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**The Calusa and Seminole Indians: Before, During, and After
Colonialism**

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By

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Dear Dr. Martin,

This is to let you know that I approve of Rebecca Woods' Capstone project for Honors recognition. Her project, "The Calusa and Seminole Indians: Before, During, and After Colonialism" is a good piece of research. While not breaking new ground, it is a comprehensive summary, and I believe it will help her with her future plans to work in Florida in the field of Anthropology.

I enjoyed working with Rebecca. Please let me know if you have any questions about her work with me on her Capstone project.

Best wishes,

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HONORS THESIS ABSTRACT
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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to compare and contrast two Floridian Native American tribes, the Calusa and the Seminole. The paper will deal with issues such as social life, economy, political life and religion. These topics will be addressed in terms of historical periods: before, during, and after colonialism. Colonialism made huge impacts on these tribes, therefore it is important to look at the changes that occurred during this period. Along with this, one major conclusion will deal with how and why the Calusa disappeared, while the Seminole remain in Florida today. It is clear that the Seminole's ability to adapt to invasion and the Calusa's refusal to do so was a major contributor in this outcome.

The Calusa Pre-Contact

The Calusa Indians were once natives of what is now Southwest Florida. Their exact origin is unknown, but there is evidence of a fishing tradition off of the Florida coast that goes back 6,000 years. Since there is no evidence of a drastic change in material culture, it is surmised that these were the original inhabitants of this area, reaching from what is today Fort Myers all the way south to the tip of the Florida Keys (Fig. 1).

Of all the artifacts excavated from various sites, there is no evidence to suggest that these people had migrated from the Caribbean or Mexico. It is estimated that the height of their society was approximately 1200 AD and it thrived for 300 years in Southwest Florida (Marquardt 1992). They were the most powerful people in all of Southern Florida when in 1500 AD the Calusa had first contact with Spaniards. By the late 1700s the Calusa had disappeared, never to be heard from again. How could such a vast and successful empire vanish so quickly? Simply: colonialism had devastating impacts on the Calusa's culture as well as their environment.

The social life of a Calusa was quite similar to other Native Americans in Florida before colonization. Areas of habitation were set up in family camps for shell fishing, fishing, and other procurement activities. Calusa Indians were known to be very hospitable, and at diplomatic occasions they served teas from plants and ate wild fruits and roots (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:88). One of these teas was Cassina, or yaupon holly tea, which when consumed, was believed to help one achieve purity and social harmony. Cassina was high in caffeine and was used as a stimulant. It was one product

that was traded inland. Due to the fact that Cassina was thought to help achieve social harmony, it was a very popular drink for social occasions (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:89).

No standing remains of Calusa houses currently exist, and little can be determined about building forms and sizes. However, historical documents explain that South Florida Indians used fronds of the cabbage palm to make thatched roofs and sometimes walls. Today in Southern Florida, the Miccosukee Indians use this same technique using tight, waterproof palm thatch to roof their traditional buildings (Macmahon and Marquardt 2004:91). Many other people in the tropics do this as well, so it is a high probability that the Calusa made housing similar to these models.

It is known that Calusa structures had windows, separate rooms, and in the leader's home, there was a platform where he would sit when he received visitors (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:91). Other buildings were created for ritual purpose. Calusa villages often featured high mounds, shell ridges, canals, and broad, flat plazas. Some larger villages had similar layouts consisting of two large mounds divided by a central canal. These earthworks range from being simple to large, with multiple mound complexes with unusual earthwork features. By 500AD, the Calusa had settled in Charlotte Harbor, and instead of spreading out their earthworks, they built them up, making use of their trash middens (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:96). Between 500-1000AD people began to heap up sand and shells to make ridges and mounds for their structures (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:96). The Calusa may have used mounds for several reasons. One plausible reason would be protection. Having structures higher up would allow you to see enemies approaching from further away. A second reason could

be better protection from storm surges, and also better protection from insects. Since height often indicates power, authority, and wealth, these mounds are a good example of measuring prestige within the Calusa society (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:96).

The home of the leader was quite large and might have been a council house where leaders held meetings. This house would have been able to hold nearly 2,000 people without it being crowded. The exact shape of the house is unknown, but if circular, it may have been nearly 90 ft in diameter, if square, 82 ft on a side (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:91).

The Calusa maintained relations with other nearby tribes. Some of these tribes were the Jobe and the Jeaga, the Tequesta, the Matecumbe, the Muspa, the Serrope and the Mayaimi (Wheeler 2000:11). These tribes were all located within close proximity to the Calusa in southern Florida. Together they allied to create bonds for marriage and familial relationships. Although hostilities sometimes arose, these people were able to organize together, showing the Calusa's power. Elders knew multiple languages in order to communicate with these groups.

The economy of the Calusa was unique because their territory was very large and their people were very numerous, yet they did not specialize in growing crops and did not participate in any large-scale agriculture. Most large chiefdoms have an agricultural economy to help distribute food to the people. It is clear within the archaeological as well as historical data that the Calusa were not agriculturalists (Marquardt 1992:2). Instead of agriculture, its people relied on the estuarine meadows to sustain its people. Zooarchaeological and archeobotanical studies of middens (trash piles) in the Caloosahatchee region show a very diverse diet containing over fifty species of fish and

more than twenty kinds of mollusks and crustaceans (Wheeler 2000: 13). The staple fish were pinfish, pigfish, and catfish. In addition to this, the Calusa ate shellfish and crabs. They also ate a variety of fleshy fruit as well as grass seeds, weed, acorns, and gourd seeds. In addition to these staples, the Calusa also ate deer, turtle, and duck (Wheeler 2000:13).

Although the Calusa did not rely on large-scale agriculture, they grew garden crops such as papayas, chili peppers, and squash. Tobacco was grown in these gardens as well. The Natives would use it as an offering for spirits of the deceased (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:89).

The Calusa traded and communicated with other Indians throughout North America. These ancient networks are a prime example of how vast the Calusa chiefdom was before colonialism. These networks provided the Calusa with valuable minerals and stones, while the Calusa traded large seashells and other local goods. All of the items received came through trade, exchange, and tribute. Trade was carried out through a barter; people met to swap goods. The Calusa had no monetary system, therefore, they would trade goods for other goods instead. Trade held strong social and ritual meaning. Many trade items, such as Cassina, were ritualistic and spiritualistic, which solidified political and social relations. The Calusa exchanged foodstuffs with coastal and inland groups. They also traded shark teeth and shells. Large lightning whelk shells from the Gulf Coast were discovered in present day Oklahoma, Kentucky, New York, and South Dakota (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:82). These lightning whelk shells were drinking vessels, commonly used while drinking Cassina. This vast exchange system shows how powerful and how immense their trade networks were before colonialism. According to

MacMahon and Marquardt, it is quite probable that the Calusa were involved in this movement of shells.

Canals connected many Native American towns in this region. Archaeological evidence has shown that these canals linked Calusa villages. The Calusa created canals that were vital to its economy. These canals were for travel and connected neighbors to one another. They also allowed people to collect plants and animals in a larger area. These canals connected communities and provided protected pathways for trade, tribute, and information. The canals were dug by hand, and some measured as large as 30 feet wide by 6 feet deep. These canals are an indication of the effective planning and leadership among the Calusa Indians before colonization. Cushing excavated many of these canals during his archaeological field work. At Mound Key, he discovered a series of long canals that were crowned with high mounds (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:94).

According to Randolph Widmer the Calusa population grew to a peak in about 800 AD and reached its limits. The Calusa created a centralized political structure to work with disagreements, distribute foods, and other materials. He believes this structure was unchanged until the European era (Marquardt 1992).

Goggin and Sturtevant estimated that in the 16th to 17th century the principle town of Calos was inhabited by 1,000 people, and the total population of the Calusa was somewhere between 4,000 to 7,000 individuals (Wheeler 2000:10). It is thought that Calos is the Calusa capital, located on an island, a two days sail from Havana (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:80). It is probably located near present day Fort Myers beach. The main town was probably located on Mound Key in Estero Bay (MacMahon

and Marquardt 2004:80). Widmer, on the other hand, estimated that there were approximately 4,800 in the Charlotte Harbor/Estero Bay area. When calculating inhabitants within the Ten Thousand Islands, Widmer's total estimation reached as many as 10,000 Calusa. Yet another estimate by Dobyns, given for the pre-1520 population of southern Florida was 195,200, the total Calusa population being 97,600 (Wheeler 2000:11). Although Dobyns estimate seems substantially higher than those of Widmer, Goggin and Sturtevant, it is important to remember that Dobyns was creating an estimate before Spanish contact, and after contact, thousands of Native Americans died due to disease and warfare. After looking at these figures, it becomes very apparent that they are very diverse, and overall it is very hard to determine the exact population of the Calusa at any given time.

Settlements in the Caloosahatchee region show several major site complexes and Charlotte Harbor and the Estero Bay area. These complexes reveal a hierarchical society, characterized by large groups of sites. It is clear that there was a differentiation of wealth due to the size of the complexes, the diverse arrangement of shell mounds, sand mounds, shell works, canals, and other features. Major sites discovered are at Useppa, Pineland, Shell Creek, and Mound Key (Wheeler 2000:11). These major towns would have been centers of political, economic, and religious power.

The leader of the Calusa tribe was called the cacique, (a Taino indian word the Spanish adopted for various village chiefs in the New World) and he was responsible for the bounty of the land and the waters (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:78). Calusa leaders were kin to one another and inherited their positions. The As stated previously, Calusa people society was hierarchical and it were divided into nobles and commoners.

Small groups of powerful leaders made decisions for the Calusa. They also provided protection for their people. The majority of the people supplied food and labor for public works for their leader. The cacique received all tributes, given as goods or services. These tributes were an indication of allegiance to the leader. The cacique was very powerful and controlled over 50 towns and many other towns paid tribute to him. In addition to tributes, trading may have been diplomatic, and have taken place at conferences or meetings between leaders. Reciprocity was common in Calusa society, however some valuable items could not be reciprocated, and this became an indication of power. Some items given were food, mats, hides, feathers, and sometimes even captive people. These captives were forced to work, but there is no evidence of any large amounts of slaves. Some captives ended up being killed.

There were three primary leaders within Calusa society: the cacique, the spiritual leader, and the military captain (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:78). Calusa leaders sat on a special stool whenever they met for deliberation on a range of subjects. During meetings, processions of masked priests accompanied by women singing would show their respects to the leaders. The masks that were worn by the men were also religious in purpose and hung on the inside walls of the temple.

The common people believed in the absolute power of their leader. His power was a function and proof of his identification with the practical and spiritual features of their world. Calusa's believed that as their leader prospered, the land and waters did as well. They believed that everything he did was in the interest of everyone and all things, whether it was wars, alliances, or dealings with the spirits of the dead. Whatever the leader required of the commoners, they did without question. Spiritual and political

authority was directly related to one another.

The Calusa maintained a strong belief system, which was integrated into their political system as well as their daily life and habits. The Calusa believed that every person had three souls (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:83). The first soul was the little pupil of the eye. The second was the shadow that a person casts, and the third was the reflection of oneself in a calm pool of water. They believed that when a person died, two of the souls left the body, while the soul of the eye would remain with the person always. According to their beliefs, once a person died, they would go and speak with those who had already died, asking for their advice. From the deceased, they would learn many things which were happening in other regions, or things that would happen in the future. After this, the soul would enter into an animal or fish. When the Calusa would kill the being the soul had entered, the soul would leave, and enter into a lesser being until eventually the person became nothing.

In accordance with the three souls, they also believe that the world is governed by three people. The first one is "the one to whom the universal government of the most universal and common things belongs, such as the heavenly movements and the seasons" (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:83). This is the greatest of the three persons. The second greatest is the one "to him belongs the government of the kingdoms, empires, and republics". The last and the least great of the three is the one who helps in wars. They believed that whoever's side this person attached himself to, would prevail in any attack and lead their side to victory.

Calusa Indians also engaged in games, songs, dance, and public ceremonies. Some ceremonies were very serious, such as the procession of the masked priests and singing

women. The Calusa hung these spiritual masks on the inner walls of their temple. They would bring them off the walls for certain rituals and ceremonies. The temple was a separate building from the leader's house, where certain rituals were held. The building had benches, an altar, or central mound. It held many masks and men would wear them into the village while women would sing as they marched through the village. Some people impersonated spirits while wearing these masks. After the summer had ended, men would spend weeks at a time visiting other Calusa towns. They would dress up with horns on their heads and howl like the animals and spirits they were impersonating. These people would stay for an extended period of time and not rest day or night, running around and impersonating the spirits (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:88).

The Seminoles Pre-Contact

The Seminole Indians had a much different experience pre-colonialism. Their name did not become the "Seminoles" until the late 1700s. In fact, the Seminoles are a group of multiple tribes who originated from north of Florida, in present day states such as Alabama and Georgia. A large majority of those called Seminoles are descendents from the aboriginal tribe called the Muskogeans, or Muscogulges, which mean "people of a wet/flooded land" (Braund 1993:3). When trade initiated after contact, they became known as the Creeks. This was due to their locations near rivers and streams.

Creek society was a chiefdom-level society, which was similar to the Calusa. Their society was organized into matrilineal clans, named after animals, such as Panther, Bear, and Deer, natural forces, such as Wind, as well as plants, like Potato and Corn (Covington 1993:7). Clan membership was determined through the mother's line and traced back to a common female ancestor. A man was a member of his mother's clan but

his children were members of their mother's clan. Men were tied to their mother's residence and had strong relationships with their sister's children, who were members of his clan.

Clans were organized into two groups or moieties-Red and White. Red symbolized war, while White symbolized peace. Red and White clans co-existed in each town. However, each town was labeled as either Red or White. When at war, the Red clan made all decisions. The White clan made decisions for all matters concerning peacetime. When two or more towns were making inter-clan decisions, the same rules applied--White for peace, Red for war. These two moieties also played against each other in the ball game "little brother of war". Sometimes these games could last for weeks, and they could involve much injury to the players. Many people made wagers on who would win the game. Early Seminole towns maintained this formal relationship between Red and White clans (Braund 1993:7).

Towns were of great political importance, however, most lived outside of the towns. Most clans were along the banks of rivers and streams in smaller household settlements called *huti*, or clan camps (Weisman 1999:10). People connected themselves to the nearby towns for politics and ceremonies. The living camps were self sufficient and produced what was needed to survive from agricultural fields and gardens. If help was needed, sons would be called upon for assistance. These types of clan camps continued well into the 20th century.

The pre-Colonial Creek economy was based on a horticultural lifestyle, unlike the Calusa economy. Hunting accompanied horticulture, but meat only supplemented a Creek's diet. Each town was surrounded by corn fields and hunting ranges. Men prepared

the fields for harvest, and they helped plant the crops. Women and children tended the crop, while women and men participated in the harvest. The staple crop was corn, and its most important product was hominy. Vegetables of many other varieties were harvested. Beans, peas, gourds, and pumpkins were also a large majority of their diet. Gathering provided foods such as strawberries, plums, wild nuts, berries, and roots (Braund 1993:18). Fishing for trout and bream was also common. Women preserved fruits, vegetables, and meat by through a drying process.

Men hunted deer, bear, turkey, rabbits, squirrels, and on rare occasion buffalo. Men hunted with bow and arrow, disguising themselves as a deer by placing a buck's head over theirs, and crouching in the bushes. Fire was used to corral deer into open areas. After this, men would have free range to shoot the animals. Men hunted with men from their own clan. Wives and children often accompanied their families on hunts. Women would forage, cook, and gather firewood and water while their husbands hunted. The Creek had a very extensive trade network, which spanned for hundreds of miles. It is quite possible that the Calusa and the Creek were a part of the same trading network. Their trade paths linked villages across eastern North America, up the Gulf Coast, through the Appalachian Mountains and Tennessee River, and into the Great Lakes region. Items that were traded along this route were as follows: conch shells, salt, feathers, flint, pigments, skins, furs, cassina, silver, galena, copper, clay pipes, and figurines (Braund 1993:27). In South Carolina, at Cofitachique, there were storehouses of deerskins, pearls, and copper-tipped weapons (Braund 1993:27). The center of the trade network was most likely at this location. It is quite possible that this aboriginal trade is what brought the Creek Confederation together.

The Creek Confederation was founded on an alliance of friendly tribes and towns. These tribes formally agreed to live in peace with one another. This was most likely the product of this vast trade network. As these towns traded with each other, they all benefited from this arrangement.

Central in each Creek town was a square-ground, which was the local seat of government. Here people gathered for councils, to welcome visitors, or to celebrate the annual busk. Within the center of the square was the council fire with its four logs pointing to the cardinal directions. Bounding the square were four cabins, each with two or more rows of benches facing the square. Each of the four cabins had specific members. The West cabin was for men from the White clans, while the North cabin was for the men from the Red clans. Their assistants and the chief's advisors occupied the South cabin. Lastly, the East cabin was for women and their children. Councils were held in the "round house" next to the square. The square-ground was very clean, and it was especially cleaned before the annual Green Corn Dance (Weisman 1999:10).

The leader of the Creeks, or *micco*, resided in the *talwa* village, which was comprised of several hundred people (Covington 1993:6). A council of elders, which were representatives of several Creek clans, elected the highest official. Selection for the *micco* was restricted to one of the clans, therefore, his position was hereditary. This is similar to the Calusa leader, the *cacique*. If the leader was unfit to lead the people, the council had the ability to impeach him. The leader performed certain duties, some of which were issuing invitations to feasts and dances, receiving envoys, and presiding at town meetings. This is different from the Calusa, because the Calusa believed that their leader always had the best in mind for them. There was no process of impeachment.

Similar to Calusa society, there were other positions that were filled by skill and ability. These men were very important to Creek society. There were four other positions: *micco apokta*, or Vice-Chief; *micalgi*, assistant leaders; *heniha*, ceremonial leaders; and lastly, *holibonaya*, the war speaker (Covington 1993:6).

During councils, or busks, men would sit in cabin-like structures. The *henihas*, or ceremonial leaders, sat on the west side of the square ground. The *holibonaya* (war speaker) sat with the warriors on the south side (Covington 1993:6). Visitors and other men would sit on the east and north sides of the cabin.

Creek life participated in ceremony and celebration, much like the Calusa. The night before a war party, women would accompany men into the hot house and dance ritualistically. When hunters would return from their hunts, the village would hold a feast of bear ribs. Dancing, chanting, and singing accompanied the feast. Music created from drums, rattles, and flutes was part of their ceremony. Central to religious, social, and political life was that of the Green Corn Dance. This occurred in late July, early August, and was a celebration of the harvest. It marked the beginning of a new year of plenty. Before the festival, people would fast, dance, and perform cleansing rituals to receive forgiveness for any crimes they had committed. It was a time for religious introspection. The feast began with a ceremonial sacrifice of the first part of their crop. The shaman, keeper of the medicine bundle, along with the General Council would meet during this time and make tribal decisions. The medicine man preserved the bundle, which contained what was needed for the Seminoles well-being (Covington 1993:257). It had the power to do well for people, but if used improperly, could cause much harm. The bundle was wrapped in deerskin, and contained pieces of horn, feathers, and stones. During the Green

Corn Dance, those who had committed crimes faced their charges. Sometimes sentences were money payment, exile, or death.

Since the Calusa were not agriculturalists, they did not participate in the Green Corn Dance, or other rituals like it. The religion of the Creeks was also vastly different from the Calusa. While the Calusa believed in three supreme beings, the Creeks believed in only one.

The Creek believed in an omniscient Great Creator, or a Supreme Being who was the giver of life (Braund 1993:24). The Creek would appeal to the spirits of the universe, such as the sun, the moon, and the natural spirits. Religious leaders sought to provide rain, a good harvest, and protection for warriors who were away. These beliefs continued well after Christian invasion.

The Calusa During Contact

During the time of European contact, the Calusa were the most powerful people in all of southern Florida. Social life of the Calusa, after contact with the Spanish, continued closely with their aboriginal ways of life. This continued for nearly 200 years. Ponce de Leon made first contact with these people in 1513 off the west coast of Florida near Estero Bay and Charlotte Harbor. The Calusa did not greet them in a friendly manner because they were already aware that the Spaniards enslaved and murdered Caribbean Indians, who had fled to Florida. The Calusa became the "fierce people" due to their resistance against the Spanish.

The first extended contact with the Spanish came when Pedro Menendez attempted to create settlements from 1566-67 (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:88). Menendez drove the French out from the St. Augustine area in 1565 and wanted to secure

the rest of the peninsula. The first official encounter between the chief and the Spaniards was in 1566. The Calusa leader and Menendez made an alliance, and during this time, he established several forts across southern Florida. One of these forts was placed at Key Mound, at one of the Calusa's main centers. Due to many deaths, the Spanish left Florida in 1614 and did not return for nearly 200 years. During this time, Calusa beliefs and social norms thrived. Since the Calusa were isolated from the Europeans, except for a few captives, they continued to live as they always had. It was not until the early 1700s when the Calusa lost their native homelands.

The Calusa continued their relations with other nearby native groups. Together they allied to create bonds through marriage and familial relations.

The Calusa economy changed after colonization. New goods and trade items became available. When Ponce de Leon's ships landed on the east coast of Florida in the spring of 1513, they attempted to offer the Calusa trade items. However the Calusa were not interested, and they attacked with twenty canoes filled with warriors. During this fight, some Calusa were captured and killed.

During the 16th and 17th Centuries, natives acquired many goods from the Europeans, labeling this period the "Golden Age" of native culture. It is at this time that the Spaniards and Indians would often trade goods. The influx of these valuable materials was still controlled by the chief, and in this aspect it retained its traditional habit. These traditional lines of exchange augmented the chief's powers and politics. Unfortunately, this "Golden Age" was not long lived. Disease, warfare, and the displacement of the people caused many to die, and as a result, much of their culture was obliterated.

During the 1680s and continuing through 1760, many Calusa began to work as

hired hands on Cuban fishing vessels (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:121). This change of work was a drastic difference from their traditional ways of life. They moved from gathering their foods, to working for money. It is very evident here how much colonialism changed the ways of life for these men.

The politics during this period remained relatively unchanged. The Calusa continued to have a centralized political structure to work out disagreements, and to distribute food and other materials. However, some believe that this structure may have changed during this period, to resemble the European-dominated merchant/imperial economy (Marquardt 1992).

The Calusa did not want to share power with the Spanish, and this led to many wars and many deaths for both the Spanish and the Indians. During this war time of conflict, the three leaders were still evident within society: the cacique, the spiritual leader, and the military leader. Society was still hierarchical, and divided into nobles and commoners. According to the Spaniards, the cacique married his sister, but this was most likely misinterpreted. His "sister" was most likely a woman from his own clan, a "clan sister". They may have married their cousins. Polygamy was also possible for the leader, which was a symbol of his power and prestige.

Written documents from the 16th century explain that the Calusa had a domain of at least 50 towns from which the leader collected tribute from. They had control over nearly all of southern Florida. By 1612, the leader controlled over 60 towns, and many more paid him tribute (MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:82).

Ceremonies continued very closely with the previous ways of life before expansion. During the leader's alliance with Governor Menendez, practices were still very

traditional. The Calusa nobility would paint themselves colorfully and dress in their nicest clothing. Many men and women attended this event. It is estimated that 500 women and 500 men stood besides the leader in this ceremony. Caalus, the Calusa leader at this time, provided Menendez with his sister as a sign of allegiance. This was part of the Calusa custom. After the alliance, the participants celebrated. About 500 teenage girls stood outside of the windows, and sang, while those inside sang and danced in celebration. This is a good example of how Calusa ritual beliefs were entwined with their political beliefs. This is one reason why the Calusa fought so hard to resist the Spanish after Ponce de Leon came to Florida. If the Calusa were to give up their religious/ritual beliefs, their entire political structure would have collapsed.

During colonialism and expansion, the Calusa were continually confronted about their religion, and many mission attempts were made. During the alliance made with Pedro Menendez, a Jesuit mission, San Anton de Carlos, was stationed at Mound Key, to try to convert the Calusa to Catholicism. This mission was created in the "court of the kings" the designated living area for Calusa nobles. At this time, the Spanish occupied three dozen houses. When the alliance fell through, the missionaries left, and the mission was completely abandoned. The Calusa retained their traditional religious beliefs throughout the entirety of the mission attempt. They adamantly refused to change their own spiritual beliefs.

In 1697, the Franciscan mission of San Diego de Compostela was created. It was built near the house of the Calusa leader, showing the desire for the nobles and the leaders to convert from their native religion. Another Jesuit mission attempt, in 1743, was made at the mouth of the Miami River. It is believed that this mission may have served some of

the last Calusa.

The Seminoles During Contact

During Colonialism and European expansion, is when the Seminoles became a distinct group of individuals and moved from being "Creeks" to "Seminoles". The name "Creek" originated from English in the 18th century, and refers to the Natives with whom they traded, who were located along the creeks of the Alabama and Georgia piedmont (Weisman). During the time that the Calusa were being killed off, the Creek Confederacy was thriving. The confederation was comprised of two divisions. The first was the Upper Creeks who lived along the Coosa and Tallapoosa branches of the Alabama River. The second division was the Lower Creeks who resided in valleys of the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers along the lower Alabama and Georgia borders (Covington 1993:3).

When Europeans invaded, the Seminole lost numerous amounts of people due to disease, warfare, and slavery. Many Indians joined together and some moved into the Florida peninsula. Some remnants of other Florida natives and slaves, who had escaped enslavement, joined the Seminole at this time. Along with this, many Florida Indians began fighting with the Seminoles as they began moving into their territories. The Spanish began to refer to these people as *cimarrones*, which means "wild" or "untamed". Among the Indian people, it became "Simanoli", and later "Seminole"(MacMahon and Marquardt 2004:135).

The United States waged three wars against the Seminoles from 1817 through 1858, which became known as "The Seminole Wars". The government wanted to eliminate their power and make room for colonization by non-Indians. In order to accomplish this, the US forcibly deported over 3,000 Seminoles to Oklahoma. This was

part of the Indian Removal Act, which attempted to move all Indians into "Indian Territory" west of the Mississippi. This act ended up deporting over 100,000 Native Americans on harsh routes. This was later named the "Trail of Tears". Some Seminoles are still located in Oklahoma. They are members of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. The Creek continued to grow crops after contact. They raised corn, melon, beans, and pumpkins. When the soil would become unproductive, they would relocate. Agriculture and hunting was used for subsistence only. During the 18th century, peaches, oranges, apples, watermelons, and sweet potatoes were added into their crops. Rice was even found in one lower Creek town. In addition to this, Europeans introduced hogs, cattle, and chicken into their economy. Families began to raise livestock, and participate in small-scale farming.

After colonization, the Creek economy drastically changed through trade. Trading even became almost essential to their survival. Anglo-Americans were the first who made relations with the Creeks in what is now South Carolina and Georgia. The British sold numerous items to the Creeks, mainly guns, cloth, and metal tools. The trade between the Creeks and the Europeans inevitably determined their course.

Carolina plantations conducted early trade, where the Natives traded deerskins for clothes and guns. As time passed, they began to rely on these items like iron hoes, flintlock muskets, and duffel blankets (Braund 1993). Creeks began to obtain horses through trade with the Spanish, or by stealing them. In return, they would sell them to the British and receive a large monetary reward. Creeks also began to enslave Choctaws and other tribes on the Gulf Coast, selling them to the British. The Creeks also participated in limited trade with Cuban fishing boats. In the early 1700s, the Creek began to trade with

the French, and received free gun repair, brandy, and powder and lead. This exchange with the French lasted through the Seven Year's War.

After the Seven Years' War, the British wanted to form peace alliances with the Choctaws, a long time enemy of the Creeks. Creeks were upset with this because they became afraid that the Choctaws would gain valuable weapons, leaving them inferior in wartime. Creek warriors instigated a war to help protect their hunting territory, which became known as the Choctaw War. Some Creeks sought better hunting territory and moved into modern-day Florida. This migration ultimately led to the establishment of the Seminole Nation. The first Seminoles were led by an Indian named Cowkeeper. They settled on the Alachua savannah near what is today Gainesville, Florida. This area was known as Cuscowilla. The Seminole, enslaved many of the Natives who were living in this area, such as the Yamassee. Towns were established near Alachua, and Talhasochte was established along the Suwanne River. Slaves of the Seminole were different from those of the Calusa. The Calusa made slaves of those who invaded their land. The Seminole, on the other hand, would go out of their way, raiding other tribes and capturing them for sale to the Europeans.

The occurrence of the Revolutionary War reordered trade channels and new partners were established. During the war, British goods were not imported. Therefore, the Creeks lacked gunpowder. This limited their defense and their ability to hunt. John Stuart attempted to shift the center of Indian trade from Augusta to colonies in east and west Florida, particularly Pensacola. Headmen agreed to protect and defend the new trading paths in Florida after shortages occurred from lack of trade. West Indian rum was a very profitable trade item in west Florida, and became the staple trade product of this

time (Braund 1993:42).

War along the Georgia-Florida boarder allowed Creeks to raid settlements. They received horses and slaves, and destroyed multitudes of livestock. Creek trade patterns were destroyed by the end of the war. Trade became very difficult to maintain and the markets for deerskins have virtually disappeared. The war caused shortages of guns, ammunition, and clothes for the Natives. In addition to this, head warriors became the spokespersons for villages. The Seminoles were deprived of many influential leaders because of this shift in leadership.

Since the Seminoles were the decedents of the Creeks, they followed the same form of government. The *micco*, or leader, continued to reside in the *talwa* village. After colonialism, a council of elders, which were representatives of several Creek (Seminoles) clans, elected the highest official. This continued from their old ways of election. This position was filled by a member of a specific clan, and was therefore hereditary. There were other positions that were filled by skill and ability. These men were very important to Creek society. There were four other positions: *micco apokta*, or Vice-Chief; *micalgi*, assistant leaders; *heniha*, ceremonial leaders; and lastly, *holibonaya*, the war speaker (Covington 1993:6). Men continued to gather in cabin-like structures to deliberate on issues of the day.

These political views continued up until the Revolutionary War. During this time, warriors became the new headmen for their villages. Men of mixed ancestry became the new leaders of Seminole society. These men also had skills in literacy, speaking either English or Spanish, and had a deep understanding of white culture. This was partially due to the European desire to deal with mixed-bloods. The Seminoles lost some of their most

influential leaders during this time.

Religion was based on the concepts of purity and balance. Fasting, drinking the black drink, scratching or bleeding, bathing, and other rituals helped one to achieve purity. On the final day of the Green Corn Dance, harmony and balance were sought after (Covington 1993:257).

During colonialism, the Green Corn Dance was still a vital and central part of Seminole religion, politics, and life. However, missionary attempts were pushed onto the Seminoles. In 1863, Amelia Quinton wrote a letter requesting that the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida take charge of the Seminole Indian project (Covington 1993:165). The purpose of this project was to convert the Seminoles to Christianity. A church was built near Immokalee, but only a few Seminoles made use of the mission's services. Baptists also attempted to convert Seminoles into becoming Christians. For a long time the Spanish were trying to convert the Creek to Christianity as well. They wanted these people to conform to Spanish ideals and wanted to convert them. However, none of these efforts produced any lasting effects. They preferred their traditional religion to that of Christianity.

The Creek ritualistically carried charms while hunting. These charms would attract the deer. One of these charms, called a colored horn charm, which would tantalize the deer when the hunter sang. The hunters would also carry physic-nut, which had the same effect (Covington 1993:63).

The Calusa After Contact

After decades of war, disease, and destruction, the Calusa decided to relocate and they left their native lands. In 1763, 80 Calusa families, along with their chief, left Florida

for Cuba (Wheeler 2000:9). Many died during this time of relocation, including the hereditary chief himself. In 1775, an English observer reported that Key Vecas and Key West were places that the Calusa has escaped. Some stories of "Spanish Indians" may refer to the Calusa. A few writers speculate that a leader in the Second Seminole War in the 1830s names Chakaika may have had Calusa ancestry. However, there are no written documents to support this idea. A few Calusa may have integrated into the Seminole Tribe. Some Seminoles say if a person is tall, they must be Calusa. In the 1930s, folklorist Frances Densmore collected songs among the Seminoles. Some songs have been attributed to the Calusa (Macmahon and Marquardt 2004). Unfortunately, the Calusa no longer have control of their aboriginal territory. They have disappeared from existence. Whether or not there are descendents of the Calusa living in southwest Florida today, no one may ever know.

The Seminole After Contact/Today

The Seminoles have survived centuries of war, cultural upheaval, and oppression. They have a vibrant living culture, which retains traditional cultural values combined with modern life. Today, the Seminoles are comprised of about 3,500 members who are descended from fewer than 200 survivors at the end of the Seminole War in 1858. The Florida Seminoles are divided into two federally recognized tribes or nations. The first is the Seminole Tribe of Florida, recognized in 1957 (Bonvillain 2001:142). They were comprised of about 3,000 members in 2004. The second are the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, recognized in 1962. They were comprised of about 500 members in 2004. In addition to this, there are also members who are unaffiliated Independent, or Traditional Seminoles. The Seminole Tribe of Florida is the second largest southeast

nation. Today they are a product of at least two indigenous groups: the Yamassees, from the Carolinas, and Creeks. The Seminoles are acknowledged as one of the "Five Civilized Tribes".

Currently, there are five Seminole reservations in Florida with a combined population of about 3,500. The four federal reservations are Big Cypress, Brighton Reservation, Hollywood Reservation, and Miccosukee Reservation. The largest reservation is Big Cypress, which is located in the interior of Florida, about 130 miles from Miami. In 1950, the Seminoles filed suit with the Indian Claim Commission (ICC) for confiscated lands by the federal government. In 1970, the ICC awarded the Seminoles over \$12 million dollars, with a final judgment of over \$16 million (Bonvillain 2001:144). However, not all Seminoles were happy with the outcome. Some Seminoles consider themselves to be traditional, and have labeled themselves "Tamiami Trail Indians". These traditional Indians said that they wanted their land, back, not a monetary settlement. They objected to taking the money because they claimed it would take away their right to the land. Instead, traditionalists wanted the rights to land use for traditional subsistence activities, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering. In 1976, they filed a suit to block the settlement, but they were unsuccessful in court. In the end, the money was divided into three groups: 77.2% was awarded to the Seminole Tribe of Florida; 18.6% was given to the Miccosukees, and 4.64% was awarded to the Independent Seminoles. By this time, the interest had grown to over \$50 million (Bonvillain 2001:144).

In the past, Seminoles farmed their land and raised cattle. Now most of their land is leased to commercial agricultural companies growing vegetables for the northern market. Many Seminoles work on farms as seasonal laborers and they rely on resources such as

deer, fish, turtles, birds, and wild plants. The current Seminole economy is based on a combination of farming, raising cattle, tourism, and casino gambling. Due to land reclamation projects and the improvement of herds, the Seminoles are the 19th largest producer of calves in the United States (Bonvillain 2001:143). In addition to their success with raising calves, they also have highly developed farming. They have a "highly specialized farming niche" and have therefore become the worlds leading producer of lemons (Bonvillain 2001:143).

The Seminoles began working in tourism in the early 20th century. By 1919, men were working in tourist venues and circuses as "alligator wrestlers". They also opened "Indian Villages" used as tourist attractions near Miami and Fort Lauderdale. Here, they wrestled alligators, sold bird plumes and belts, and posed for pictures with the tourists. During this time women also posed for pictures, made crafts such as dolls, skirts, and belts. Today, some supplement their incomes by selling crafts, especially skirts and blouses decorated with ribbons and embroidery. This style of embroidery was adopted by the Seminoles in the late 19th century. After the building of the main highway, connecting Miami to Tampa, Seminoles in rural areas began to create their own tourist attractions. However, now they provide glimpses into traditional life-foods, clothing, crafts, and dance demonstrations. This type of tourism is called "eco-tourism" and is popular with Americans and Europeans. Many of the houses at the largest reservation, Big Cypress, follow traditional patterns of social organization. These emphasize matrilineal clan and matrilineal households and families. Kin groups are the primary units of socializing and economic cooperation.

Big Cypress is linked to four other reservations of the "Seminole Tribe of Florida"

that gained official recognition in 1957 (Garbarino 1972:1). Tribal leaders are elected by the populous, but traditional consensus building is vital to the success of any decision or undertaking. In doing this, traditional ways of political decision making are still upheld. Votes on issues are taken after a long period of discussion and deliberation. Leaders who adopt Anglo-style of decision making are discredited and quickly replaced. It is clear that in this aspect, the Seminoles wish to continue their aboriginal political ways as closely as possible.

Seminoles have played a large part in changing the legal and economic landscapes throughout native America. They were the first tribe to bring the issue of gaming to the Supreme Court. During the 1980s, the Seminoles opened casinos and bingo parlors and Florida attempted to have these establishments shut down. The Seminoles legally challenged this attempt, which ended up in the Supreme Court in 1981. This case, *The Seminole Tribe of Florida vs. Butterworth*, advanced the tribes status and upheld their rights to regulate gaming on their reservation (Bonvillain 2001:143). The Supreme Court explained that Florida could not regulate gaming on the Indian Reservations and that they could not deny an Indian tribe from participation in activities that were permitted for non-Indians. This decision led to the passage of the "Indian Gaming Regulatory Act" of 1988, which established the rights of Indian tribes to operate gaming establishments of their territories. Seminoles now operate casinos on four out of five of their reservations. The money, which is gained from the casinos, is used for funding public projects on the reservations, the establishment of museums, and visitor centers. In addition to this, every member of the Seminole Tribe of Florida receives a distribution of per capita payments from the casino profits. This distribution varies with annual income, but in 1998, each

member was rewarded \$2,000 a month (Bonvillain 2001:143).

Although the Seminoles receive monthly rewards from casinos, and have been rewarded over \$50 million from the ICC, their per capital income is lower than the average for all Native Americans. In 1989, the Seminole per capita income was \$7,591, while the state of Florida was \$17,647 (Bonvillain 2001:144). 27.5% of Seminoles in Florida were living below the poverty line at this time, and this rate was more than double that of southerners. In addition to this, 16% of Seminoles were unemployed, which is three times higher than the norm for the entire state of Florida (Bonvillain 2001:144). Seminole religion today still emphasizes the Green Corn Dance. It is still integral to their form of government, and customs. It is still an annual gathering of all the Seminole clans which lasts for several days. Inter-clan contests, such as the Indian ball game, are still played today. Most important at the Green Corn Dance, is the lighting of the ceremonial fire. At this time, the Shaman lights the fire. He holds the tribal medicine bag, which is passed from generation to generation. This bag is essential in lighting the fire. The Green Corn Dance is still of vital importance to today's Seminoles, and it shows the lasting impact of their religion for these people.

There is one main conclusion to this comparison: the Seminoles have survived centuries of removal, warfare, and oppression, the Calusa have not. It seems that the main reason the Seminoles have survived is that they allowed themselves to be mutated into a form of person that was culturally acceptable to the Europeans. The Calusa refused such a transformation. Although the Seminoles have retained parts of their aboriginal lifestyles, they were forced to conform to European ways. They did this through trade, and contact with Europeans. The Calusa wanted nothing to do with the Spanish. If the Calusa had

been more willing to accept the ways of the white man, they too may have been around today, to tell their own personal story. What remains as fact is this: the Seminole are alive and thriving, while the Calusa have disappeared forever.

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