that the Choctaw were among the first in the southeast to have regular contact and early utilization of horses, it is safe to say that the change in the Choctaw word for horse, combined with the use of horse tails as substitutions for deer tails for ball games, is further evidence of this group having a strong and lasting connection to the animal.

In addition, the Choctaw word association raises questions on their view of the horse from its introduction. Accepting Carson’s claim that the Choctaw are receiving their first horses from the Caddo, one might assume that the Choctaw would then adopt a word related to the Caddo or Spanish words for horse since they are the suppliers. However, there is, at most, eleven years between the first known instance of the introduction of horses via the Caddo and Gravier’s penning of “isuba,” which Carson claims derives from another deer associated word. Language is malleable, and many words can exist to describe the same thing but seeing that the most prominent surviving

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<sup>74</sup> Cyrus Byington, *A Dictionary of the Choctaw Language*, eds. John R. Swanton and Henry S. Halbert (London: Forgotten Books, 2017), 426, 473.

<sup>75</sup> Carson, “Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 1690-1840,” 506.

Choctaw words for horse all relate to deer, it seems that the Choctaw did not adopt the Caddo word nor its role as an “important exchangeable commodity.”

Interestingly, similar evidence of linguistics links exists in other nations’ languages from the southeast. For example, Martin and Mauldin’s recently re-edited Creek dictionary from 1890 states the word for deer is “eco” where the full form of horse is “eco-rakko,” or “big deer.”<sup>76</sup> The dictionary also shows the words “cerakko” and “corakko” also translating to horse, with the latter exhibiting a very close relationship to “eco-rakko.”<sup>77</sup> “Rakko” possessed many definitions in Creek language, and analyzing these various other meanings allows for a better understanding of how the nation felt about the horse. For example, rakko is synonymous with “great” and “big,” and often used in conjunction with other words to signify importance.<sup>78</sup> Understanding the multiple uses and meanings of rakko further solidifies the Creek’s reverence for the horse. In sum, this is another case of a southeastern Native nation creating their own word based on another animal’s importance to them instead of adopting or borrowing the word from a foreign language. This evidence also suggests that the Creek, like the Choctaw, forged a deeper bond with the animal as time progressed, with the word remaining closely related to the word for deer, but taking on its own unique identity.

The Chickasaw are another southeastern people that have a linguistic connection between deer and horse. The Munro and Willmond Chickasaw dictionary, a contemporary compilation of the language from Native speakers, states the Chickasaw

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<sup>76</sup> Jack B. Martin and Margaret McKane Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 225, 255.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

word for deer is “issi’,” where horse is “issoba.” These are very similar to the Choctaw’s words for the animals but still distinctly Chickasaw.<sup>79</sup> The reason for the similarities between the Choctaw and Chickasaw words is most likely due to both of the two being in the same Muskeogan language family, but as time passed they developed their own distinct languages/dialects. However, the previous research on the Chickasaw shows that the region as early as the mid sixteenth century was connecting horses to deer. In Ethridge’s *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, when she depicts a Mississippian leader gaining intelligence on the coming Spanish army, she states the Indian men understood the Spanish to be riding “big deer.”<sup>80</sup> As mentioned above, the full Creek translation equates to “big deer” as well. Having no previous contact with European horses before, it makes sense that Mississippian Natives defined these strange animals in terms they understood.

Importantly, much like the Choctaw, surviving records of the number of horses the Chickasaw possessed indicates that they had fully accepted the animal. Hudson states that in the summer of 1837 during a forced migration “one of [the Chickasaw’s] worse problems was that a gang of horse thieves followed them, stealing horses whenever they could.”<sup>81</sup> Presumably a gang of thieves would not follow a group if the group did not possess many things to be stolen. A more concrete example is seen that same year in a winter log that places four thousand Chickasaw in possession of “four or five thousand horses.”<sup>82</sup> This instance places a higher ratio of horse to men than that of the Choctaw’s

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<sup>79</sup> Pamela Munro and Catherine Willmond, *Chickasaw: An Analytical Dictionary* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 404, 440.

<sup>80</sup> Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 461.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 461.

recorded number in 1829, aiding the idea that the number of horses possessed by the summer Chickasaws must have also been sizable.

Looking further into the Choctaw, Creek, and Chickasaw languages strengthens these Nations' connections between deer and horses. The words for similar animals, such as dogs, show no connections to the word for deer. Dogs in particular are a good place to begin because the animals were native to the southeast and utilized by the peoples far before Europeans crossed the Atlantic, meaning that Natives chose to refer to horses as deer-like instead of dog-like from the first contact. The Chickasaw word for dog is "ofi," the Choctaw say "ipaf" or "ofi," and the Creek refer to the animals as "efv."<sup>83</sup> While the Chickasaw and Choctaw words are identical, the Creek word, although spelled differently when translated to English, is quite similar in form and function. Horses resemble deer more than dogs physically being larger, four legged animals, and in lifestyle with both being herbivores, so it makes sense that Natives would choose to associate the two larger animals together. But the fact that southeastern Natives chose to associate horses with deer suggests that they decided that the European animal should be of a higher standard than dogs, with one European traveler stating Native dogs were "seemingly Wolves" and "made tame with starving and beating."<sup>84</sup> While the traveler in question, John Lawson, was touring the southeastern countryside in the early eighteenth century, it is unlikely that indigenous peoples drastically shifted their treatment of dogs between 1708 and the early nineteenth century seeing as there was no cultural or economic catalyst to spark the

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<sup>83</sup> Munro and Willmond, *Chickasaw: An Analytical Dictionary*, 407; Cyrus Byington, *A Dictionary of the Choctaw Language*, eds. John R. Swanton and Henry S. Halbert, 433; Martin and Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, 228.

<sup>84</sup> John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, Accessed online <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1838/1838-h/1838-h.htm>.

change as seen with horses. Deer were still treated with the utmost respect in southeastern native culture with their importance not diminishing until the severe overhunting of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>85</sup> With that being said, after the collapse of the deerskin trade around the turn of the nineteenth century, Native men in particular began to look to horse keeping and stealing to fill the economic and cultural gaps left by the failing deer population.

Lawson's journals provide another interesting piece of information on the relationship between domesticated animals and the indigenous peoples of the Carolinas. He recalls the complex definition of the word for slave: "As for Servant, they have no such thing, except Slave, and their Dogs, Cats, tame or domestick Beasts, and Birds, are call'd by the same Name: For the Indian Word for Slave includes them all."<sup>86</sup> As can be seen in the dictionaries that exist today, that southeastern Natives possessed separate words for dogs and other tamed animals, what Lawson documented raises important questions on how these Natives from the Carolinas understood their relationship between domesticated animals and themselves. By equating "slave" with dogs and other domesticated animals, Lawson's journal suggests that domesticated animals were understood as laborers, or their identity directly linked with the labor. Although Lawson does not say what these Natives called horse, the linguistic link shared by the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek all suggest that most peoples of the southeast did not primarily associate horses with labor, but instead chose to associate them to respected deer.

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<sup>85</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*.

<sup>86</sup> John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, Accessed online <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1838/1838-h/1838-h.htm>.

The choice to form a linguistic connection between horses and deer rather than other Native animals such as the dog shows the importance of the horse to the Choctaw, Creek, and Chickasaw since their continuous contact with the European animal. Here we see that the southeastern Natives decided to associate this new animal with something familiar, and that this decision had some cultural implications that developed throughout the eighteenth century. However, it should be noted that the Cherokee word for deer “ahawi” and their word for horse “sogwili” do not match the pattern established by the Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw.<sup>87</sup> The Cherokee do not belong to the Muskegeon language family, but instead, according to James Mooney, “belong to the Iroquoian stock.”<sup>88</sup> However, even though the Cherokee is an outlier in language a consistency across all of these nations’ language exists when considering another European introduced animal: the cow.

#### *Southeastern Natives’ Response to Cows*

Comparatively, the cow does not see the same amount of recognition as the horse or deer in cultural myths of the southeast. One of the few tales is recorded by Swanton and sees the cow asking the Judeo-Christian God to make her more “fruitful.”<sup>89</sup> God tells her to go spend the night in a garden and to return the next day. Instead of just resting, the cow “fed on the vegetables all night and destroyed the beautiful garden.”<sup>90</sup> This story provides two important pieces of information that allows for a better understanding of the

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<sup>87</sup> Durbin Feeling, *Cherokee-English Dictionary* (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma: 1975), accessed online <http://www.cherokeedictionary.net/>.

<sup>88</sup> James Mooney, *Historical Sketch of the Cherokee*, reprinted with a foreword by W.W. Keeler, and an introduction by Richard Mack Bettis (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1975), 4.

<sup>89</sup> Swanton, *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians*, 73.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

relationship between southeastern Native Americans and cows. Firstly, this story shows the cow speaking with the Juedo-Christian God, which again ties it directly back to Europeans. Comparatively, in the story about the man who wanted to marry thunder's sister, the horse is being used in a tale strictly involving Native beliefs, which suggests that the horse was able to transcend the bridge over into Native culture. Secondly, this tale can be viewed as voicing of a complaint that southeastern Natives had about cows. As will be discussed further in chapter four, unfenced cows were a common nuisance for the indigenous southeast because the beasts would come into Native farm lands and eat their crops. In the story God says to the cow "See what *destruction* you have caused in one night," which shows that the creators of the myth saw the beings as inherently flawed because of their gluttony and destructiveness.<sup>91</sup> While unregulated horses could cause havoc as well, these animals were still useful for transportation and load-bearing. On the other hand, cows' con of crop destruction and high maintenance greatly outweighed their pro of a food source.

Combined with cows in the southeastern mythos, comparing the Native words for horse and cow provides further insight on the acceptance of foreign beasts into southeastern Native society. Cows were introduced by Europeans shortly after their North American colonies were established, with Carson showing the Choctaw being familiar with the animal by 1701.<sup>92</sup> Horses, cows, and deer are all herbivores that graze in open fields, unless enclosed in a fenced in area. But, Natives more readily accepted the horse into their societies and were far more likely to run into horses rather than cattle,

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>92</sup> Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path*, 54.

especially in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, because horses were used by European traders for transportation. In addition, as previously stated the Western Native nations were also quick to deal in horses but did not trade cows in the same frequency or numbers, partly because early adopters of the southeastern nations did not see them as useful as horses.<sup>93</sup> So, even though the cow and the horse can serve useful functions and have comparable eating habits to each other and the deer, this early familiarity with and quick adoption of the horse compared to the cow directly links to the language surrounding both animals and their acceptance and role in southeastern Native society.

The Chickasaw call the cow “waaka,” the Choctaw refer to the animal as “wak” or “wak tek,” and the Creek say “wakv,” and the Cherokee named them “wahga.”<sup>94</sup> However, the definition in the Martin and Mauldin Creek dictionary claims that the Creek word “wakv” derives from the Spanish word for cow: “vaca.”<sup>95</sup> This means the Creek word for cow was borrowed or inspired by the Spanish, which is entirely different from the construction of their words for horse from deer. Carson also states this on the matter: “other tribes, including the Osages, Wichitas, Cherokees, and Creeks, as well as those speaking the Mobilian trade dialect that was the lingua franca of the Lower Mississippi Valley, also used a Spanish loanword, vaca, for cattle.”<sup>96</sup> While the dictionaries do not fully support Carson’s claim, the idea is still the same: all of these southeastern nations

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>94</sup> Munro and Willmond, *Chickasaw: An Analytical Dictionary*, 399; Cyrus Byington, *A Dictionary of the Choctaw Language*, eds. John R. Swanton and Henry S. Halbert, 420; Jack Martin and Margaret Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, 220; Feeling, *Cherokee-English Dictionary*, accessed online <http://www.cherokeedictionary.net/>.

<sup>95</sup> Martin and Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*, 220.

<sup>96</sup> Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path*, 54.

borrowed from the Spanish to create their words for cow. Mooney connects the Cherokee word for cow to the Spanish as well.<sup>97</sup> This can also be taken one step further. Looking at each of these nations' words, distinct similarities can be drawn between them all.

Carson's argument on the Caddo's relationship with Spanish words can be applied here as well. Because the Caddo borrowed their word for horse from the Spanish, he argues that the Caddo then saw "the regional trade of horses in conformity with Spanish conceptions of trade and alliance."<sup>98</sup> If the Caddo borrowing the Spanish word for horse means they understood horses to be, at least in part, inherently tied to the Spanish, the same argument applies to the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek, and Cherokee nations' relationship with cows and horses. All of these languages share a borrowing of the Spanish word which by Carson's standards means these groups understood the cow to be Spanish and not Native. Therefore, since the Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek associated horses with something inherently Native, their word for deer, they were choosing to claim horses and define them in their own terms as an important part of their culture.

Taking this into account, the similarities between the Native words for cow across the southeast, and relationship between Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek words for deer and horse are all strengthened. Since the English explorers all recorded similar sounding words for cow across the southeast and current dictionaries state the word possesses some connection to the Spanish language, a regional adoption of the word based on the Spanish saying is likely. Additionally, since the translated words for deer and horse are so closely linked phonetically in the Muskogean languages, the connection is strengthened further.

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<sup>97</sup> Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 265.

<sup>98</sup> Carson, "Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 1690-1840," 497.

Even the outlying Cherokee drew inspiration, as did the others, from the Spanish when deciding on the word for cow, which shows a more unified regional belief in the animal being foreign.

As this chapter has shown, studying the cultures of the southeastern Native Americans provides much insight about their beliefs on animals and their roles in society. Animals play important parts for numerous things such as games, myths, superstitions, assigning gender roles, and social hierarchies and organization. Another important part of culture, language, also shows southeastern Natives linking horses more closely to deer than to other European beasts like cows. This combined with the elevated position of deer in southeastern society suggests that these peoples chose to more readily accept the horse based on its usefulness to their lives. This idea of adoption based on utility is particularly strengthened when considering the horse's use in one of the largest exchange schemes between European colonists and Natives of the southeast: the deerskin trade.

### CHAPTER III - TREASURE TO TRANSPORTATION: HORSES IN THE SOUTHEAST BEFORE AND DURING THE DEERSKIN TRADE, 1663 - 1776

After the Spanish Entradas into the southeast in the mid to late 1500s, the region's Native Americans saw their lives revolutionized. In many ways, these groups successfully beat back an invasive army, and even manipulated the Spanish to benefit them in political endeavors. However, with the Spanish came another invasive species: epidemic diseases. The introduction of these diseases into virgin lands decimated the population of the southeast who had no acquired immunity nor any understanding of how to treat the plagues. On top of this, as the conquistadors traveled throughout Mississippian country they often took advantage of Natives's reserved food supplies either via hospitality or force. These food supplies were saved for emergencies such as long winters and poor harvests. The loss of the stockpiles only amplified the hardships of these chiefdoms after the blights began to take hold. Because of these reasons, the Mississippian societies spread out in the area fragmented into what anthropologist Robbie Ethridge has called a "shatter zone."<sup>99</sup> After the shattering of the southeast, the surviving Native peoples, because of their cultural ties to one another and the fluidity of identity in Mississippian society, were able to coalesce into the societies that Europeans would come into contact with in the middle seventeenth century.

As Europeans reconnected with the southeast in the late 1600s, trade, conflict, and compromise between the different peoples almost immediately emerged. It was during this time of prolonged contact and developing relationships where southeastern Natives began to see horses first as prestige goods and later as a kind of practical economic asset.

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<sup>99</sup> Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 60.

Whether through theft, gift, or exchange, some members of southeastern Native tribes began to utilize horses. However, the animal's use was just beginning and increased throughout the late 1600s and 1700s. This was due, in part, to commodities demanded by Europeans. As the southern British colonies, such as South Carolina, became increasingly established and stable they began to engage in an indigenous slave trade. South Carolina is of particular interest to this chapter because of its role in both slave trading with Native Americans and the Yamasee War. The Indian slave trade caused wide-spread raiding throughout the region, with larger polities preying on each other and smaller chiefdoms. This eventually culminated in a multi-nation attack on British South Carolina in the Yamasee War. Adoption of horses was limited during the era of the Indian slave trade because southeastern Indians viewed horses as prestige goods with limited economic utility.

However, as the deerskin trade exploded onto the scene after the Yamasee War, horses became a useful tool in the traveling to hunting grounds and transporting skins, which led to an increase in Native demand for and acceptance of the animal into their societies. After the collapse of the slave trade post-Yamasee War, Europeans and Natives quickly resumed their exchange. Since the trade of indigenous slaves was outlawed by the British colonies and the African slave trade increased, deerskins became the primary commodity in demand. Although beginning shortly after the colonization of the region by Europeans, the deerskin trade flourished for much of the eighteenth century. In fact, the trade was so expansive that it began to alter southeastern Natives' hunting patterns and societal structures. With more product able to be exchanged, the Native traders were able to get more of their desired goods in return. The deerskin trade would continue to

dominate the exchange between southeastern Native and Europeans up until the end of the eighteenth century, after which the market for the skins and number of traders shrunk.

*Reconnection, The Indigenous Slave Trade, & The Yamasee War*

For the 1600s and into the 1700s, Native control of the land aided their ability to incorporate horses into their own societies as they saw fit, instead of Europeans instructing them on the uses and roles of horses. After the Spanish incursions in the sixteenth century, other European nations started to stake their claims on the North American continent in the 1600s. For example, in the southeast, Great Britain chartered the colony of Carolina in 1663, while France founded Fort Maurepas in present-day Biloxi, Mississippi by 1699.<sup>100</sup> Importantly, these territories were “Native Grounds” during this time. Historian Kathleen DuVal defines “Native Ground” in her work on Natives in the heart of North America: “As a whole, Indians outnumbered non-Indians... Besides their numbers, Indians took advantage of Europeans’ lack of information about the region and its peoples to shape their understandings and actions, as the Quapaws did with Jolliet and Marquette in 1673.”<sup>101</sup> The European colonies were dependent on the region’s friendly Natives for survival. Combined with limited support from the colonial centers, this dependency allowed Native Americans to maintain their independence and afforded them much power in dealings with colonizers. Ultimately, the level of establishment, ideology, and connection to the metropole all impacted the

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<sup>100</sup> Daniel H. Usner Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 13.

<sup>101</sup> Duval, *The Native Ground*, 4.

Natives' ability to dictate the terms of colonization and control their adoption of European goods.<sup>102</sup>

Many different Native nations in the southeast came into contact with European settlers, and because of the Indians' power and knowledge of the area, the fledgling European settlements relied heavily on Native goods and practices to survive in this foreign land, again allowing Natives to adopt European goods like horses on their own terms.<sup>103</sup> Smaller indigenous groups such as the Biloxi on the Gulf Coast, and the Yamasee in Carolina shared spaces with larger nations in the southeastern region such as the Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Creek.<sup>104</sup> These groups were not the same as the ones De Soto and Luna encountered, but these new coalescent societies still maintained control over the land.<sup>105</sup> As Frenchmen and Englishmen came over the Atlantic to settle the new colonies, interaction with the Native groups began immediately. Moreover, due to limited space and overall risk, colonizing Europeans brought only essentials on their dangerous voyage across the sea, meaning the population of horses introduced to the region was limited in the early days of colonization. On top of this, it is very unlikely that the southeastern Natives possessed any leftover horses from the earlier Spanish incursions into the region.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, the autonomy the Native groups possessed in

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 6, et passim.

<sup>103</sup> Usner Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy*, 17. It should be noted that this trend is present throughout different regions of North American colonization and is agreed upon by different regional scholars. For the Northeast see Andrew Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* (Princeton: Yale University Press, 2015); For the Heartland see Duval *The Native Ground*.

<sup>104</sup> Most Native Nations have multiple different names depending on the context and who is referring to them. For example, the Creek also go by the name of Muscogulges. For the sake of consistency and clarity, this thesis will be referring to each Nation as listed here, even though the sources may call these Peoples by different names.

<sup>105</sup> Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 2.

<sup>106</sup> Jared Vincent Harper, "The Adoption and Use of the Horse Among Southeastern Indians," *Tennessee Anthropologist* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1980), 27.

the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries allowed them power in interactions with the Europeans.

Even though Europeans brought little more than the bare minimum, both colonial and Native traders quickly looked to strike up deals with each other to establish peace and foster relationships with exchange partners. With these early trading relationships established, as Europeans began to import more horses they were more willing to trade the animals to the Natives. These early days of trade saw European textiles, clothes, tools, jewelry, and weapons being exchanged for Native food and other goods.<sup>107</sup> However, the colonizers could not impose their ideas on the process of exchange upon the Native Americans in the southeast. Due in part to their reliance on Indians for survival and the power the indigenous peoples held in the relationship, Natives forced Europeans to abide by their practice of reciprocal gift-giving in order to begin and maintain peaceful trading relationships.

Gift-giving was the dominant form of diplomacy in trading for southeastern Native Americans, and horses could have been a good desired in this exchange. Evidence of reciprocal gift-giving's role in facilitating relationships between different chiefdoms goes as far back as Mississippian times and survived the Spanish Entradas in the 1500s.<sup>108</sup> In order to begin and maintain a peaceful trading relationship with these peoples, initiators provided gifts to leaders of individual chiefdoms, or "micos." The micos would consider the gifts provided and, if deemed suitable, accept them, signaling the establishment of a peaceful relationship. However, the mico could also demand

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<sup>107</sup> Usner Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy*, 13-14.

<sup>108</sup> Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 181.

additional gifts if he found the supply lacking. If the initiators refused to up their ante, relations between the two groups would sour and attempts to renegotiate would take additional effort and goods. Trading diplomacy was one of the micos' primary roles in southeastern Native society, and his ability to obtain gifts and then redistribute them to other members of his chiefdom is how he solidified his leadership. However, the mico's role as a distributor of goods changed as Europeans became more established in the southeast, especially after the Yamasee War.

As the name implies, reciprocal gift-giving was not a one-sided affair. Both members of the trading alliance were expected to exchange gifts. For southeastern Natives, one potential gift was indigenous slaves. Slavery was not a new concept for southeastern Native Americans. Even before contact, Mississippian chiefdoms took captives in warfare with competing chiefdoms, and the practice continued on after the Spanish Entradas.<sup>109</sup> However, slavery operated far differently in indigenous society compared to the racialized, chattel systems developing in the Spanish, French, and British colonies in North America in the 1600s and 1700s. Indigenous slaves were most often women and children captured after a raid on a rival chiefdom in the region, who were then brought back to the raiders' chiefdoms to be used as labor or adoptees to supplement a falling population. For Native men, capturing slaves served as both a way to display their prowess in battle, and increase their standing in the chiefdom, which shows that captive taking impacted both local economics and culture.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 64-65.

<sup>110</sup> For a more in depth discussion on the workings and processes of Indigenous slavery and the Indian slave trade in the Southeast two land mark studies exist in the field: Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*; and Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*.

Native Americans quickly learned that indigenous slaves were extremely appealing to European colonizers and used them to further cement trading relationships with Europeans. The trading relationships established during this exchange provided the necessary avenue for horses to flow into the southeast from the British. By the early eighteenth-century, Europeans became more established in the New World and the industry of colonialism truly began. With profit in mind, colonizers searched for stable cash crops and lucrative natural resources to extract and use to enrich the motherland. In the southeast, tobacco, rice, indigo, and animal skins all filled the requirements, and colonial production of these goods increased rapidly. The demand for these goods was nearly insatiable. With this in mind, the colonies ran into a problem: a shortage of labor. While indentured servants filled some of the demand, much of it during the mid-to-late seventeenth century was filled with indigenous slaves received in exchanges with the region's Natives.

As participants in the exchange of captives, Native captors sought out European commodities they found purposeful or useful to their lives. Between firearms, improved traditional weapons and tools, and new cookware, southeastern Natives showed no qualms with adopting new technology into their societies as long as they found a way to apply it to their lives and cultures. Thomas Nairne, a British man who traveled Chickasaw territory in 1708, recorded his interactions with the Chickasaws in a journal where he stated that “a lucky hit at [slaving] besides the Honor procures them a whole Estate at once, one slave brings a Gun, ammunition, horse, hatchet, and a suit of Cloathes” which shows the high value of a slave and notes that a horse was a possible

item for trade in the exchange.<sup>111</sup> It is also important to note that even with the incorporation of these new goods, Natives continued to use them, or alter them to fit traditional ideas of labor and production, meaning that these tools did not fundamentally alter Native societal operations. These same ideas of acceptance based on usefulness are similarly applicable to horses and is discussed further in the coming chapters.

An indigenous slave trade would come to develop in the early eighteenth century and is an early example of southeastern Natives supplying a European demand in exchange for European goods they desired. Native consumer demands for European products were strong, especially for firearms and ammunition. In his work on the spread of firearms throughout the American continent, historian David Silverman states “The southeastern slave trade was fundamentally a trade of humans for munitions in which marauding Indian slavers grew ever more formidable by selling captives for arms, while previous victims became raiders themselves in order to obtain guns for protection and predation.”<sup>112</sup> Used for both raiding and defense, the introduction of guns revolutionized southeastern Native society, aided in the expansion of the indigenous slave trade, and further developed ties between Indian and British traders.

A similar situation occurred simultaneously with firmer, stronger metals introduced by Europeans, which regional Natives quickly demanded metalware in exchanges to amplify their already existing tools such as axes and hoes.<sup>113</sup> Southeastern Natives’ haste to adopt these European goods into their everyday lives can be explained in part by their usefulness. Two of the main roles for women in these societies was food

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<sup>111</sup> Nairne, *Nairne’s Muskhogean Journals*, 47-48.

<sup>112</sup> Silverman, *Thundersticks*, 57.

<sup>113</sup> Stern, *The Lives in Objects*, 128.

production and preparation. Upgraded farming tools made the digging, sowing, and harvesting process much easier for both personal and communal fields. In addition, European metal cookware was a desirable good for these women. Southeastern women had no problem using European goods, and in many cases preferred them.<sup>114</sup> Even though exchange and trade existed in the male sphere of southeastern Native societies, women's market demands influenced the exchange between indigenous and European traders.

The captive-for-gun exchange persisted for years, but as the 1700s progressed continued violence between Native groups began to cause significant damage to populations and tribal politics, ultimately reaching a breaking point with the Yamasee War. British traders, now with more support from England, began to increase the rate of exchange for firearms. To compensate for this, Natives began dealing in credit and going into debt to maintain access to powder and shot they now relied on. Historian William Ramsey presents other factors for growing hostilities between Natives and British colonists, citing "diplomatic concerns" and "reprehensible conduct" by British traders.<sup>115</sup> Regardless of the causes, tensions between the two groups eventually erupted in war.

The Yamasee War signaled the beginning of the end of the indigenous slave trade, after which Europeans and Natives would have to find a new commodity to continue their exchanges. The Yamasee War was almost disastrous for British South Carolina. In his work on warfare in the southeast in the early eighteenth century, historian Larry Ivers states: "If the Indians had realized how unprepared South Carolina was for a preemptive

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<sup>114</sup> Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender, and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 66.

<sup>115</sup> William L. Ramsey, "'Something Cloudy in Their Looks': The Origins of the Yamasee War Reconsidered," *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 1 (June, 2003), 46-47.

strike, they might have exerted more effort to coordinate and sustain their attacks during the spring and summer of 1715. South Carolina could have fallen.”<sup>116</sup> Native groups both large and small combined their forces to attack the colony, and nearly reached the capital of Charles Town in 1715.

While the near collapse of a colony by the hands of Native Americans is notable, the ways in which the colonists lived and fought during this period show that the population of horses was increasing in the region. Just before the outbreak of the Yamasee War, colonists from South Carolina “preferred to ride on horseback when traveling on paths and roads,” and partook in horseracing in their free time.<sup>117</sup> After war broke out, Governor Charles Craven mustered a militia cavalry unit called the “Horse Guard”, which consisted of forty men and horses as early as April 1715.<sup>118</sup> The fact that there were enough animals for horseracing to be a common occurrence combined with South Carolina’s ability to raise a cavalry unit quickly after war broke out shows that the population of horses was increasing in the region. In addition to South Carolina, other British, French, and Spanish colonies as well as western Native nations all contributed to an increasing population of horses, meaning the animals were more easily accessible for Native Americans to obtain through gift-giving or trade.

However, Native Americans still obtained some horses in the early days of colonization, and their reactions to the animals provide insight on how these groups would come to adopt them into their societies. In the late seventeenth and early

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<sup>116</sup> Larry E. Ivers, *This Torrent of Indians: War on the Southern Frontier, 1715-1728* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2016), 201.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

eighteenth centuries, when horses were less commonly available to them, Native Southerners saw them as prestige goods due to their exoticism. Additionally, keeping exotic prestige goods keeps with their ideas on reciprocal exchange systems that dated back to the pre-contact, Mississippian era. John Lawson mentioned that, in his eyes, southeastern Indians were “of a quite contrary Disposition to Horses.”<sup>119</sup> European travelers frequently recorded the Natives’ lack of familiarity with or incorrect use of foreign goods and technology, but Lawson’s elaboration provides some interesting material. He continued: “some of their Kings having gotten, by great chance, a Jade, stolen by some neighbouring Indian, and transported farther into the Country, and sold; or bought sometimes of a Christian, that trades amongst them.”<sup>120</sup> This passage illustrates the relationship between the Carolinian Native Americans and horses. Firstly, Lawson states that it was “Kings” or micos that seemed to have ownership of the animal. In the time before the Yamasee War, claiming, retaining, and redistributing prestige goods was how a mico held and maintained his authority.<sup>121</sup> Since Lawson only found that, at least in the Carolinas, men in leadership positions possessed horses, this is evidence that the animal was considered by the Natives as prestigious. Lawson’s immediate follow-up, “by great chance,” offers a sense of scarcity for horses in Indian country during the early 1700s. Contact between these Natives and British traders in the back country was sporadic. There is ample evidence of European wares, especially rare ones, being commonly seen as prestige goods by the peoples of the southeast.

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<sup>119</sup> John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, accessed online <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1838/1838-h/1838-h.htm>.

<sup>120</sup> John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, accessed online <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1838/1838-h/1838-h.htm>.

<sup>121</sup> Stern, *The Lives in Objects*, 8.

Lawson's reasoning on how these "Kings" received their horses provides more insight on the Natives' relationships with them. Lawson states the two ways micos obtained horses was through trade with other Indians who stole the horses from the colonies or through colonial traders as gifts or products of exchange. This statement confirms that Natives were at least familiar with the horse in the early eighteenth century. In addition, either if the horse was obtained through trade or theft it shows that Natives in Carolina had an understanding that the animal was valuable at the very least to the colonists. While the lack of consistent transactions suggests that there was a limited indigenous market for or supply of the animal, Natives were beginning to understand the horse possessed some value. This initial connection to worth the Natives made would expand as the usefulness of the animal increased throughout the seventeenth century.

Lawson's last words on these peoples' methods of horse keeping provide more on how the animals were understood to be prestige goods by the Carolinian Indians during the early 1700s. He writes, "These Creatures they continually cram, and feed with Maiz, and what the Horse will eat, till he is as fat as a Hog; never making any farther use of him than to fetch a Deer home, that is killed somewhere near the Indian's Plantation."<sup>122</sup> Comparing Lawson's statements on the treatment of dogs to the overfeeding of the horse suggests that horses possessed some degree of importance to the micos, furthering the idea that they were understood to be valuable prestige goods. Natives overfed and pampered horses while starving and beating dogs, showing that they ranked horses higher in their hierarchy of animals. Finally, the portion of Lawson's writings that discusses

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<sup>122</sup> John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, Accessed online <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1838/1838-h/1838-h.htm>.

using the overfed horse for nothing more than transporting a nearby slain deer back to the village suggest that these indigenous peoples from the Carolinas had begun to use horses as beasts of burden. All in all, in the early 1700s Carolinian Natives began their ownership of horses and slowly started linking them to their societies and way of life.

Other evidence suggests other Native nations of the Deep South interior also saw horses as prestige goods. Nairne elaborated on the Indian slave trade in his 1708 journal.

“The Chicasaws live in an Excellent hunting country, both for Larg dear, and other game, but the deficulty of carriage makes their trade of less Value, but their is a remedy to be had for this. Formerly when beavor was a commodity they sold about 1200 skins a year but no imployment pleases the Chicasaws so well as slave Catching. A lucky hit at that besides the Honor procures them a whole Estate at once, one slave brings a Gun, ammunication, horse, hatchet, and a suit of Cloathes, which would not be procured without much tedious toil a hunting.”<sup>123</sup>

The first part of this passage shows that, at least in Nairne’s eyes, a more successful deerskin trade could develop if the Chickasaws possessed better means of transportation. Horses could fill that role nicely, and Lawson suggests Natives in the region may have already been experimenting with that idea. However, Nairne is clear that the Chickasaw were not using horses to carry deerskins. His writing shows that one reason the deerskin trade had not fully developed yet was because of the success of the Indian slave trade. Riches and prestige, according to Nairne, followed after Native warriors brought captives back for trading. Other researchers examining the Indian slave trade and how it operated in southeastern Native society have shown that captive taking was directly linked to climbing the social ranks and obtaining prestige items necessary to maintain that status.<sup>124</sup> With a horse being on the list of potential goods that a captor could receive in

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<sup>123</sup> Nairne, *Nairne’s Muskhogean Journals*, 47-48.

<sup>124</sup> See Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, and Gallyay, *The Indian Slave Trade*.

return for a slave, along with Lawson's claim that only "kings" held horses, it seems that the European animals held some prestigious connections.

Both Nairne and Swanton state that Natives valued horses as exotic prestige goods to be purchased or stolen, then monopolized and pampered by their elite owners, but not used solely as tools to carry loads. The horse's equation to prestige because of rarity also follows previously held beliefs on reciprocal exchange of southeastern Natives. While there is evidence of limited use of horses for labor, with the expansion of the deerskin trade in the early 1700s this trend would increase dramatically. Indeed, just as guns saw a dramatic increase in demand in use as vital component of the Indian slave trade, the horse would come to fill a necessary role in the hunting and exchanging of deerskin.

#### *Horses & The Deerskin Trade*

Even though the Yamasee War nearly caused South Carolina to collapse, Great Britain would not be deterred from their colonial expansion. In his book on the relationships between English maps and Anglo-Native trade in the southeast, historian Robert Paulett explains that "On numerous maps in the 1700s, Britain's imperial planners drew ambitious plans for future colonies, eventually resulting in the founding of Georgia in 1732."<sup>125</sup> Ramsey states that Georgia was at least in part founded for defensive purposes in the post-Yamasee War era.<sup>126</sup> This imperial craving for expansion would be met with a similar desire to return to peaceful trade and alliance making between the British and Natives. Because the Yamasee War stemmed from the indigenous slave trade,

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<sup>125</sup> Robert Paulett, *An Empire of Small Places: Mapping the Southeastern Anglo-Indian Trade, 1732-1795* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), 12.

<sup>126</sup> Ramsey, "Something Cloudy in Their Looks," 45.

Great Britain outlawed the buying and selling of enslaved Indians in 1717. On top of this, enslaved Africans were beginning to pour in to replace the laborers lost after the collapse of the Indian slave trade. Indeed, historian Alan Gally states in his landmark work on the indigenous slave trade that “The Yamasee War marks a watershed: from then until the Civil War, South Carolina’s wealth lay in its ownership of black slave labor.”<sup>127</sup> Limited cases of illicit Indian slave trading exist after 1717, but between the government crackdown on the practice and the increase of Africans, the trade all but ended. A different commodity was necessary to facilitate the return of trade between Natives and the British. Luckily for both parties, a familiar product saw an increase in demand in the eighteenth century: animal skins. Robbie Ethridge concludes in her work on the Chickasaw: “After the Yamasee War, the Chickasaws, as well as the other Southern Indians, segued from trading in Indian slaves to trading in skins, mostly those of the white-tailed deer. Throughout the slaving era, skins and furs had been part of the trade system, but they took second place to the more highly valued Indian slaves.”<sup>128</sup> The white-tailed deerskin trade encompassed, even dominated, the entire southeastern region after the Yamasee War.

The deerskin trade triggered a shift from using human burden bearers and captive coffles to using packhorse trains, a shift that gave Native Americans more familiarity with horses and more chances to obtain them. South Carolinian traders began to morph their exchange practices in the immediate post-Yamasee War era. Indeed, Ramsey argues that “horses appeared on southern trade paths not because the market demanded them but,

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<sup>127</sup> Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 346.

<sup>128</sup> Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 255.

rather, because they offered one way of maintaining diplomatic relations among key groups of people who were willing to make economic sacrifices to maintain those relations.”<sup>129</sup> Before the Yamasee War, Indian burden bearers were the primary mode of transporting goods between British colonies and Native towns. The trading parties charged with moving the goods, however, were highly susceptible to raids and thefts. As historian Jessica Stern shows, shipments of both animal skins and European goods on courses to different buyers and sellers could easily be intercepted and incapacitated while the thieves made off with the goods.<sup>130</sup> Ramsey argues that South Carolinians, severely shaken by the Yamasee War, chose to shift almost exclusively to the packhorse in order to more reliably make the transactions with their Native partners. The colonists understood that to avoid additional conflicts with the Indians, reliable trading was essential. The shift to the packhorse was not a cheap endeavor, but it further increased the population of horses in the southeast. Additionally, it created an even greater sense of familiarity between Natives and horses, while simultaneously providing these peoples with more chances to obtain them.

In the years following the Yamasee War and the increase of trade in animal skins, men’s roles in southeastern Native society changed slightly, and this change opened an avenue for horsemanship to develop. While the men still maintained their roles as hunters, the length of hunts began to increase, with men being gone for months to hunt deer. Indeed, as historian Jessica Stern states in her work on Native labor in the southeast, “Their winter and summer hunts lengthened to the point at which hunting became a

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<sup>129</sup> William L. Ramsey, *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South* (Lincoln, The University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 194.

<sup>130</sup> Stern, *The Lives in Objects*, 152.

yearlong activity.”<sup>131</sup> On top of this, due in part to the longer hunting seasons, large communities began to shrink and shifted to more to mobile family groups. Stern argues that “as the deer population dwindled over the eighteenth century, stalking individuals and small groups of deer was more effective, a practice that was best carried out in smaller numbers.”<sup>132</sup> While Native society and culture still held strong, a shift to smaller group and individual work opened an avenue for more individual practices to be adopted, such as horses used for trading.

Because of the increased time spent and ground covered during the hunts, more and more Native men turned to horses to aid in the transportation of skins to European trading posts in Indian country or to colonial trading centers. Native women also appreciated the introduction of horses with the increased demands of the deerskin trade. While southeastern Natives’ traditional roles saw the men hunting the deer, women were charged with transportation back to their communities and skin processing. Indeed, in his work on the horse in Choctaw society historian James Taylor Carson states that by the 1730s “[Choctaw] women began to use horses to fetch the game” and “women also drove horse trains laden with provisions when they accompanied their husbands on long hunting journeys and returned with horse trains weighted down by the skins.”<sup>133</sup> This statement shows that, by the 1730s, the Natives on the western fringes of the southeast had begun to incorporate horses more fully into their everyday lives and the population of the animals had increased significantly.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>133</sup> Carson, *Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians*, 498.

Southeastern micos also saw their roles begin to shift with the expansion of the deerskin trade, and this change allowed for Native individuals to begin to demand more horses in their exchanges with Europeans. As discussed above, the micos' traditional role was to accept gifts and redistribute them throughout the chiefdom in order to maintain his leadership. During the eighteenth century, however, micos' authority came from having access to a large European trade network. With the increase of individual Native men exchanging goods with European traders, the micos' role as distributors was no longer needed, so they shifted to developing ties with European traders to provide access to certain goods instead of receiving the items themselves.<sup>134</sup> Since transactions now were more likely to occur between European traders and common men of different chiefdoms, horses became more commonly used by Native individuals in order to transport their goods to European traders.

The relationship between Ulrich and John Tobler from South Carolina, Thomas Rasberry from Georgia, and a Creek man called Tobler's Friend demonstrates the trend toward more intensive use of horses in the more individualistic deerskin trade. Thomas Rasberry was a colonial trader who had a business relationship with Indian trader Ulrich Tobler. Essentially, Tobler was the middleman that facilitated the trade between his Native contacts and the British colonies. Rasberry kept a letter book of his inventory, personal letters, and business correspondences that has survived. From this letter book Stern draws the story. She states that in January 1760 "Tobler's Friend and his wife packed up their hunting camp and loaded their two horses with thirty deerskins," and then

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<sup>134</sup> Stern, *The Lives in Objects*, 13-14, et passim.

headed toward home hoping to find Ulrich to trade for a firearm and ammunition.<sup>135</sup> Stern goes on to explain that the relationship between Ulrich and Tobler's Friend developed over some twenty years of interactions and previous transactions.<sup>136</sup> The fact that the Creek man was known as "Tobler's Friend" suggests that Rasberry understood that Ulrich and his Native supplier had a personal relationship. Tobler's Friend could have traded with other vendors but he chose to wait.<sup>137</sup> Tolber's Friend understood that the relationship he built with Ulrich would net him the most profit while simultaneously continuing the bond with the European middleman.<sup>138</sup> However, Ulrich passed away in the summer of 1759, which left his son John in charge of his trading operations.<sup>139</sup> John then met with Tolber's Friend to deliver the news of his father's death, which Tobler's Friend saw not only as a loss of a consistent trading partner, but also a friend of twenty years. This story shows that individuals in Creek society had been developing personal relationships with European traders by 1740 where they would receive a preferred status the longer the relationship went on. Stern's retelling of Rasberry's letter book also shows that by the 1760s, horses were owned by individual Creeks who used them as a necessary part of this exchange.

Cherokees also became more accustomed to horses in their societies in the mid-eighteenth century, though evidence exists that the Cherokee already were familiar with and even owned the animals earlier in the 1700s. In her book on Cherokee women, historian Theda Perdue agrees with Ramsey's claim that packhorses became the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 151-152.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 150.

dominant form of transportation for colonial traders after the Yamasee War, but she also states that “By 1718 a number of Cherokee men seem to have owned horses. [European] Traders even occasionally bought or borrowed horses from Native owners.”<sup>140</sup> James Mooney also contends that horses were available to the Cherokee “early in the [eighteenth] century.”<sup>141</sup> The chronology is consistent with first hand reports from Thomas Nairne and John Swanton. As time progressed horses were moving inland from the colonial centers to Native ground, resulting in more access and a larger population. However, anthropologist Robert Newman argues that 1740 is a significant point for Cherokee access to horses due to the “opening of the great horse path from Augusta, Georgia to the Cherokee country.”<sup>142</sup> This opening of a horse path greatly increased trade and traffic between Georgia and Cherokee country, ultimately growing the number of accessible horses after 1740. This increase of horses after 1740 went hand-in-hand with the expansion of Cherokee participation in the deerskin trade. In fact, Perdue cites the Cherokee deer hunts of 1756 being so successful that “the traders began to run out of goods to exchange for skins.”<sup>143</sup> Horses would have been greatly beneficial, if not necessary, in order to move the skins from the hunting grounds back to the towns.

Archaeology reports provide evidence about an increasing prevalence of horse ownership in Cherokee society, while showing that conflicts such as the Anglo-Cherokee War could heavily influence Native ability to maintain a horse population. In 1976, archeologist William Baden conducted a dig on the Cherokee town of Tomotely on the

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<sup>140</sup> Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 79.

<sup>141</sup> Mooney, *Historical Sketch of the Cherokee*, 72.

<sup>142</sup> Robert D. Newman, “The Acceptance of European Domesticated Animals by the Eighteenth Century Cherokee,” *Tennessee Anthropologist* 4, no. 1, (Spring 1979), 102.

<sup>143</sup> Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 70.

Little Tennessee River in what is now Tennessee. The published findings argue that the region was “occupied by Lower, Middle, and Valley Cherokee refugees between 1751 and 1776.”<sup>144</sup> The list of contents related to horses found in the dig include “1 bridle, bit,” “2 horseshoe,” “2 saddle brace,” and “1 stirrup.”<sup>145</sup> One might imagine that, if the Cherokee had a lot of access to horses and incorporated the animals into their societies, more artifacts would have been found here. However, the author states “[horse] tack did not appear in trade lists until after the 1750s” which shows that some horse furniture was less readily available to the Cherokee compared to the animals themselves.<sup>146</sup> The report also reveals that Tomotley was home to refugees, suggesting that certain luxuries would have been scarce. Even with their refugee status, the small amount of horse related items that survived shows that the materials were considered valuable enough to keep. Part of the reason that Tomotley was occupied by refugees is due to conflicts between the British and the Cherokee, most importantly the Anglo-Cherokee War from 1759 to 1761.<sup>147</sup> The Cherokee War, as the South Carolinians would come to call it, fits neatly between the estimated timeline produced by Baden, so the residents of Tomotley likely included refugees from the conflict. Importantly, James Adair cites this conflict as the reason for a significant decline in the population of horses in Cherokee country. He states that “The Cheerake had a prodigious number of excellent horses, at the beginning of their late war with us; but pinching hunger forced them to eat the greatest part of them.”<sup>148</sup> Since the

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<sup>144</sup> William W. Baden, *Tomotley: An Eighteenth Century Cherokee Village* (Knoxville: The Tennessee Valley Authority, 1983), iv.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>147</sup> For a more in depth discussion of the war, its causes, and effects see Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Revolutionary Era* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>148</sup> Adair, *Adair's History of the American Indians*, 242.

Cherokee were forced to eat many of their horses to survive, it makes more sense that the amount of horse related material found at Tomotley was limited.

While the evidence for horses in Tomotley is limited, Cherokee horse ownership steadily increased, allowing Cherokees to continue to use the animals, and even begin to use them in new ways such as raising and selling. Adair noted in his travels that sometime between 1750 and 1775, “almost every one [of the Cherokee] hath horses, from two to a dozen; which makes a considerable number, through their various nations.”<sup>149</sup> The sheer number of horses owned by the Cherokee is indeed considerable, and it foreshadows a shift from using the animals strictly as beasts of burden to using them as commodities for sale. As will be discussed further in Chapter IV, when the deerskin trade began to collapse, southeastern Natives continued to rely on horses as a part of their economy through gathering and selling them outright.

Another important occurrence happening in the eighteenth century is the start of southeastern nations being credited with their own horse breeds, which suggests that Europeans also understood the Indians to be developing a horse culture. William Bartram noted that both the Chickasaw and the Choctaw “say they brought with them across the river those fine beautiful creatures called the Chicasaw & C[h]actaw Breeds.”<sup>150</sup> Adair adds to the Chickasaw’s history of horses by stating their “breed of running wood horses” were descendants of “Mexican or Spanish barbs.”<sup>151</sup> The evidence certainly aligns with Carson’s findings that the first horses available to the Choctaw and Chickasaw came

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>150</sup> William Bartram, “Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians,” in *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, edited and annotated by Gregory A. Waselkov and Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 141.

<sup>151</sup> Adair, *Adair’s History of the American Indians*, 205.

from western nations such as the Caddo. It also shows that Europeans were beginning to understand the animals as Native born and bred. Natives themselves likely had understood them to be part of their culture for some time.

Seminoles, too, had a strong association with their own individual horse breed. The introduction of this thesis draws upon part of Bartram's *Travels* in which he reports seeing "squadrons of the beautiful fleet Seminole horse."<sup>152</sup> Bartram would go on to explain the history of the Seminole breed: "The Seminole Horses, or those beautiful creatures bred amongst the Lower Creeks, which are of the Andalusian Breed, were introduced by the Spaniards of St. Augustine."<sup>153</sup> Bartram appeared very impressed by the Seminole breed and praised the animals' high quality, especially their appearance. If others similarly admired Seminole horses, it may indicate growing demand for the animals among Euro-American consumers.

This shift found in Cherokee and Seminole society is a precursor to a larger, region-wide shift towards horse selling that began to occur in the 1770s. Just as the collapse of the Indian slave trade shifted market demands away from captives to deerskins, the collapse of the deerskin trade would see another shift in the goods traded between Europeans and Natives. The American Revolution and eventual American independence ushered in the deerskin trade's slow demise. While skins would continue to be traded for the rest of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, Euro-American trade with the regional Natives could not be supported solely on this exchange. As will be discussed in the next chapter, southeastern peoples began to raise, steal, and sell horses in

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<sup>152</sup> Bartram, *Travels and Other Writings*, 167.

<sup>153</sup> Bartram, "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians," in *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, 141.

larger quantities in order to help fill the market gaps left by the waning skin trade. However, as this chapter shows, this transition was neither abrupt nor without precedent, but a logical progression based on the Indians' circumstances. In fact, as Bartram and Adair suggest, Euro-Americans had already begun to see horses as an integral part of Native society, as did the Natives themselves. The reason for this gradual shift, however, came from the increase of horse ownership among to Natives resulting from the success of the deerskin trade. In turn, the deerskin trade's success depended on the already established connections between European traders and Natives that blossomed during the slave trade.

CHAPTER IV – DEERSKIN DECLINE AND HORSEMEN RISE: HORSE THEFTS  
AND THE SOUTHEASTERN BORDERLAND ECONOMY, 1776 - 1840

Before the United States won its independence from Great Britain, British colonial officials started to receive complaints from colonists of a rapidly increasing occurrence: horse stealing. British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern District John Stuart met with Creek leaders in November of 1768 to come to an agreement for a trade treaty to be signed between both parties. In the recorded transcript of his negotiations with Creek leaders, Stuart, shortly after his greeting, discussed “frequent disorders, Robberies, and thefts, committed by some of your young people,” Stuart then declared that “there are many people here present, who have been robbed of their Horses.”<sup>154</sup> Later, the transcript states that “Several of the Back Inhabitants Complained of having lost their horses.”<sup>155</sup> Although not specified, this suggests that British settlers accompanied Stuart to the meeting to voice their complaints to the Creek headmen. However, a Creek man called Captain Aleck responded to the colonial critics: “I believe it is true, that some of our people are rogues, and Steal Horses, but they learnt to be th[ie]ves and rogues from these back Settlers.” Captain Aleck later stated “[The young Native men] are corrupted and made rogues, by the example of those back settlers, who give them rum for Stolen Horses. I, and the Warriors present, have had many horses Stolen by the white people.”<sup>156</sup> As this event shows, a new exchange was beginning to

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<sup>154</sup> Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, 71.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

rise, one that would supplant the deerskin trade after its demise due in part to southeastern Natives fully developed equestrianism.

This chapter traces the expansion of the horse exchange between southeastern Natives and Americans after the Revolutionary War. Horses became one of the main commodities for both Americans and southeastern Natives on the borderlands, replacing deerskins after American independence. High demand for horses in the borderlands expedited the shift towards Native people using horses as commodities. The familiarity Natives developed with horses due to their use in the deerskin trade gave them the necessary experience to be consistent suppliers of the animals. While some Natives turned to ranching and horse raising, many in the southeast stole horses and attempted to quickly sell them to the numerous buyers available in the region. However, horse thieves came in all shapes and sizes, with Natives stealing from whites, whites stealing from Natives, and Natives stealing from rival nations. The massive scope of the contraband economy serves as a testament to the value of horses in the southeastern borderlands.

This chapter utilizes first-hand accounts from travelers, United States Indian agents, treaties between national governments and Native nations, and United States federal trade policy to discern the causes and effects of the horse exchange. It argues that the stealing of horses was so widespread by both Natives and Americans that leaders from both societies struggled to control it and the horse trade as a whole. Horse stealing could also lead to violence between the groups in the southeastern borderlands, which prompted leaders to try to work towards peaceful solutions, albeit with limited success. However, these American attempts to maintain peace were often subtle erosions of Native sovereignty through law, many of which laid the groundwork for more aggressive

attacks on Native independence seen in the 1830s. The chapter opens with a discussion of the decline of the deerskin trade due to overhunting and the American Revolution.

Afterwards, this chapter analyzes numerous examples of individual accounts of horse theft to detail the causes and effects of the horse exchange as well as the motivations of the various groups partaking in both. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of United States treaties with Native Americans and federal trade policy that attempted to regulate horse theft and trade.

### *Meeting Market Demands: Horses Help Replace Deerskins*

As alluded to in the previous chapter, the regional shift to a more equestrian economy was due to a significant decline in the deerskin trade that started in the late eighteenth century. To put it into perspective, anthropologist Shepard Krech III tracked the number of deerskins traded by southeastern Natives, stating that the hunters traded “over 500,000 in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, before easing off to the low 100,000s in the beginning of the nineteenth century.”<sup>157</sup> Creek historian Kathryn Holland Braund estimates that during the height of the deerskin trade the indigenous peoples of the southeast produced “1.5 million pounds of leather annually” which “represents at least 1 million animals.”<sup>158</sup> Importantly, Krech III’s 100,000 estimate for the early 1800s resembles his approximation for the late sixteenth century, 85,000, showing the severity of the decline.<sup>159</sup> Reasons for the decline in trade stemmed in part from its vast size during its pinnacle. Even if one accepts Ernest Thompson Seton’s late seventeenth century estimate of forty million deer in the southeast found in *The*

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<sup>157</sup> Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 160.

<sup>158</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 71.

<sup>159</sup> Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 160.

*Ecological Indian*, hunting a million or more deer each year likely produced serious pressure on the deer's ability to reproduce over a span of time.<sup>160</sup> British officials saw the pressure put on the deer population and responded by outlawing the killing of fawns, does during birthing season, and bucks during the height of the reproductive season.<sup>161</sup> However, these colonial statutes bore no jurisdiction over southeastern Natives who continued to hunt in large numbers, and British traders still accepted as many deerskins they could get their hands on throughout the eighteenth century.

Trade between the British and the southeastern Indians all but ended with the American Revolution, which greatly accelerated the shift away from trade in deerskins and increased the use of horses as commodities. While the Spanish and French participated in the deerskin exchange, the British colonies were the heaviest buyers of animal skins and suppliers of European goods like metalware, textiles, firearms, and ammunition.<sup>162</sup> With the British being ousted by the Americans, these supplies and demands evaporated, along with many of the established connections Natives developed with British traders. Indeed, Braund states that with American independence “the sources of credit, trade goods, and the markets for deerskins vanished.”<sup>163</sup> However, just as when Natives found a new commodity in deerskins after the indigenous slave trade ended in the early eighteenth century, they expanded their use of horses as a commodity to fill the gap left by the deerskin trade.

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<sup>160</sup> Seton in Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 153.

<sup>161</sup> Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 161.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>163</sup> Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 169.

The shift from horses as a tool to a commodity was accompanied by minor changes in Native societies and attitudes towards the animal but was not fundamentally disruptive to Native culture. Instead of keeping a few horses to help travel and transport deerskins, many groups began to keep horses in larger numbers by the nineteenth century. Historian James Taylor Carson states that the Choctaw possessed around “fifteen thousand horses in 1829,” anthropologist Charles Hudson says that in 1838 a group of four thousand Chickasaws migrants left with “four or five thousand horses,” and historian Tyler Boulware cites American agent Return J. Meigs’ 1809 estimate of 6,519 horses amongst the thirteen thousand Cherokee, but this number is likely “underestimated.”<sup>164</sup> Meigs’ admission to the underestimations for the Cherokee is bolstered by Adair’s claim that the Cherokee he came across in the late eighteenth century during his travels owned “two to a dozen” each.<sup>165</sup> United States Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins found that the Creek possessed “several of them, cattle, hogs, and horses” and their leader “has a valuable property in negroes and stock and begins to know their value.”<sup>166</sup> John Pope noted in his late eighteenth century travel log that Creek leader Alexander McGilivray possessed “large Stocks of Hor[s]es.”<sup>167</sup> In addition, Hawkins also recorded Seminoles

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<sup>164</sup> Carson, “Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 506; Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 461; Tyler Boulware, “‘Skilful Jockies’ and ‘Good Sadlers’: Native Americans and Horses in the Southeastern Borderlands,” in *Borderland Narratives: Negotiation and Accommodation in North America’s Contested Spaces, 1500-1850*, eds. Andrew K. Frank and A. Glenn Crothers (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 2017), 71.

<sup>165</sup> Adair, *Adair’s History of the American Indians*, 242.

<sup>166</sup> Benjamin Hawkins, *The Collective Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810*, edited with an introduction by H. Thomas Foster II (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), 26s.

<sup>167</sup> John Pope, *A Tour Through the Southern and Western Territories of the United States of North America*, reprinted with an introduction and indexes by J. Barton Starr (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1979), 49.

possessing a varying amount of horses.<sup>168</sup> In order to obtain the populations discussed above Natives traded for and stole horses at an increasing rate.

One of the more impactful changes for southeastern Natives during the shift to horses as commodities was the increase of horse theft. The volume of the thefts show that thefts increased as the animals became more useful as laborers but became a regular occurrence with the shift to horses as commodities. Importantly, the fact that horse theft began in small numbers as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century and increased as time progressed shows that this was a long held Native practice, not an abrupt shift in their behavior. John Lawson stated in 1701 that “some of [the Carolinian Native] Kings having gotten, by great chance, a Jade, stolen by some neighbouring Indian, and transported farther into the Country, and sold”<sup>169</sup> Tyler Boulware cites early Carolinians complaining that their horses “had been seized and taken from them by Indians.”<sup>170</sup> British Colonel George Chicken’s 1726 travels into Cherokee lands present another case of Native horse theft. In his surviving journal, Chicken wrote “I was last Year an Eye Witness to some of the faults of [the Cherokee], having found out One of them who Stole a horse and a Saddle.”<sup>171</sup> However, Chicken offers that the Cherokee might have been motivated by these animals destroying their crops. Just before he penned his personal account of the theft, he wrote that “if any of the Traders Packhorses gott among [the Cherokee’s] Corn and Destroy[ed] it that they should Immediately Complain to the

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<sup>168</sup> Hawkins, *The Collective Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 60s, 62s.

<sup>169</sup> John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, Accessed online <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1838/1838-h/1838-h.htm>.

<sup>170</sup> Boulware, “Native Americans and Horses in the Southeastern Borderlands,” 81.

<sup>171</sup> George Chicken, “Journal of Colonel George Chicken’s Mission from Charleston, S. C., to the Cherokees, 1726,” in *Travels of the American Colonies*, edited by Newton D. Mereness (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1961), 171.

Co[m]ander of the Garrison who on hearing the Compl[ain]t and finding it to be true would Order Satisfaction to be made them by the White Man that owned the horses.”<sup>172</sup> Chicken’s testimony shows that he believed that the Cherokees meddling with white settlers’ horses were not necessarily doing so to strictly obtain the animal, but to deter them from entering Native crop fields. Taking into account all of these early cases of the practice suggests that horse thieving, just as captive taking, was not fundamentally disruptive to Native culture but the practice increased with the economic benefits.

It is in the latter half of the eighteenth century where horse stealing became a more widespread and popular practice amongst the indigenous southeast as a response to the collapsing deerskin trade. James Adair witnessed a small group of Choctaw men make off with a Chickasaw horse during his time with the Chickasaw people in the late 1700s. He recalled his group being tracked by Choctaw warriors in the woods during an excursion with the Chickasaw stating “the Choktah at night came down from the mountains and crept out after us.”<sup>173</sup> However, Adair and his Chickasaw allies had positioned their camp “on very convenient ground” so that the Choctaw could not ambush them in easily.<sup>174</sup> In response to this, Adair says the Choctaw “used an artful stratagem, to draw some of us into their treacherous snares; for they stole one of the bell horses, and led it away to a place near their den.”<sup>175</sup> Adair’s account offers an important detail on the views of the horse in the southeast. This story shows that both the Chickasaw and the Choctaw understood that horses held enough value that one might be

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<sup>172</sup> Chicken, “Journal of Colonel George Chicken’s Mission from Charleston, S. C., to the Cherokees, 1726,” in *Travels of the American Colonies*, 171.

<sup>173</sup> Adair, *Adair’s History of the Native Americans*, 361.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

willing to fight to maintain control over them. After the theft occurred, Adair continued the story, saying “this horse was a favorite with the gallant active young man I escorted the day before to camp” and “the people [at the camp] were much surprised to find him at night peevish and querulous” which shows that the Chickasaw owner was very upset by this loss.<sup>176</sup> The fact that the flustered temperament of the Chickasaw man was considered to be out of character suggests that the loss of the horse, and by extension the horse’s value as a commodity and laborer in the deerskin trade, was significant to him.

United States liaison to the Cherokee Silas Dinsmore dealt some with horse thefts amongst this group in 1795, and his letters help to show that the Cherokees’ motivations for stealing horses come from a desire to obtain European goods. A letter of his from July to the United States War Department states that “two [Cherokee] were killed a short time since, by a scout from South Carolina, for stealing horses” which suggests that horse stealing was dangerous, but the payoff was worth risking one’s life.<sup>177</sup> Dinsmore follows with his forecast for the continuation of horse stealing, saying “The stealing of horses will I fear continue while the white people encourage them to it by purchasing them.”<sup>178</sup> He also discusses Natives successfully selling stolen horses to American traders: “The licensed traders at Tuskeega have lately purchased some horses knowing them to have been stolen from the frontiers of Georgia.”<sup>179</sup> This instance of a successful transaction shows that Indian thieves were not necessarily in the market to keep the animals, but saw

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 361-362.

<sup>177</sup> Silas Dinsmore to the United States War Department, 8 July 1796, *Papers [manuscript]: 1794-1796*, available through Adam Matthew, Marlborough, American Indian Histories and Cultures, [http://www.aihc.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/Ayer\\_MS\\_241](http://www.aihc.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/Ayer_MS_241).

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

them as commodities that could be exchanged for money or other goods. On top of this, since licensed traders were accepting stolen animals, it not only shows how high the demand was for said horses, but also can be seen as encouragement to keep the practice going. Finally, Dinsmore establishes a motivation the for acts of the Cherokee and other indigenous horse thieves by rhetorically asking, “What will an Indian not do for whiskey?”<sup>180</sup> This suggests that an alcohol-for-horse trade was well-established by the late eighteenth century.

Indian agent to the Creek Benjamin Hawkins witnessed horse theft firsthand, and his experience provides more insight into the phenomenon of horse thieving becoming an economic opportunity. Hawkins noted in a letter in January of 1797 that “one of my mares proved sickly, and did not return as usual to be fed.”<sup>181</sup> He feared that his horse had been stolen. These fears were confirmed by a local woman who claimed “a man out now in the woods with his family had come expressly with the intention of doing it.”<sup>182</sup> This man and his family turned out to be Native Americans, which Hawkins confirmed when he demanded “of the chiefs the execution of their law upon him.”<sup>183</sup> Most importantly, Hawkins concluded his account noting that “[the Native thief] has long been at the habit of stealing horses, and is a fit subject for an example.”<sup>184</sup> This closing line states that the arrested man had, with some frequency, stolen horses. This shows that Natives were increasing their attempts at horse thefts from Americans in the late eighteenth century. In addition, the woman’s claim that the man explicitly made a trip to

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Hawkins, *The Collective Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 64.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 64.

the white settlement to steal horses suggests that Native men were beginning to see horse thieving as more of a consistent economic strategy rather than simply an act of desperation.

With horse stealing increasing in the borderlands, United States officials and Creek leaders tried to work together to maintain amicable relations with each other, but both expected their peoples' property rights be respected which continued to complicate the situation. Being the Creek agent for the United States meant that Hawkins was often a mediator for wrongdoings done to and by the Creek nation, which included horse stealing on both sides. In a letter from June 1, 1797, Lieutenant Colonel Gaither reported to Hawkins on some events occurring near Coweta, a principle Creek town. Gaither wrote, "The Indians in general appear disposed for peace, and the chiefs have gave up some horses which their young men had stole, and promises fair to return all that their people shall in future bring in, but you are no stranger to Indian promises."<sup>185</sup> This passage suggests that Creek leaders understood horse stealing to be detrimental to peaceful relationships with the United States, and that they did not condone the stealing of horses, but rather individual men did so without permission. Keeping in mind the final line, it seems the lieutenant colonel was skeptical of the full return of all future stolen horses. In the same letter, Gaither also recorded a case of Creek hunters claiming, "the people from Georgia took [three horses] from their camp."<sup>186</sup> However, just afterward Gaither states that "The chiefs have heard that some Indians belonging to the Halfway House have stole

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<sup>185</sup> The Georgia Historical Society, *Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1806* (Savanah: The Morning News, 1916), 465, accessed online <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015040766639;view=1up;seq=477>.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 465.

horses for the white people, & they suppose that the white people who took the horses from the Cowetas were in pursuit of the horse thieves.”<sup>187</sup> This suggests that horse thieving also could be done as an act of revenge by both whites and Natives. In the final lines of the letter, Gaither provides more information on the diplomacy surrounding the situation: “As soon as these horses come in, the chiefs will take & send them to Mr. Barnard for to be restored to their owners, & when that is done, they expect the horses taken from the Cowetas will be returned.”<sup>188</sup> This last passage shows that Creek chiefs were willing to act in good faith and return stolen horses to white settlers, but they expected that any horses stolen from their people also be returned.

However, cases involving horse theft were not always simple, and the complications surrounding the crime often meant that justice was not always swift nor satisfying. Hawkins encountered another case of horse theft in October 1797 in the Creek town of Cusseta. He wrote, “Hardy Reed, a resident in this country, complains to me on oath that some time in the last spring, he lent some horses to the Leader’s son” so that the Native man could go hunting.<sup>189</sup> Afterwards, Hawkins penned, “on the return of the Leader’s son, he reported that he had been robbed of two horses...by white people, on the Indian hunting ground, he understood, by way of reprisal for some that had been stolen by the Indians from the citizens of Georgia.”<sup>190</sup> However, it was then revealed that the Creek man had lied about what happened: “He further declares on oath that the said horses are now his property and that he has never parted with them.”<sup>191</sup> This example

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 465.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 465.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 205-206.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 206.

provides an interesting look at borderland legal dealings surrounding the stealing of horses. Allegedly, the Creek leader's son attempted to keep the horses by falsely claiming that they had been stolen from him. This is not only another example of the commonality of horse thefts in the southeast during this time, but it also shows that stealing was not always a "grab-and-go" situation. Instead of using threats or physical violence, the Creek man took advantage of the white horse owner's decision to lend out his horses, and then attempted to keep them by claiming they were stolen from him. With this said, this story also shows an example of legal proceedings in cases of horse theft. Hawkins responded to Hardy Reed by giving him "authoriz[ation] to go into Georgia to recover [his] property" meaning Reed had to go and try to reclaim his horses on his own.<sup>192</sup> While he had Hawkins' approval, there was no guarantee that Reed would regain control over his horses, showing how difficult it was to navigate the darker side of the horse exchange.

Governor of the Southwest Territory William Blount's dealings with the Cherokee reveals another instance of white theft of Native horses, confirming horse stealing was both widespread and done by settlers. In a letter dated January 28, 1795, Blount instructed the recipient to "take the possession of the three horses stolen from the Cherokees from Tuskega Island and deliver them to Ensign Davidson at Tellico Block House to the end that he may deliver them to the Hanging Maw for the Indians to whom they belong."<sup>193</sup> Not only does Blount's letter exemplify horses being stolen from the Cherokee, but it also shows how tedious and time consuming the recovery process could

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>193</sup> William Blount, 1794-1796. *Papers [manuscript]: 1794-1796*. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, American Indian Histories and Cultures, [http://www.aihc.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/Ayer\\_MS\\_74](http://www.aihc.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/Ayer_MS_74).

be. While the letter does not say how long it took the horses to be recovered, the fact that the horses had to be exchanged at least three times meant that it would not be a speedy process. The extended amount of time without access to their animals, on top of being upset about the theft in the first place, could have motivated thefts in return out of revenge or desperation. As seen in Gaither's example, horse thefts could produce a reverberating cycle of illicit acts.

The instances examined above are a testament to the severity of horse stealing by both Americans and southeastern Natives in the years after the American Revolution. The animals must have been highly valued by everyone in the borderlands during this time, as evidenced by the numerous examples of thefts occurring in the latter half of the eighteenth century. No matter the nationality of the victim, having one's property stolen caused strife between Americans and Natives in the southeast. In response, the United States attempted to regulate the exchange of horses between Americans and indigenous people, with varying degrees of success.

#### *U.S. and Them: Treaties and Regulations*

While personal accounts of horse thefts provide information on the exchange of horses, analyzing treaties made between the United States and the southeastern Native nations reveals the extent of the thefts and exchanges, as well as attempts to regulate them. The Cherokee treaties of the 1790s are an excellent demonstration of how the United States responded to difficulties in regulating the stealing of horses. As noted by historian Colin G. Calloway, the relationship between the Cherokee and the United States was tense from the beginning. His book, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, states that "the Revolution marked an emphatic divergence between the Cherokees and

their colonial neighbors” and these hostilities became defining characteristics of the Cherokee in American eyes after their successful struggle for independence.<sup>194</sup> With this in mind, Americans became very worried about any aggressive Cherokee acts, such as stealing horses, and sought to maintain peace with treaties.

One of the earliest treaties of the decade is the 1791 Treaty of Holston which was signed July 2. Article 10 of the treaty states that “If any Cherokee Indian or Indians, or person residing among them, or who shall take refuge in their nation, shall steal a horse from, or commit a robbery or murder, or other capital crime, on any citizens or inhabitants of the United States, the Cherokee nation shall be bound to deliver him or them up, to be punished according to the laws of the United States.”<sup>195</sup> The fact that horse thefts were specified outside of general robberies, and were listed before murder or other capital crimes suggests that the Cherokee were stealing enough horses to warrant a separate listing. Attempting to regulate horse theft amongst the Cherokee was a high priority. It appears, however, that this 1791 treaty did not curb Cherokee horse thefts enough because another treaty was signed in 1794 as an amendment that increased the penalties. Article 4 of this agreement states that “the said Cherokee nation, in order to evince the sincerity of their intentions in future, to prevent the practice of stealing horses...do hereby agree, that for every horse which shall be stolen from the white inhabitants by any Cherokee Indians, and not returned within three months, that the sum of fifty dollars shall be deducted from the said annuity of five thousand dollars.”<sup>196</sup> Given

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<sup>194</sup> Collin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 212.

<sup>195</sup> Charles J. Kappler ed, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II* (Washington D.C.: The United States Government Printing Office, 1904), 31.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Choctaw historian James Taylor Carson's estimates on the prices of horses in the southeast "fluctuat[ed] between twenty-five and seventy-five dollars," it appears that the fifty dollar penalty is most likely derived from the average value of the stolen animal.<sup>197</sup> Importantly, it would only take one hundred horses to be stolen before the entire annuity would be gone, which adds significant pressure on the Cherokee to crackdown on horse thieves. On top of this, the treaty gave the United States an enormous amount of influence over the Cherokee via threatening their annuities with false claims of horse thefts, ultimately threatening the stability of the Cherokee.

The issues of horse thefts and punishments were again addressed in another treaty between the Cherokee and the United States four years later, showing that the practice amongst the Natives continued at an unacceptable rate. Article 9 of the 1798 treaty increased the monetary penalty to sixty dollar per stolen horse, again to be deducted from the annuity if stolen by a member of the Cherokee.<sup>198</sup> However, this treaty is different than its predecessors because it mentions the same punishment for whites stealing Native horses: "if stolen by a white man, citizen of the United States, the Indian proprietor shall be paid in cash."<sup>199</sup> This inclusion of whites stealing Native horses suggests that the Cherokees were complaining and potentially defying previous treaties based on their horses being stolen with no punishment. At the very least, the United States understood that horse stealing by both parties was a risk to peaceful relations with the Cherokee

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<sup>197</sup> Carson, "Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians," 512.

<sup>198</sup> Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II*, 54.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

because the article concludes a with declaration of the end of “all animosities” between the Cherokee and the United States.<sup>200</sup>

Analyzing laws of the United States provides an additional avenue for understanding the severity of horse thefts committed by both Natives and whites. Historian Francis Paul Prucha edited a collection of documents related to United States Indian policy, and in this work lies the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802. Prucha’s introductory notes on the act say that “the temporary trade and intercourse acts passed in 1790, 1796, and 1799 were replaced in 1802 by a more permanent measure, which was largely a restatement of the earlier law.”<sup>201</sup> With this in mind, the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802 can be seen as both a culmination and perpetuation of late eighteenth century United States Indian policy on American-Native exchange.

A significant portion of the act specifically deals with horses, indicating the significance of the exchange of horses between Natives and Americans and a desire to more heavily regulate it. Section 10 requires a special license for anyone to purchase a horse in Native controlled territory, whether the seller be indigenous or white.<sup>202</sup> This appears to be an attempt to regulate the exchange of horses in the borderlands. Keeping in mind the extensive horse thefts occurring throughout the southeast, a quick turn around of stolen goods served the dual purpose of relieving oneself of the contraband and creating space between the thief and the stolen property. Requiring Americans to have a federal permit in order to purchase horses in Indian country shows that the government was

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>201</sup> Prucha, *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 17, accessed online <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook?sid=06d8876e-9522-4afb-932b-33f46becb9cd%40sdc-v-sessmgr02&vid=0&format=EB>.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 19.

attempting to crack down on the unregulated horse trade where stolen horses could easily pass between buyers and sellers.

This idea of the 1802 act implementing more regulations on the horse trade in an effort to curb horse thefts is bolstered later in Section 10. The law stipulates that anyone who bought one or more horses with the proper license was required to provide a detailed physical description of each purchased horse within fifteen days of purchase.<sup>203</sup>

Requiring that a description of all newly-purchased horses be delivered to a federal official was an additional step to prevent the selling of stolen horses. The records of newly purchased horses could be cross examined with descriptions of stolen horses to identify any that had been taken and return them to the proper owner. The descriptions would create a sort of database to aid in the identification of horses if they were stolen from the licensed buyers, adding another layer of protection against thefts.

While instruments were put in place to help identify and recover stolen horses with the 1802 measure, deterrents also were enacted to discourage those who would break the law. The end of Section 10 established punishments of fines no more than one hundred dollars and jail sentences up to thirty days for those who would buy horses from Natives without the proper license.<sup>204</sup> Importantly, taking into account Carson's estimated values of twenty-five to seventy-five dollars along with the fifty dollar punishment for the Cherokee, the maximum monetary penalty possible was greater than the value of most horses, and jail time was to be served on top of the fine.<sup>205</sup> In addition to those who

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>205</sup> Carson, "Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians," 512; Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II*, 34.

purchased horses in Indian country without the permit, the law stipulates that “every person, who shall purchase a horse, knowing him to be brought out of the Indian territory, by any person or persons, not licensed, as above, to purchase the same, shall forfeit the value of such horse.”<sup>206</sup> While the punishment for purchasing an illegally obtained horse is significantly lower than that of buying in Indian territory without a permit, here again is more evidence of a crackdown on both the supply and demand sides of the horse trade.

Government officials also saw additional restrictions placed on them in the Trade and Intercourse Act which shows that the United States was regulating all aspects of trade. Section 11 required that any United States official forfeit any personal trade in horses unless explicitly instructed to do so by the government.<sup>207</sup> This shows that the United States was looking to cut down the trade from both the bottom and the top, but the punishment for these officials was much more severe. Under Section 11 officials faced fines up to one thousand dollars and jail sentences up to one full year.<sup>208</sup> The maximum fine for these men was ten times higher than those trading without a permit, and the longest sentence was twelve times as long, showing that the federal government was far more concerned with an illegitimate horse trade being established and run via these officials. This fear is understandable because any such trade would increase the size of the illegal exchange, which would encourage more participation in it.

The 1802 law also sought to extend the United States’ control over Native Americans participating in the horse trade and thefts in American territory, ultimately attacking Natives’ autonomy and right to defend their borders. In his book on Creek

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 19.

border patrols, historian Joshua Haynes argues that Creek raiders often attacked and stole white settlers' property as a means of protest against their encroachment on Creek lands.<sup>209</sup> Horse thefts all across the southeast have a similar political aspect to them on top of the economic ones, and this 1802 legislation can be seen as an attempt to stifle these political acts. Section 14 depicts the United States' intentions for dealing with Natives partaking in illegal actions, specifically stealing horses.

“if any Indian or Indians, belonging to any tribe in amity with the United States, shall come over or cross the said boundary line, into any state or territory inhabited by citizens of the United States, and there take, steal or destroy any horse, horses, or other property, belonging to any citizen or inhabitant of the United States, or of either of the territorial districts of the United States...it shall be the duty of such citizen or inhabitant, his representative, attorney, or agent, to make application to the superintendent, or such other person as the President of the United States shall authorize for that purpose; who, upon being furnished with the necessary documents and proofs, shall, under the direction or instruction of the President of the United States, make application to the nation or tribe, to which such Indian or Indians shall belong, for satisfaction.”<sup>210</sup>

Again, since horse stealing is specifically addressed in in this section of the legislation the severity of Native horse stealing must have been sizable. While the Cherokee treaties of 1791, 1794, and 1798 show that these Natives actively stole horses in large enough numbers to force a federal response, this piece of national legislation offers additional evidence that the problem affected far more than those dealing with the Cherokee.

While Section 14 does extend the United States' authority for crimes the Natives committed, it also attempts to offer some protections to those accused of horse theft. The legislation states that “if such injured party, his representative, attorney or agent, shall, in

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<sup>209</sup> Joshua S. Haynes, *Patrolling the Border: Theft and Violence on the Creek-Georgia Frontier, 1770-1796* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2018), 7.

<sup>210</sup> Prucha, *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 19-20, accessed online <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook?sid=06d8876e-9522-4afb-932b-33f46becb9cd%40sdc-v-sessmgr02&vid=0&format=EB>.

any way, violate any of the provisions of this act, by seeking, or attempting to obtain private satisfaction or revenge, by crossing over the line, on any of the Indian lands, he shall forfeit all claim upon the United States, for such indemnification.”<sup>211</sup> While the law stipulates some basic protections for Native individuals, as long as those accusing did not seek personal justice, it punishes the indigenous groups as a whole by taking the value of the stolen property out of the annuities paid to them by the United States.<sup>212</sup> This idea is a clear continuation of policy from the Cherokee treaties of 1794 and 1798, but the fine amount was no longer fixed to an estimated average of a horse’s worth. Importantly, just as the deduction from the annuities was designed to hurt the Cherokee, once the policy was adopted nationally with this piece of legislation the sovereignty of all Native nations in the southeast were increasingly threatened. The 1802 Trade and Intercourse Act would become the basis of future legislation regarding the regulation of American and Native interactions. One example of this is the 1832 Trade and Intercourse Act, in which Section 17 is an explicit continuation of Section 14 of 1802 law. The passages are nearly identical, which suggests that, even with the move to a more aggressive removal policy, horse thefts in the southeast continued well past 1802.<sup>213</sup>

In May 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act which greatly increasing the rate of Native nations’ removal from their lands in the southeast to spaces west of the Mississippi River. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, many members of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Seminole, and Cherokee would see themselves forced to leave the lands their ancestors had occupied for centuries.

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 66.

Thousands of these forced migrants would lose their lives as a result. Those brave enough to stay would never again see the type of sovereignty experienced before the United States' expansion west into their territory. However, southeastern Natives continued to be horsemen whether they stayed or left the southeast, just as they had done for the past one hundred years. As this chapter has shown, southeastern Natives could easily adapt their equestrian skills to aid their economic positions. Horses were both tools and commodities to these peoples, and they used their talents developed in the deerskin trade to continue to trade with whites, even if that meant stealing.

## CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

In October 2018, the Associated Press published an article about a Choctaw breed of horses being found alive in southwestern Mississippi. The article claims that the breed is “the first new blood in a century” which signifies their rarity.<sup>214</sup> The surviving horse, named DeSoto, can be seen as a testament to the Choctaw’s strong, surviving connection to the animals that had been developing since the 1690s. While the animal may be distinctly Choctaw, the surviving breed also exemplifies a lasting legacy of southeastern Native American equestrianism that developed in the region and greatly impacted the Native peoples’ cultures and economies. Much like how DeSoto, seemingly against all odds, managed to continue the Choctaw line, Indians of the southeast adapted their relationship with the horse to continue their way of life in the face of increasingly aggressive imperial policies.

Southeastern Native Americans initiated their relationship with horses beginning in the 1690s and they continued to develop their cultural ties to the animals for the next century and a half. Through language, most southeastern Native nations related the horse to the deer. The importance of this linguistic connection is evidenced by the numerous accounts of the deer’s importance to the southeastern Native mythos and cultural practices. On top of this, by the late eighteenth century these Natives began to use horses as supplements or replacements to deer in these significant cultural events. However, the linguistic and cultural relationships between the indigenous southeast with the European cow shows that the horse developed a more significant meaning to these individuals and

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<sup>214</sup> “Rare Horses Found in Mississippi, Descended from Line Bred by Choctaw Indians,” *NOLA.com*, last modified Oct 16, 2018, <https://www.nola.com/news/2018/10/rare-horses-found-in-mississippi-descended-from-line-bred-by-choctaw-indians.html>.

that they quickly identified as both something useful and something Native. This Native identity can be seen via the initial connection between the horse and prestige made by southeastern Indians by the early 1700s.

While the cultural importance of the horse to the indigenous southeast is seen through their use in cultural events and their initial identity as prestige goods, the animals would quickly take on an economic role with the expansion of the deerskin trade. While captors could receive horses in exchange for slaves during the Indian slave trade of the early eighteenth century, the horse did not gain an expanded role in their economy until the Indian slave trade ended with the Yamasee War. However, once the deerskin trade replaced the slave trade, southeastern Natives quickly adapted the horse to be used as economic asset that helped hunters travel to hunting grounds and transported deerskins back to the towns to be processed and sold to Indian traders. While the use of horses increased throughout the eighteenth century, so too did the southeastern Natives' equestrian abilities, and these more fully developed skills played an integral role in the third shift horses saw after the American Revolution.

The deerskin trade all but collapsed in the late 1700s after the American colonies ousted the British. Left to their own devices and desires, the United States did not have anywhere near the appetite for deerskins as the British did. On top of this, the deerskin trade caused Native hunters to decimate the white-tailed deer population, which greatly impacted their ability to supply the same number of skins to traders. However, just as deerskins quickly replaced the market gap created by the end of the indigenous slave trade, horses would make another shift to a tradable commodity which helped facilitate trade between the United States and southeastern Natives. While some Natives of the

southeast began ranching and breeding horses, many partook in horse stealing to meet market demands. Cases of horse theft existed as early as the first decade of the eighteenth century, but rapidly expanded in the late 1700s and early 1800s alongside with the decline of the deerskin trade. Importantly, horse stealing was not a one-sided affair. Natives stole from whites, whites stole from Natives, and Natives stole from rival Natives throughout the region. The problem of horse theft became so widespread that the United States signed treaties and enacted federal policies in an attempt to curb the practice. However, these agreements and pieces of legislation ultimately attacked the sovereignty of the various Native groups of the southeast by deducting the value of the horses from the United State's annuities to southeastern Native nations. In addition, the United States began to more aggressively pursue the relocation of the indigenous peoples of the southeast to lands west of the Mississippi River with legislation such as the 1830 Indian Removal Act. However, even in the face of these encroachments southeastern Native Americans continued to use horses to maintain their economies. Additionally, several groups that were forced to move west ended up taking thousands of the animals with them, which serves as a testament to the importance of horse to these individuals' cultures and economies that had been developing since the 1690s.

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